The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's *De Trinitate*

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OXFORD THEOLOGICAL MONOGRAPHS

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To Father Abbot François You

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Acknowledgements

In the long journey of doctoral research, where meetings matter and shape us often well beyond what we are aware of, finally the time comes to acknowledge the way the Lord's providence has blessed these encounters and to give him thanks, 'for we are in his hand, yes, ourselves and our sayings, and all our understanding and all our skills' (Wisd. 7:16).

I should like to thank above all the brothers of my monastic community of the Benedictine Abbey Notre Dame de Maylis, who allowed me to spend six long years of academic study in Toulouse and Oxford and patiently bore with the seemingly endless process of writing for a further four years after I came back to the monastery. Without the trust, the understanding, the fraternal love of abbot François You and of each of my monastic brethren I would never have been able to pursue this research to its end and to face the equally daunting work required to convert it into the present monograph.

I owe a similar gratitude to those who welcomed me in the University of Oxford and who each in a unique way contributed to make my years there far more formative and enriching than I could ever have expected. From Dr Mark Edwards, my supervisor, I have learned the rigorous discipline required for the scrutiny of sources, minute textual analysis and care for details. Prof. John Webster, who kindly accepted to act as an informal co-supervisor even after he moved from Oxford to Aberdeen, has taught me the seriousness, the responsibility, the humility, and even the stubbornness required by work in systematic theology. If I have developed any sense at all of the complex and many-layered architecture of Augustine's thought and of its relevance, this I owe to Prof. Oliver O'Donovan's unforgettable seminars on the *City of God*. Moreover, his unfailing support and his wise guidance as my college advisor at Christ Church embodied for me the warmest aspect of the Oxford collegial system. Thanks to him, and also to the chaplain, Fr Ralph Williamson, the porters, my fellow graduate-students and to all its other members, Christ Church (the House !) has really been a home to me and will ever remain so. The Cathedral at Christ Church, the chapel at New College, the congregations and pastors of St Ebbes, St Aldates, St Aloysius, and the always welcoming community of the Sisters of the Work in Littlemore, helped me to root academic theological investigation in worship, an essential condition for the understanding of Augustine's Trinitarian theology. I am particularly proud to owe the financial possibility of completing my research to the generosity of the

Copyright Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

AugMag	*Augustinus Magister. Congrès International Augustinien*. Paris, 21–24 septembre 1954, Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1954.
ATA	Fitzgerald A. D. (ed.), (1999), *Augustine Through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
CCL	*Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1953– .
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vienna: Tempsky, 1865– .
PG	*Patrologia Cursus Completus*, *Series Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne, Paris 1857–1866.
PL	*Patrologia Cursus Completus*, *Series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, Paris 1844–1864.
SP	*Studia Patristica*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, Louvain: Peeters Press.

Augustine's Works

agon.	*De agone Christiano*
b. uita	*De beata vita* (*The Happy Life*, trans. Ludwig Schopp, The Fathers of the Church, New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1948).
cat. rud.	*De catechizandis rudibus*
ciu. Dei	*De ciuitate Dei* (*City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson, London: Penguin Books, 1984).
conf.	*Confessiones* (*Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
cons. Eu.	*De consensu Euangelistarum*
c. Iul. imp.	*Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*
c. Acad.	*Contra Academicos* (*Answer to the Skeptics*, trans. Denis J. Kavanagh, The Fathers of the Church, New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1948).
c. s. Ar.	*Contra sermonem Arianorum*
corrept.	*De correptione et gratia*
diu. qu.	*De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* (*Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David L. Mosher, The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982).
doc. Chr.	*De doctrina Christiana*
en. Ps.	*Enarrationes in Psalmos*

ench.	*Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide spe et caritate*
ep.	*Epistulae* (*Letters*, trans. Roland Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century, New York: New City Press; Letters 1–99, vol. II/1, 2001; Letters 100–155, vol. II/2, 2003; Letters 156–210, vol. II/3, 2004; Letters 211–270, 1*-29*, vol. II/4, 2005).
ep. Jo.	*In epistulam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus*
ep. Rm. inch.	*Epistulae ad Romanos inchoata expositio*
f. et symb.	*De fide et symbolo*
Gn. adu. Man.	*De Genesi aduersus Manichaeos*
Gn. litt.	*De Genesi ad litteram* (*The literal meaning of Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill, *On Genesis*, The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century, New York: New City Press, 2002).
Gn. litt. imp.	*De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber* (*On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. Roland J. Teske, The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991).
Jo. eu. tr.	*In Johannis euangelium tractatus* (*Tractates on the Gospel of John*, trans. John W. Rettig, The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press; Tractates 1–10, vol. 78, 1988; Tractates 11–27, vol. 79, 1988; Tractates 28–54, vol. 88, 1993; Tractates 55–111, vol. 90, 1994; Tractates 112–124, vol. 92, 1995).
nat. et gr.	*De natura et gratia*
ord.	*De ordine* (*Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*, trans. Robert P. Russell, The Fathers of the Church, New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1948).
pecc. mer.	*De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum*
praed. sanct.	*De praedestinatione sanctorum*
praes. Dei	*De praesentia Dei (ep. 187)*
quant.	*De animae quantitate*
qu. Hept.	*Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*
retr.	*Retractationes* (*The Retractations*, trans. Mary Inez Bogan, The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968).
s.	*Sermones* (*Sermons*, trans. Edmund Hill, TheWorks of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century, New York: New City Press; Sermons 1–19, vol. III/1, 1979)
Trin.	*De Trinitate* (*The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century, New York: New City Press, 1991)

uera rel.   *De uera religione* (*True Religion*, trans. Edmund Hill, *On Christian Belief*, The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century, New York: New City Press, 2005).

For the quotations of the *De Trinitate*, unless other works of Augustine are quoted in the same page or in the same footnote, we have omitted to add the abbreviation *Trin.*

Each quotation of the *De Trinitate* is followed by the page number of the critical edition of the Latin text, without referring each time to the volumes 50 and 50/A of the *Corpus Christianorum Latinorum* in which it can be found.

Introduction

So much criticism has been heaped on Augustine's *De Trinitate* in recent decades that this work definitely does not need yet another censorious dissection, or another partial examination of its content, but rather a modest, dogged, and above all sympathetic descriptive analysis thoroughly committed to accounting for the whole of the treatise, on the presupposition of its unity and its coherence.[1]

The unity and the coherence of this work is explicitly claimed by Augustine himself in his letter 174, addressed to the bishop of Carthage Aurelius, and destined to be placed at the beginning of the final editing of the treatise. In this letter, Augustine famously complains about the theft of a copy of the *De Trinitate* at an advanced stage of its writing. Such was his frustration at the discovery of the distribution of the unfinished work that he had decided to abandon its completion altogether.[2] The explanation of the reasons for this degree of annoyance and for the consequent radical decision to lay aside the result of years of painstaking work gives us an invaluable insight into the way Augustine regarded this treatise: 'It had been my intention to publish them all [the books] together and not one by one, because the inquiry proceeds in a closely-knit development from the first of them to the last.'[3] Despite the length of the *De Trinitate* and a composition spread out over a span of

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[1] Hill (1991) is an example of a sympathetic approach to the *De Trinitate*, even though his account needs to be complemented by further theological elaboration. Cf. also Cavadini (1992), 104, who pleads for a reading of the *De Trinitate* which accounts for all its elements, particularly those usually treated as digressions and therefore as irrelevant to the overall argument of the treatise, namely the long discussion on redemption in the fourth and the thirteenth books; the discussion on contemplation in the first book and in the prologues of books 1 to 5; the treatment of original sin and human renewal in the fourteenth book; the discussion of the theophanies of Genesis and Exodus in the second and the third books. For an older but insightful criticism of inadequate accounts of the unity of the *De Trinitate*, see Daniels (1977), 33–36. Madec (2000) vehemently criticizes the attempt to distinguish a more 'theological' from a more 'philosophical' section in the *De Trinitate*.

[2] *ep.* 174 (CCL 50, 25). Cf. *retr.* 2.15 (CCL 57, 101).

[3] *ep.* 174 (CCL 50, 25): 'Non enim singillatim sed omnes simul edere ea ratione decreueram quoniam praecedentibus consequentes inquisitione proficiente nectuntur.'

some twenty years,[4] Augustine considered it as one single, consistent, tightly woven 'progressive enquiry'.[5] So carefully had he conceived the progressive and pedagogical character of this enquiry, that access to an unfinished version of it, however sizeable, could have exposed the reader to a dangerous misunderstanding: 'This is why I hold onto those books filled with most dangerous questions, namely *Genesis* and *The Trinity*, longer than you want and tolerate in order that, if they cannot fail to have some points that it would be right to criticise, these might at least be fewer than they could have been if they were published in headlong haste and without more reflection.'[6]

Therefore, Augustine himself warns us: an accurate grasp of the unity and the coherence of his progressive enquiry is the condition for the understanding of his Trinitarian theology. However, this unity and this coherence might have to be looked for elsewhere than in the mere structural analysis of the treatise, which does not always yield satisfying results. In fact, a purely sequential account is constantly threatened by the temptation to rank under the easy label of 'digressions' many sections of this work: for example, the apparently overlong exegetical passages of the first three books, the sudden and unexpected switch to Christology and soteriology of books 4 and 13, the intricacy of the argument in book 8, not easy to relate either to the preceding logical approach to Trinitarian formulas of faith of books 5 to 7 or to the following exploration of human psychology of books 9 to 11. Was it really necessary, in a treatise on the Trinity, to dwell at such length on God's attributes, on the proper way of predicating them, on Christology, soteriology, eschatology, just to mention some of the main topics of the fifteen-book-long enquiry? Within such a variety of themes, where is the principle of coherence to be located?

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[4]   Augustine declares that 'De trinitate quae deus summus et uerus est libros iuuenis inchoaui, senex edidi', *ep.* 174 (CCL 50, 25). On this basis, three hypotheses have been put forward to determine the year in which Augustine started the writing of the *De Trinitate*: summer 399 (Hendrikx (1955a), 558), the beginning of 405 (La Bonnardière (1971–1972 and 1972–1973), 295), and finally the period going from 400 to 403 (Hombert (2000), 53–56). For the end, Hendrikx (1955a), 559 considers that 419 is the most likely date; La Bonnardière (1965), 69 and 166 f. gives the period 420–426 for book 15. Hombert (2000) thinks that only the first book was written between 400 and 403, whereas books 2 to 4 were written between 411–414 (pp. 56–80). On the whole, therefore, the tendency of scholarship goes towards an early start around 400, while locating the bulk of the work later, towards the 420s. A crucial argument in favour of the late dating of most of the treatise, from book 2 onwards, is provided by Berrouard (1977), 42–46, cf. this book, ch. 2 n. 14. The late dating of the treatise is particularly significant since it might explain the similarity of book 4 with book 13 in the light of the anti-Pelagian controversy, as we shall see.

[5]   Madec (2000), 57.

[6]   *ep.* 143.4 (CSEL 44, 254. Trans. Teske, II/2, 303): 'Hinc est, quod periculosissimarum quaestionum libros de genesi scilicet, et de trinitate diutius teneo quam uultis et fertis, ut si non potuerint nisi habere aliqua, quae merito reprehendantur, saltem pauciora sint quam esse possent, si praecipiti festinatione inconsultius ederentur.'

Patient and sustained confrontation with this treatise has persuaded us that its unity and coherence are best perceived when Augustine's progressive enquiry is approached from the angle of knowledge of God. This angle might not be easy to detect from the viewpoint of modern epistemological standards because Augustine does not embark on an explicit reflection on the conditions of knowledge of God, but aims at introducing his reader into the *practice* of this knowledge and then, only retrospectively, determines its conditions not critically but theologically or, rather, from a theologically ruled critical point of view. Therefore, throughout this book, we shall refer to 'theological epistemology' according to Augustine's approach to knowledge of God and treat epistemological questions as a function of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The *De Trinitate* is based on the presupposition that it is impossible to dissociate questions concerning the identity of the God we believe in from those related to the way we have actually come to know him. The Trinitarian identity of God is the only way to explain *how* we come to know him. As a result, investigation into the identity of the Trinity changes the way we perceive ourselves and our own identity and in this process theology discovers its critical responsibility not only with regards to epistemology but also to anthropology.

In other words, theology is accountable to questions framed by philosophical epistemology only through the latter's conversion, just as in the case of any human activity and reality confronted by the God revealed in Jesus Christ. As soon as the theologian wonders '*Who* is God the Trinity?', the philosopher asks '*How* do we know God?' Theology cannot ignore this question, but at the same time it cannot confine itself to importing the philosopher's presuppositions without drawing from its own patrimony the critical resources needed to shape these presuppositions anew in conformity to the principles it is ruled by or, rather, through faithfulness to the living triune God it is accountable to.

Thus in the *De Trinitate* theology begins by learning the proper way to approach its 'object': how can we talk about knowledge of an invisible and immutable God, in whom we have life, movement, and being, who is our good and our light? To answer that it is through revelation is exact, but insufficient. God does not cease to be invisible and immutable, that is unknowable, once we have had access to some propositional revealed truths concerning his identity and his will. Therefore, the principle of God's unknowability appears as the touchstone of theological epistemology and explains why knowledge of God can only be Trinitarian: for the Father to reveal himself while remaining unknowable we need Christ and the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, theology becomes aware of the actual situation of the knowing 'subject' and of his position in relation to God: we are creatures who have sinned and have turned away from the source of our life, light, and

happiness; we have been rescued and yet are still subject to the consequences of sin; we are located at a stage of the economy of salvation where we know through a mirror and not yet face-to-face, through faith and not through vision; finally we are saved and are going to be introduced into the eternal enjoyment of Trinitarian life as members of the body of Christ, that is not individually, but as the Church.

Thus, in the process of elaborating a proper theological understanding of 'object' and 'subject' of knowledge, Augustine somehow reverses the relation between the two: the knowing 'subject' is in fact the object of God's self-revelation and of God's creative, sustaining, and salvific action; the 'object', God, is known and loved through God, i.e. in Christ through the Holy Spirit, which means that he is himself the real subject who associates us to his own self-knowledge. Starting from this paradox, Augustine alerts us to some other key features contributing to the distinctiveness of theological epistemology.

First, God does not make himself known in the Old and in the New Testament primarily through the communication of a set of propositional truths about himself—even though, of course, these are part of the process of revelation—but through the creation of a covenant, of a *relation* with his creatures which involves all their existence, all their being, their intelligence, their will, that is their freedom, their desire, their love. Thus, knowledge of God and (covenantal) relation with him are coextensive and mutually conditioning and nothing of what human beings are made of can be left aside in a properly Christian approach to the way we come to know God. Then, theological epistemology has to pay attention to the consequences of the crucial role played by *conversion* in the process of knowledge of God: to what extent is it possible to talk properly of knowledge of God before this conversion? Is there a definite and unbridgeable break or is there a continuity? Then, the relational and existential character of knowledge of God should not lead us to underestimate the role played by propositional knowledge of God, the material content of faith, the truths to be confessed, the precepts to be obeyed, in short everything which Augustine tends to place under the label of *science*. What is the relation between this science and what Augustine calls *wisdom*, that is the eschatological contemplation of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, the fulfilment of the relation with God? Finally, attention is to be paid to the posture, the place, the attitude which best represents and fulfils the distinctiveness of knowledge of God while anticipating its eschatological fullness, that is *worship*.

Therefore, the unity and coherence of the *De Trinitate* are to be looked for in its structure, of course, as well as in the sequential progression of the argument, but they can be really perceived there only from the theological point of view required to explain how we come to know the God of Jesus Christ.

Thus, since the question of the identity of God the Trinity is inseparable from theological reflection on the way we know him, it is necessary to explore the connections between the doctrine of the Trinity and other theological areas such as Christology, soteriology, doctrine of the Holy Spirit, doctrine of revelation, and doctrine of the image of God. A glance at the table of contents of the present book shows that this is precisely the approach we have chosen and which, therefore, recommends this monograph not only to interpreters of Augustine's thought or historians of the development of theology, but to theologians in the first place. With Augustine's *De Trinitate*, we are in the presence of a full-scale search for a language to talk about the core of Christian faith, together with the elaboration of the fundamental critical standards which secure a genuine theological character to this enquiry and a distinctively Christian evidence and credibility to it. It is precisely the theological—that is Trinitarian—character of the critical standards elaborated in the course of this enquiry that represents the most enduring lesson of the *De Trinitate*, which this monograph intends to bring to the fore and from which contemporary theology can benefit.

1

Augustine and his Critics

I. ANAGOGY, CREATIONIST ONTOLOGY, AND ANALOGY

Up to this day, Olivier Du Roy's[1] lengthy work on the genesis of Augustine's Trinitarian theology remains the most comprehensive treatment of the subject. The attempt to relate the *De Trinitate* to Augustine's early works up to his ordination in 391 (and, indeed, well beyond this date) is the most enduring—and probably the least appreciated—achievement of this study. A deeper perception of the complex texture of the *De Trinitate* can be reached only in the light of its wider background and particularly of its roots in the Manichaean and the Pelagian controversies.

Du Roy[2] rightly points out the seminal importance of the epistemological concern triggered by the reading of Cicero's *Hortensius*, which inaugurated a quest for wisdom inseparable from that for happiness. However, he comes to the conclusion that, from very early on and until the end of Augustine's life, knowledge, including knowledge of God the Trinity, remained fundamentally independent from his faith. Du Roy finds a confirmation of this interpretation in book 7 of the *Confessions* where Augustine claims to have discovered spiritual interiority and divine transcendence not through faith but in the Platonic books. From that time onwards, knowledge of God would have taken the fundamental shape of what Du Roy calls an 'anagogy': a conversion to interiority followed by a movement upwards, under the guidance of the light of Truth. At the end of this anagogy, and independently from faith, Augustine assumes the identity of Plotinus' hypostases with the Christian Trinity. However, so dazzling is the light of this Truth—identical with the Trinity—that the soul is incapable of sustaining this vision for very long and no sooner has it reached the climax of this anagogical movement than it is torn away from this light by its own weakness and mutability. Only the frustration resulting from the fleeting nature of the achievement made possible through anagogy persuades Augustine of the necessity to complement it with faith in the Incarnation. Faith provides him with a sure way towards the light perceived autonomously through Plotinian anagogy.

[1] Du Roy (1966).   [2] Du Roy (1966), 414–420, which we sum up from the French.

The epistemological role of faith, therefore, consists merely in an authoritative spur to turn towards interiority through moral purification and humility, where the anagogical mode takes over. Knowledge of God the Trinity chiefly results from this superior mode of knowing,[3] basically independent from faith, also available to philosophers. This whole approach is summed up in the pattern 'way-homeland' (*uia-patria*): (i) 'homeland' is the name given to the aim of human quest—corresponding to wisdom or happiness—which can be perceived, however fleetingly, through anagogy; (ii) even though in principle this 'homeland' can be known by everyone, only one 'way', however, makes its attainment actually possible: the purification provided by Christ's Incarnation.[4]

Through the lens of this interpretation, Du Roy embarks upon a lengthy and meticulous analysis of Augustine's early works, starting from the dialogues at Cassiciacum of 386 up to *De Trinitate*. Very schematically, the result of this analysis can be summed up as follows: anagogy remains Augustine's only epistemological tool until the anti-Manichaean controversy forces him to confront it with a creationist ontology. This confrontation inaugurates a tension in Augustine's thought between the earlier approach to the mystery of the Trinity through Plotinian anagogy and a new mode based on the doctrine of the image of God:

(i) the earlier anagogical approach presupposed the Plotinian philosophy of the One: since production of beings consists in fall into multiplicity and exteriority, return to the One is attained through ascent ('anagogy') from multiplicity to unity and from exteriority to interiority;

(ii) according to the biblical creationist ontology developed during the anti-Manichaean controversy, production of beings results from free creation *ex nihilo* and implies participation (i.e. likeness to God). In this new context, the doctrine of the image of God acquires an epistemological status insofar as it expresses our total dependence on God both for our existence and for our possibility of coming back to him through knowledge and love. In the light of this doctrine, return to God coincides with growth in his likeness, made possible through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

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[3] Du Roy (1966), 419, even talks of the 'composante gnostique de la théologie augustinienne'.
[4] Madec (1989), 48 and 240, criticizes Du Roy's interpretation by noticing that the pattern *patria-uia* is constantly enshrined into the context of the opposition between pride and humility, presumptuousness and confession. Madec (2000), 72 f. explains that the pattern *patria-uia* does not establish an extrinsic relation between intelligence and faith, attributing illumination to the former and purification to the latter, because both have their foundation in Christ; cf. also 66 ff.

Du Roy argues that this tension between two irreconcilable ontologies is the fundamental cause of what he constantly refers to as the 'failure' of Augustine's Trinitarian epistemology. An impressively detailed—and often very valuable—analysis of Augustine's works up to the *De Trinitate* is meant to substantiate this claim. In the present overview, we shall focus on the consequences of the adoption of this framework for Du Roy's interpretation of the structure and the argument of the *De Trinitate*.

To start with, Du Roy's attention to the genetic aspect of Augustine's Trinitarian thought leads him to argue against a purely analogical approach to the psychological triads. These triads are to be understood in the light of the tension outlined above between Plotinian anagogy and Trinitarian metaphysics of creation. According to him, the triads of book 8 to 14 emerge from an underlying anagogy characterized by the classical movement of conversion to interiority and transcendence and the passage from exteriority to interiority, from the sensitive world to the spiritual dimension of reality, from multiplicity to unity. At the same time, in the light of the evolution of Augustine's theology, these triads also have to be understood within the metaphysical framework of the Trinitarian structure of creation. This means that the psychological triads are instrumental in the discovery of the Trinitarian structure of created being. At least initially, therefore, these triads are not devised with a view to providing an analogy for the Trinitarian mystery. On the contrary, they aim at illustrating the three ontological levels—existence, knowledge, and will—corresponding to the threefold dependence of the creature on its creator.[5]

In this portrayal, the *De Trinitate* becomes Augustine's most sustained attempt to resolve the supposed polarization between these two approaches to the knowledge of God. In the initial intention of the treatise, the '*cogito*' enlightened by the Trinity, its creator, would have been the starting point not of a simple analogy of the Trinity, but of an anagogic movement leading up to

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[5] A similar point is made by Crouse (1985), 510, who shows that in Augustine the Trinity revealed by Christ and believed by faith is in fact the '*Principium* of human reflection', the 'foundation of self-conscious life', to the point that 'presence to itself and awareness of itself imply awareness of that principle'. According to Cochrane (1940), Augustine in the *De Trinitate* undertakes a 'phenomenology of the human mind', where the reasoning mind goes from awareness of objects external to itself to awareness of being aware. This awareness of being aware, is awareness of existing, knowing, and willing or 'awareness of selfhood as a triad of being, intelligence and purpose' (p. 403). The decisive aspect of this discovery is that it does not lock reason into an illusion of independence, of radical transcendence, or yet of the absence of limitations or again, in a word, in a claim to divinity. On the contrary, it rests on an awareness of self as created, in a 'consciousness of selfhood as, in some mysterious sense, forever dependent upon an inexhaustible and unconditioned source of Being, Wisdom and Power in whose "image" it is made' (p. 407). God is recognized as the ἀρχή, the *Principium*, of mind's being, thought, and purpose. Awareness of being aware results in consciousness of selfhood as a dependent entity not only for its very existence, but also for its possibility of knowing and willing.

vision of God the Trinity, in a way somehow akin to Plotinus' ecstatic vision of the One. However, both the triads of love and of self-reflection would have proved unable to sustain this anagogic ascent to the Trinity and led to the 'failure' of both the outcome of book 8[6] and the passage from the tenth to the eleventh book.[7] As a result, Augustine would have tried to obviate this double failure through a new strategy which echoes that of his early works and consists in looking for images (or 'analogies') of the Trinity at the lower levels of creation.

Rather predictably, according to the interpretation of the pattern 'way-homeland' adopted by Du Roy where faith only plays a role of purification, the discussion of book 13 on redemption is explained along the same lines: Incarnation only purifies us; knowledge of the Trinity—which corresponds to wisdom—transcends faith; faith itself is assimilated to temporal and therefore provisional science.[8] The attempt to lead the anagogy based on creationist ontology to its outcome is resumed once again in book 14, but, unsurprisingly, ends up in yet another 'failure': Augustine does not manage to explain how the presence of God's image in the soul enables it to remember God. This last 'failure' finally persuades Augustine to leave behind the anagogical mode and to explore the analogical approach to the triadic structure of our dependence on the creative Trinity instead, in book 15. This is how he is led to discuss the attribution of memory, knowledge, and love to God and to list similarities and differences between the psychological triads and the Trinity.[9]

In a nutshell, Du Roy builds his version of the logic of Augustine's practice of knowledge of God along three lines: anagogy, creationist ontology, and analogy. The anagogical mode, in tension with creationist ontology, came first.

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[6] Du Roy (1962) had reached the verdict of 'failure' to describe the outcome of the eighth book of the *De Trinitate* some years before his book on the Trinity appeared, Du Roy (1966).

[7] Cf. Cavadini (1992) who goes so far as to suggest that 'the *De Trinitate* uses the Neoplatonic soteriology of ascent only to impress it into the service of a thoroughgoing critique of its claim to raise the inductee to the contemplation of God, a critique which, more generally, becomes a declaration of the futility of any attempt to come to any saving knowledge of God apart from Christ' (p. 106). Augustine unfolds 'one of the finest examples of what could be called Neoplatonic anagogy that remains from the antique world' only 'to break the inevitable impasse of the introspective soteriology of ascent' (p. 105) through a full appreciation of the necessity of saving knowledge of the Trinity through faith in Christ (p. 110).

[8] Studer (1997b) although acknowledging that 'the idea of *purgatio fidei* is dear to Augustine', argues at length that faith is a kind of historical knowledge and that 'the economy manifests in time the eternal existence of the Trinity' (p. 45). Thus, the object of belief (*fides quae*), that is 'the *res gestae* narrated by the *historia sacra*' and 'the baptismal creed with constitutes a summary of what the Bible tells us' (p. 49) are 'a congruent expression of what the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have been since eternity' (p. 50). Bourassa (1977), 680, on the basis of several quotations, declares: 'La foi n'est-elle pas, chez lui [Augustin], illumination, connaissance et recherche de Dieu pour s'épanouir elle-même en intelligence de la foi?'

[9] Du Roy (1966), 437–446.

Only the impossibility of reconciling anagogy and creationist ontology led to the final predominance of analogy. In addition to this compromise, the basis for this analogy were static formulas of faith: unity of the three persons in one nature, unity of operations *ad extra*, and primacy of the unity of essence. Thus, the final product Augustine hands over to tradition is the analogical image of a God unique in essence, whose life is abstractly represented through relations of self-knowledge and self-love.[10]

On such premises, hardly any of the dead-ends even of much later Western theological and philosophical tradition cannot ultimately be traced back to Augustine. 'Augustine handed over to the West a dogmatic pattern which tends to cut off the Trinity from the economy of salvation.'[11] His is the 'notion of a divine "Self" as the image of human "self" '.[12] 'The Augustinian *intellectus fidei* conceals a risk of modalism. It results in a notion of God as . . . a unique God, thinking and loving himself, like a great selfish figure or a "great bachelor". Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Deism probably is the ultimate upshot of this *intellectus fidei* of the Trinity, based on a Neoplatonic philosophy.'[13]

In the end, even though Du Roy's impressive effort to ascertain the genesis of Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine indeed deserves to be taken into account, the same thing cannot be said for his overall interpretations of the evolution of Augustine's Trinitarian thought.[14] The polarization he postulates between knowledge of God the Trinity and Christology in his interpretation of the pattern 'way-homeland' is based on a very superficial acquaintance with the *De Trinitate*. Our book as a whole shall be devoted to disproving Du Roy's conclusion not only with regard to his interpretation of the *De Trinitate*, but also to crucial aspects of his account of the genesis of Augustine's Trinitarian thought.

II. AUGUSTINE AND WESTERN TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

The task of confronting some of the criticisms of Augustine's Trinitarian theology prevailing in contemporary theology is an unrewarding one that we cannot avoid, but which does not call for a too extensive treatment. Many of these critics evidently have very little first-hand knowledge of Augustine

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[10] Cf. Madec (2000), 73–76, criticizing 'les embarras de l'analogie et de l'anagogie'.
[11] Du Roy (1966), 460.
[12] Ibid., 462: 'la conception du "Soi" divin à l'image du "moi" humain'.
[13] Ibid., 463.
[14] Cf. Ayres (2000b), 44, n. 11. For a lengthy criticism of Du Roy and especially of his 'genetic method' see Bourassa (1977), especially 677 ff.

himself.[15] Instead, we shall look at few highly representative critics whose versions of what Augustine should have done, however much unintentionally, do in fact open constructive paths for the determination of what he actually did do.

Du Roy's interpretation of the so-called 'psychological triads' of the second half of the *De Trinitate* establishes that the final outcome of their—tortuous, in his opinion—unfolding is the formulation of an analogy of the Trinity: because we have been created in the image of God, by looking at what constitutes this image of God in us, i.e. our mind, we can understand something about the inner-life of the Trinity. Karl Barth held a similar view and famously characterized these triads as follows:

an analogue of the Trinity, of the Trinitarian God of Christian revelation, in some creaturely reality distinct from him, a creaturely reality which is not a form assumed by God in his revelation, but which quite apart from God's revelation manifests in its own structure by creation a certain similarity to the structure of the Trinitarian concept of God, so that it may be regarded as an image of the Trinitarian God himself.[16]

This 'analogical' interpretation of the *De Trinitate* pervades the whole Western theological tradition. Down the centuries, generations of Western theologians have thought that this was Augustine's main contribution to Trinitarian theology, and Eastern theologians have focused on this issue to deplore Augustine's unfortunate deviation from the traditional approach to the mystery of the Trinity. The present chapter will tackle this interpretation starting from Karl Barth's main concern about the possible drawbacks of the analogical approach to the mystery of the Trinity, summarized, in the passage quoted above, in the expression: 'quite apart from God's revelation'.

Karl Barth is aware of the positive value such an enterprise might assume in a context where the intention is not that of grounding 'the possibility of revelation in the world of human reason'—which he calls 'apologetics'—but that of 'establishing the actual possibilities of the world of human reason as

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[15] Even the usually careful Pannenberg (1991), I, 323, relies on Jenson (1982), 119 f., to take issue with Augustine over his assertion in *Trin.* 7.2 (246 f.) that if the Son is the wisdom of the Father, then 'the Father does not have wisdom in himself, but only through the Son' and his belief that 'this would violate the equal deity of Father and Son'. Pannenberg's comment is: 'An important insight of R. W. Jenson is that here Augustine was not simply rejecting an inappropriate formulation of Nicene doctrine but missing one of its points, namely, that the relations between the persons are constitutive not merely for their distinctions but also for their deity.' Ayres (2000a), 71, mentions other critics of Augustine, namely C. Lacugna, C. Plantinga, V. Lossky, and J. Zizioulas. One of the most striking examples of uninformed and yet influential criticisms of Augustine is also represented by Gunton (1991). See also Bourassa (1977), 675 ff. A good critical review of Lacugna's views can be found in Lancaster (1996), 124–127. The latest criticism of some aspects of Gunton's views on Augustine can be found in Cross (2007).

[16] Barth (1975), 334.

the scene of revelation'—which he calls 'polemics'.[17] *Vestigium Trinitatis*[18] in the Fathers was 'not to be overrated, nor to be used as a proof in the strict sense'.[19] It simply was based on the assumption that 'there can be true apprehension of it [the Trinity] only on the presupposition of revelation, *trinitate posita*'.[20] Insofar as the thrust behind the Fathers' doctrine of *uestigium* is not an apologetical one, Barth is prepared to explore its potential theological significance and does so very insightfully. On the basis of the Fathers' keen awareness that the Trinity is known to us only by revelation, it is possible to interpret the *uestigium* as the search for a language for the mystery of God. They were persuaded that 'revelation, the very revelation correctly and normatively understood in the formulated dogma, could grasp the language, i.e., that on the basis of revelation, enough elements could be found in the familiar language used by all to be able to speak about revelation'.[21] Triads like that of 'mind, knowledge, and love' could thus be adopted 'not because these things were in and of themselves suitable for the purpose, but because they were adapted to be appropriated'.[22] Thus he concludes that 'what happened then, is not that they tried to explain the Trinity by the world, but on the contrary that they tried to explain the world by the Trinity in order to be able to speak about the Trinity in this world'.[23]

Therefore, Barth does suggest a sympathetic interpretation of these *uestigia*. If, in the end, he pleads all the same not only for the inadequacy, but for the positive danger inherent in such attempts, it is because of the shift from polemics to apologetics he detects in later theological tradition. This change is yet another expression of the anthropological turn of theological thought in Modernity: the *uestigium* ceases to be a way of using human realities to talk about God and becomes the use of aspects of theology to talk about man.

Then, even if he is prepared to acknowledge the good intention of the Fathers and to attribute the bad use of *uestigium* to a change of motives, he argues that this was somehow foreseeable and inevitable once theology had trespassed the boundaries of humble and faithful 'interpretation' of revelation and had ventured itself into its 'illustration'. Such a move he deems reprehensible for two reasons: because it springs from lack of trust in the self-evidential

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[17] Barth (1975), 341.

[18] The title *Vestigium Trinitatis* for the section of the *Church Dogmatics* dealing with this issue (I.1, 333–347) is borrowed from the *De Trinitate* and the doctrine implied by this terminology is located especially in books 9 to 11 of this treatise, i.e. those devoted to the issue of the so called 'psychological' triads. Cf. 'Oportet igitur ut creatorem per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspicientes trinitatem intellegamus cuius in creatura quomodo dignum est apparet *uestigium*', *Trin.* 6.12 (242).

[19] Barth (1975), 338.   [20] Ibid., 340.   [21] Ibid.   [22] Ibid.   [23] Ibid., 341.

force of revelation and because an illustration, being 'closer to man than reve-
lation, because it is in the end its own being and nature, it inevitably becomes a
threat to his attention to revelation, a limitation of the seriousness with which
he takes it'.[24] In the end, probably the most cogent criticism of all Barth directs
against *uestigium* is that which he utters almost incidentally in the following
sentence: 'This is the obvious reason for the impression of trifling and even
frivolity one obviously gets when pondering this theologoumenon, no matter
how pleasing and credible it seems at first.'[25]

This remark touches the heart of the issue of the *uestigia*. Our assumption
in this book is that, insofar as scattered and occasional analogies between the
process of knowledge and inner-Trinitarian life can indeed be detected in the
De Trinitate, they can be ascribed not so much to a systematic design as to
the rhetorical character of this work and to Augustine's habitual way of doing
theology. Augustine does not simply teach. He also tries to delight and move
his reader.[26] There is a thin line, sometimes, between rhetoric and 'frivolity',
especially when elements conceived to be part of a whole pedagogical project
and for a certain type of audience are taken out of their context and given
independent weight and life.

The consequences of this analogical approach of the *De Trinitate* Barth
(rightly) dreaded so much are exactly those Du Roy attributes to Augustine's
posterity, when, as we have seen, he states that 'Augustine handed over to the
West a dogmatic pattern which tends to cut off the Trinity from the economy
of salvation'[27] and attributes to him a 'notion of a divine "Self" as the image
of human "self"'.[28] Hence the antagonism, often taken for granted, of the
shape Augustine would have imprinted on Latin Trinitarian theology over
against the 'Greek' doctrine of the Trinity; hence also the trite question of
the 'starting point' of Eastern and Western Trinitarian theologies: a non-issue
which has become a commonplace owing to the unwillingness of generations
of theologians to engage with the real sophistication of patristic Trinitarian
thought.

For Karl Rahner, such an anthropological reduction of the Trinitarian mys-
tery is at the sources of 'Western conception of the Trinity . . . [in which], in
contrast to the Greeks, one begins with the one single nature of God as a
totality and only considers him *after that* as constituted by three persons—
though this involves a constant (and necessary) effort to avoid positing the
essentia as a "fourth element" previous to the three persons'. As a result,

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[24] Ibid., 345.   [25] Ibid., 344.
[26] Cf. *doc. Chr.* 4.xii.27 (CCL 32, 135): 'Dixit enim quidam eloquens, ut uerum dixit, ita dicere
debere eloquentem, ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat. Deinde addidit: "Docere necessitatis est,
delectare suauitatis, flectere uictoriae"' (quotation from Cicero, *Orator* 21.69).
[27] Du Roy (1966), 460.   [28] Ibid., 462.

the treatment of the doctrine becomes very philosophical and abstract, with very little concrete reference to the history of salvation and shaped by necessary metaphysical attributes of God.[29] In this context, Augustine is even charged with a 'magnanimity which would cause scandal nowadays' for having ascribed some knowledge of the Trinity to philosophers.[30]

According to this polarization, Greek Fathers expound the Trinitarian dogma in conformity to its shape in Scripture and in the baptismal formula which mention Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[31] The principle of unity in the Trinity is the Father and the distinction between substance and hypostasis (οὐσία and ὑπόστασις) devised by the Cappadocian Fathers is a key conceptual breakthrough in the history of theology; in this context, ὑπόστασις would have acquired not only the meaning of 'individual' but that of 'person' in the modern sense of the word.[32] In this approach, inner-Trinitarian life starts from the person/ὑπόστασις of the Father and not from impersonal divinity or divine substance. Therefore, inner-Trinitarian relations are defined by the *origin* of Son and Holy Spirit from the Father and the distinction between generation and procession is enough to ground the difference between Son and Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, the introduction of the *filioque* in Western Trinitarian theology, in the wake of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, would denote the opposite tendency: the 'starting point' is in one divine substance and posits 'a system of relations within the unique essence, something which logically comes after the essence. . . . Instead of being characteristics of the hypostaseis, relations are identified with them.'[33] Relations are then mutual—and not of origin—and the only way of distinguishing the Son from the Holy Spirit is that of devising a further relation between them.[34] Thus, the *filioque* would be the result of a logical necessity: it would be the only way of establishing the distinction between the Son and the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father, according to the following pattern: (i) the Father alone relates and is not related; (ii) the Son both relates and is related; (iii) the Holy Spirit alone is related but does not actively relate. Without the *filioque*, the Son would formally be in exactly the same situation as the Holy Spirit, that is to say related without actively relating.[35]

As a result, in Western theology, the unity of principle (ἀρχή) is either compromised by the assertion of two principles—Father and Son—or it has to be located not in the Father, but in the substance, thus generating a Trinitarian theology tending towards Modalism. The other consequence of

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[29] Rahner (1966), 84.   [30] Ibid., 86.   [31] Rahner (1970), 55.
[32] Cf. Lossky (1957), 52, and Zizioulas (1985), 41. The views of these authors have been effectively criticized by de Halleux (1986) and Cross (2002a, 2002b, and 2003).
[33] Rahner (1970), 56.   [34] Cf. Brown (1985), 282.   [35] Ibid.

this location of the principle (ἀρχή) in the substance and not in the Father is a more impersonal notion of God. Whereas Eastern Fathers see the one divine nature as the content of the persons, Western theologians see the three persons as 'modes' of a unique nature and tend to qualify them through impersonal imagery. The image of the faculties of one mind could then be considered the clearest example of this impersonal notion of the Trinity[36] as also could be the fact that the Holy Spirit tends to be conceived as a 'link' between the Father and the Son, i.e. more in functional than personal terms.[37]

The main consequence of the flaws of the Western–Augustinian form of Trinitarian theology just enumerated would be a formalized doctrine of the Trinity a step (or even more than one) removed from Scripture. Rahner states that 'efforts are undoubtedly made, in an Augustinian "psychological" theology of the Trinity, to fill out the contents of the formal concepts of *processio, communicatio diuinae essentiae, relatio, subsistentia relatiua*'. In an attempt to characterize this approach by opposing it to that generically labelled as 'Greek', he argues that, whereas the formal portion of the theology of the Trinity—that which deals with issues of unity and plurality, consubstantiality etc. . . .—played only a marginal role in 'Greek' theology, the West 'made it the (whole) doctrine of the Trinity'. This would explain why 'Western theologians were forced—in contrast to the Greeks—to fill out this almost mathematical and formalistic theology by giving it more substance and content from the "psychological" doctrine of the Trinity as developed by Augustine'.[38]

Augustine's notorious reluctance to endorse the use of the notion of person in Trinitarian theology, for these critics, is the consequence of a shift from the interpersonal imagery of the New Testament to that of the life of the mind. The distinction of divine persons in the economy would not correspond to their inner-Trinitarian identity any more and, according to Karl Rahner, within the Augustinian Trinitarian framework, each of the divine persons could become man and therefore 'the Incarnation of the second person in particular throws no light on the special character of *this* person within the divine nature'.[39]

This would be yet another cause of a modalist bent from which Western Trinitarian theology has never really recovered and which, in epistemological

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[36] Lossky (1957), 57 and 78, quoting de Régnon (1892–1898), I, 433.
[37] Ibid., 61. [38] Rahner (1966), 85.
[39] Ibid., 80 and 91. This position has been argued more recently by Louth (2002), 15: 'we are well on our way to a kind of mythological notion of the Trinity, which will cause the problems Augustine is already somewhat at a loss to answer, such as whether any other "members" of the Trinity could have become incarnate'. For a criticism of this view, see Bourassa (1977). For a discussion on Rahner's views on the *De Trinitate*, see Hill (1971).

terms, generates an opposition between the prominence given to the philosophy of the essence in Augustine and the West in general versus the apophatic or 'communional' approach of the East.

III. AUGUSTINE AND MODERNITY

Suspicion of Augustine in many contemporary theological circles partly arises from their struggle to overcome the epistemological dead-end in which theology is claimed to have been forced by Modernity (even though such a dead-end is rather the result of a failure of theology to tackle Modernity theologically). Augustine's so called 'psychological analogies', though only remotely, would have opened the way to the anthropological turn of theology: talk about the Trinity becomes a pretext for the exploration of the self, for which Augustine would have nurtured an interest bordering on the fascination. Augustine thus anticipates Kant, in the sense that he turns to the subject to look for the source of knowledge and values, and is even more specifically the forerunner of Descartes's '*cogito*'. Such a connection is established on the basis of the striking parallelism between the latter and some of Augustine's statements about the certitude of self-knowledge in book 10 of the *De Trinitate*.

Nobody surely doubts that he lives and remembers and understands and wills and thinks and knows and judges. At least, even if he doubts, he lives; if he doubts, he remembers why he is doubting; if he doubts, he undestands he is doubting; if he doubts, he has a will to be certain; if he doubts, he thinks; if he doubts, he knows he does not know; if he doubts, he judges he ought not to give a hasty assent. You may have your doubts about anything else, but you should have no doubts about these; if they were not certain, you would not be able to doubt anything.[40]

A real *dubito, ergo sum*!

A way of preventing proto-Cartesian readings of the *De Trinitate* is offered by Rowan Williams' rendering of the overall aim of the treatise: the elaboration of a theological anthropology which would be the exact opposite of

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[40] *Trin* 10.14 (327 f. Trans. Hill, 296 f.):

Viuere se tamen et meminisse et intellegere et uelle et cogitare et scire et iudicare quis dubitet? Quandoquidem etiam si dubitat, uiuit; si dubitat, unde dubitet meminit; si dubitat, dubitare se intellegit; si dubitat, certus esse uult; si dubitat, cogitat; si dubitat, scit se nescire; si dubitat, iudicat non se temere consentire oportere. Quisquis igitur alicunde dubitat de his omnibus dubitare non debet quae si non essent, de ulla re dubitare non posset.

the infliction of an anthropological bent to theology.[41] 'More than simply a meditation on a particular doctrine', the *De Trinitate* is 'an integral theological anthropology, a structure in which diverse doctrinal themes are woven together in an account of how human acting, desiring and thinking come to participate in the action of God'[42] or, as he says elsewhere, 'the analysis of how the structures of being human speak to us of the life of God even in their very difference from the divine life'.[43]

This reading of the *De Trinitate* is already operative in the way Williams establishes the structure of the treatise.

In the section of books 1 to 4, devoted to reviewing in an anti-subordinationist way the exegesis of biblical texts traditionally used for the doctrine of the Trinity, the absolute equality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is applied to the doctrine of the missions. The fact that the Son is sent and the Holy Spirit given—as distinct from the Father for whom Scripture never makes use of vocabulary of mission—does not imply any ontological inferiority. As we shall see below, the role of the Son in the economy as 'sent' and of the Holy Spirit as 'given' are the reflection of the 'irreversible' aspect of their relation to the Father in the immanent Trinity: just as the Son is from the Father, and the Father is not from the Son, so, in the economy, only the Son is sent and not the Father. Williams comments on this point by saying that 'to speak of the Son's or the Spirit's "mission" is simply to designate the process whereby *we* come to recognize that Son and Spirit are from the Father'.[44] In fact, on the one hand missions are that through which we receive the revelation and the gift of divine life; on the other hand, this revelation and this gift are the result of what Son and Holy Spirit are in the inner-life of the Trinity. This is why the act through which we are saved coincides with recognition of the life of the immanent Trinity and in particular of the relation of Son and Holy Spirit to the Father.

In the second half of the treatise, which starts with book 8, Augustine relies on the 'concrete relation to God that we actually live by to inform a gradual process of growing illumination as to what God is'.[45] This insight comes very close to the main argument of this book, although Williams's approach is slightly different from ours. His similarity with us lies in the fact that knowledge of the Trinity is not envisaged from the viewpoint of the possibility of a relation with God but of its actuality. Thanks to the missions, we are established in a 'concrete relation to God' which is the starting point of any talk about what we are and what God the Trinity is and becomes

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[41] R. Williams (1990, 1993, and 1999).   [42] R. Williams (1999), 846.
[43] R. Williams (1993), 122.   [44] R. Williams (1999), 846. Italic in the source text.
[45] Ibid., 848.

for us. Williams singles out two main principles in book 8, which will shape Augustine's argument all through the second half of the treatise: (i) 'to love is to desire, and desire is always of what I do not possess' and (ii) 'I can be said to "know" what I desire to the extent that I know myself as moving in a certain direction, drawn by certain goals'.[46]

The self Augustine has in mind is not a 'timeless spiritual identity', but 'a self in movement' who knows 'its own temporal incompleteness and its motivation by desire'.[47] The triads are not meant to describe 'a model of mind that has three clearly delimitable capacities', but 'a mental activity that can be an object to itself'.[48] From this viewpoint, we discover that the self is characterized by a series of paradoxes. First, mind discovers two fundamental limitations: (i) 'it cannot contemplate eternal truth as an object in itself' and (ii) 'self-reflection, likewise, cannot be the perception of the mind itself as object'.[49] What mind becomes aware of, as we have said above, is its activity, i.e. its desire and its incompleteness.

Desire enables Augustine to link our mental activity to the theme of the image of God. The issue is formulated as follows: 'how does the structure of our finite loving [i.e. desiring] minds correspond to that of the infinite loving agency of God?'[50] In his explication of the activity of mind, Augustine shows that 'behind all knowing lies intention and appetition, hopeful wanting directed towards what is strange and other'.[51] The epistemological issue is a matter either of charity or of covetousness. The way we love determines the way we know, including the case of self-knowledge. We are not intelligible to ourselves unless we have the right kind of love. If we are captives of covetousness, we cannot even think ourselves [*se cogitare*] because of the diversion from our inner-life [*se nosse*] towards lower objects of love external to ourselves. Only *dilectio*, i.e. the right kind of love, love which comes from God and is directed towards God and the neighbour, enables us to think ourselves properly [*se cogitare*] and discover the real nature of our self [*se nosse*]. Williams notes that Augustine 'so defines self-knowing and self-loving as to make each unintelligible without the other and his means of doing this is the reiterated pointing to the radical incompleteness and other-directedness of created selfhood'. As a result, 'mind as independent individuality cannot image God',[52] but it must apprehend itself 'as acted upon by God', i.e. as known and loved by God or, with a specific link to the issue of missions, as the object of 'the self-imparting activity of God the creator [and] giver or the *iustitia* and *sapientia*

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46 R. Williams (1999), 848.   47 Ibid., 849.   48 R. Williams (1990), 319.
49 R. Williams (1993), 122.   50 Ibid., 126.   51 Ibid. 126 f.
52 R. Williams (1990), 320.

by which we come to share in divine life' resulting from the actualization of 'the divine act in our own temporal and finite context'.[53]

This is the paradox of our self: 'nothing can be said of the mind's relation to itself without the mediation of the revelation of God as its creator and lover'.[54] For this reason, 'the movement into our createdness', consisting in the exploration of what it means for us to be in the image of God, coincides with 'a movement into God's own life as turned "outwards" '.[55] When Augustine states that the reality of our being in the image of God only becomes clear when we remember, know and love God, he does not simply mean that our image consists in having God as the formal object of our mental activity. On the contrary, 'we image the divine wisdom to the extent that our self-perception is a perception of our own absolute dependence on the self-giving of that wisdom' which corresponds to 'recognition of our created distance from God', of our 'very difference from God'.[56]

This approach to the *De Trinitate* leads Williams to two main conclusions. The first one is that 'the image of God in us, properly so called, is not 'the mind' in and to itself…, but the mind of the saint—the awareness of someone reflectively living out the life of justice and charity'.[57] Thus, 'the realizing of the image is inseparable from the whole process of sanctification' and the treatise as a whole can be interpreted as 'a teasing out of what is to be converted and to come to live in Christ'.[58] The second is that far from being responsible for a move towards 'individualism in anthropology and abstract theism in theology', the 'introspective method of the *De Trinitate* is designed to "demythologize" the solitary human ego by establishing the life of the mind firmly in relation to God—and, what is more, to God understood as self-gift, as movement into otherness and distance in self-imparting love'.[59]

IV. THE *EXERCITATIO* OF THE INCARNATION

In the wake of Rowan Williams's ground-breaking approach to the *De Trinitate*, some scholars have devoted considerable effort to react against mainstream dismissal of Augustine's Trinitarian theology and challenged the received views on this subject in contemporary systematic theology.[60] Lewis

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[53] Ibid.   [54] Ibid., 323.   [55] Ibid., 321.   [56] Ibid., 326.
[57] R. Williams (1993), 131.   [58] R. Williams (1999), 850.
[59] R. Williams (1990), 331.
[60] Especially Barnes (1995a, 1999a, and 1999b) and Hanby (2003).

Ayres has been one of the most prolific of these scholars and has produced a series of detailed and often imaginative articles.[61] To complete this review of commentators, we shall focus on Ayres's version of the place of Christ in Augustine's Trinitarian theology.

As we have seen, interpreters of the second half of the *De Trinitate* often assume that Augustine simply reproduces the Plotinian anagogical method of ascent to God through an 'exercice of the mind' (*exercitatio mentis*). The following characteristics are ascribed to this *exercitatio*: 'a training in modes of thinking increasingly interior, and increasingly free from images, a gradual intellectual movement from the material to the immaterial', 'fundamentally Neoplatonic in character'.[62] Ayres first challenges the very expression *exercitatio mentis*, which, he argues, is rare in Augustine's corpus and only recurs twice in the *De Trinitate*, 'on both occasions to explain that a more "exercised" mind may see better how and how far material analogies fall short of the Trinity itself'.[63]

However, this does not mean that Augustine's purpose in the *De Trinitate* does not have anything to do with some kind of *exercitatio*. The point Ayres wants to make is that this word has Plotinian or even Porphyrian overtones and its uncritical use implies the assumption of a similarity of aims or methods between Augustine and these philosophers. On the contrary, a closer reading of the *De Trinitate*, especially with an eye also on the *De ciuitate Dei*, shows that Augustine is reacting against precisely these philosophers and especially against Porphyry's theurgy—a sort of *exercitatio* which pretended to be able to lead the soul to God. In the *De ciuitate Dei* Augustine offers the alternative Christian way of purification centred on the role of grace and of the one Mediator Jesus Christ. 'One spiritual exercise . . . is opposed to another.'[64]

In Ayres's version of Augustine's argument, we need an *exercitatio*, a re-education because of 'our incapacity to perceive the truth about eternal things', because 'we cannot any longer perceive God through those things which were made "in the Word" '.[65] This incapacity is behind the distinction between science and wisdom and calls for God's action through Christ. Ayres suggests that the fourth book and even more so the thirteenth book of the *De Trinitate* are the key to the understanding of the *exercitatio* carried out in the treatise. Augustine unfolds a 'theological' *exercitatio* through Christology: 'fallen humanity needs to undergo a certain *exercitatio* . . . and such *exercitatio* is provided by the Incarnation'.[66]

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[61] Ayres (1992, 1995, 1998, 2000a, and 2000b).
[62] Ayres (1998), 114, referring to Cavadini (1992).
[63] Ayres (1998), 114, quoting *Trin.* 9.17 (308) and 13.26 (418 ff.).
[64] Ibid., 117.   [65] Ibid., 125.   [66] Ibid.

The *exercitatio* mainly consists in the transferral of our affections 'from the things of this world to God';[67] it is 'both moral and intellectual and is presented as that which will enable us to progress from our obsession with the material to greater contemplation of the presence of the creator'.[68] It is made possible by the union of science with wisdom or, better, it results from 'the sort of *scientia* that is necessary to faith and which draws us on to *sapientia*'.[69] Ayres draws our attention to the parallel Augustine establishes between science–wisdom and the two natures of Christ in book 13: this parallel, he argues, 'is not best understood as an extrinsic analogy, as a purely formal analogical structure, but needs to be understood as a parallel possible *because* of the nature of the Incarnation, and operating here within our participation in Christ (and the specific theme of the *corpus Christi*)'.[70]

Through this *exercitatio* we start by becoming aware that we are not, so to speak, in a position of neutrality with regard to the truth. On the one hand, we are in the position of incapacity just mentioned. On the other hand, the process through which we overcome this incapacity does not start with us. We are caught up in it and its recognition is retrospective: it only happens once we have become the object of God's action in Christ already. Ayres expresses this point through the following circumlocutions: the 'location of the *exercitatio* within the life' of the body of Christ[71] and the 'dramatic account of the *dispensatio* of the Incarnation'.[72]

With reference to the 'dramatic account of the *dispensatio* of the Incarnation',[73] to be in Christ means for us to discover that we are situated at a precise stage of the unfolding of the economy of salvation: 'This stage of the redemptive drama is marked by Christ's absence in the flesh and yet presence as Word, a structure of presence and absence designed so that we may be drawn towards the Father and overcome our obsession with the material.'[74] This refers to Augustine's presentation of Christ as sacrament of our inner resurrection and example of the our bodily resurrection at the end of times in book 4. 'Only by grasping that Christ's resurrection and ascension have already occurred and that we now live in a time of growth towards our better following Christ . . . one has a sense of the purpose and structure or story of the *dispensatio* as a whole and of our place at a particular stage in that story.'[75] But our character of knowing subjects and the *exercitatio* we undergo in the *dispensatio* just mentioned also include our location in the body of Christ: 'Augustine views the Incarnation as integrally involving an account of the community of those who are being purified so that they may join the "first fruits" of the

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[67] Ibid., 128.   [68] Ibid., 131.   [69] Ibid., 118.
[70] Ibid., 121.   [71] Ibid., 126.   [72] Ibid., 131.
[73] Ibid.   [74] Ibid., 133.   [75] Ibid., 123.

resurrection of the dead.'[76] Thus, to the 'dramatic' character of the *dispensatio* corresponds the 'dynamic' character of our union with Christ: 'The union now is *for the purpose of* a future fulfilment, the head drawing the body. The body as it now is, is in the process of being transformed to become the body as it is intended to be.'[77]

What then are the consequences of this understanding of the *exercitatio* carried out by the *De Trinitate* on knowledge of God?

Virtually no commentator of the *De Trinitate* ignores the critical role played in Augustine's argument by the inseparability of knowledge and love and the impossibility of dissociating the process of understanding from ethical progress. The same thing, however, cannot be said for Ayres's insightful remarks concerning the 'Christological location' of the pedagogy expounded in the treatise. The core of his argument is that the fourth and the thirteenth books (those which deal with Christology) are the keys to the understanding of the structure and the purpose of the whole treatise. The thirteenth book in particular finally unveils the theological context which was presupposed by the second half of the *De Trinitate*, since it 'draws the attention to the central importance of Augustine's Christology and theological anthropology for understanding the investigations of books 8 to 12' and prepares 'the culmination of the work in books 14 and 15'.[78] Knowledge of God the Trinity does not simply depend on Christ's message, but on his person and more particularly on the transformation of our relation with God and of the meaning of history resulting from his Incarnation. This is the key insight we draw from Ayres's understanding of the *exercitatio* Augustine unfolds in his treatise; this insight shall guide us in the section of this book devoted to Christology, where we shall look for the basis of Augustine's theological epistemology in books 4 and 13 of the *De Trinitate*.

V. CONCLUSION

The observations of Rowan Williams and Lewis Ayres concerning the Christological foundation and character of Augustine's soteriology and of his approach to knowledge of God shall become the starting point of our journey into the *De Trinitate*. These two authors make clear that theological epistemology is a function of soteriology. As a result, we are faced with the paradox of self-knowledge—to use Williams's way of rendering this point—: at the very

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[76] Ibid., 124.   [77] Ibid., 126. Italics in the original text.   [78] Ibid., 136.

heart of our identity we discover our dependence on God and the impossibility of becoming ourselves [*se nosse*] without the mediation of the revelation and the salvific love of God.

At the same time, we should avoid the anachronistic temptation of framing Augustine's argument in apologetic or existential terms, as if we came to acknowledge our need for God by becoming aware of our incompleteness and of our inability to know ourselves. In Augustine's view, such acknowledgement is only retrospective. Only from the viewpoint gained by reconciliation and salvation are we able to discover the radical dependence of our being on God. The whole of Augustine's pedagogy for the exploration of the self does not aim at establishing a 'human possibility' addressed by God's salvation. On the contrary, the starting point of his whole pedagogy is the *actuality* of God's salvation. This is why the perception of the continuity between the eighth book of the *De Trinitate* and those which follow is crucial, as we shall argue at length. Only when and because we discover that we are caught in the act of loving God and our neighbour, we can become aware of the paradox of self-knowledge.

Finally, this review of secondary literature as a whole warns us that the uttermost care is necessary in articulating the relation between soteriology and the inner-life of the Trinity. Theological epistemology is 'Trinitarian' because knowledge of the Father is possible only through Christ and the Spirit of the Father and the Son. In other words, God can be known only through God or, better, God can be known only through the love for God, and this 'loving knowledge' coincides with salvation. This does not entail, however, the indiscriminate possibility of inferring the life of the immanent Trinity from the structure of salvation. Augustine's own way of expressing this truth is that we do not reach wisdom in the sense that God the Trinity becomes the formal object of our knowledge. Rather, we reach wisdom in the sense that, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, we are reconciled with the Father and we can worship him, we become a sacrifice acceptable to him, we are united to him in love.

Having narrowed down the scope of our investigation with the help of this review of secondary literature, we can embark upon the exploration of the treatise.

2

Against the 'Arians': Outline of Books 1 to 7

The complexity of Augustine's thought makes any attempt to render it analytically a considerable challenge. The main difficulty consists in disentangling the many lines of enquiry he pursues simultaneously, without losing sight of the greater picture into which they are tightly intertwined. For this reason, the most suitable method of investigation is a combination of a sequential account of the way the overall argument unfolds from one book to the next together with an analytical account of each line of enquiry.

The present chapter is devoted to the sequential analysis of the books 1 to 7 of the *De Trinitate*. Most commentators treat books 1 to 4 separately from books 5 to 7 and consider them as discrete, independent unities.[1] On the contrary, the treatment of books 1 to 7 as a single unity is crucially important for the correct interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity. For the purpose of clarity, we shall single out two main layers in the argument of this section of the *De Trinitate*. The first and the most evident, somehow the outer layer, is the exposition of the mystery of the Trinity; below it, however, and somewhat in disguise for most of the early books of the treatise, an inner layer makes its appearance and becomes increasingly dominant, namely the question of the knowledge of God. Of course, this distinction between an outer and an inner layer should not be understood as meaning that the former was less important than the latter in the writer's mind or that they were not intrinsically related to each other in his argument. We resort to it only as a provisional hermeneutic device to make our way through Augustine's work.

I. SCRIPTURE AND THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY

The outer layer, namely the exposition on the mystery of the Trinity, starts with a rule of faith, inspired by credal formulas. Augustine does not quote any creed directly. He only lays out the key terms of Trinitarian faith: Father, Son, and

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[1] Hendrikx (1955b), 20 f.; Hill (1991), 23 and 186; Trapé (2002), pp. xvi, xxii–xlviii; Matthews (2002), p. xxxiii.

Holy Spirit are one God because of their inseparability, their equality, and their consubstantiality. At the same time, the Father is different from the Son and from the Holy Spirit and so are the Son from the Father and the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. The scriptural foundation of both claims is that the New Testament ascribes specific acts to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit even though, as they are inseparable, they act inseparably.[2] The mystery of the Trinity, therefore, is approached first of all in terms of divine action: the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in one God requires them to act inseparably. At the same time, Scripture attributes specific and differentiated acts to each: how, therefore, do Father, Son, and Holy Spirit act inseparably even when Scripture only refers to one divine person?[3]

Before he can investigate this question, however, Augustine needs to deal with the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. He presupposes, of course, that the Son and the Holy Spirit are God just as the Father is God. If they are God like him, they share in his invisibility[4] and immutability.[5] They are equal to the Father and inseparable from him because of their unity in one substance. Thus, the *divinity* of the three persons is envisaged in terms of invisibility and immutability; their *unity* is seen under the viewpoint of equality, inseparability, and consubstantiality. Augustine's fundamental standpoint is that there cannot be any intermediate being between God and his creatures: 'For every substance that is not God is a creature, and that which is not a creature is God.'[6] Hence, the Son and Holy Spirit are either creatures or they are God. A whole set of scriptural passages which suggest the inferiority of the Son or of the Holy Spirit with respect to the Father had become the classical basis for the discussion of this issue during the Trinitarian controversy. Augustine, therefore, starts his treatise by reviewing these passages. Those from the New Testament are dealt with in book 1 and in the first half of book 2; those from the Old Testament in the second half of book 2 and in book 3.

For the interpretation of passages from the New Testament, he starts by applying an hermeneutical rule inspired from the Christological hymn of Philippians 2, which had become traditional against the 'Arians':[7] in his 'form

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[2] 1.7 (35).   [3] 1.8 (36 f.).   [4] Cf. 1.11 (40).

[5] 2.14 (98 f.), quoting Wisd. 7:27 for immutability and 1 Tim. 1:17 f. and 6:15 f. for invisibility. See also 2.9 (92); 2.25 (114); 3.21 (150).

[6] 1.9 (38): 'Omnis enim substantia quae deus non est creatura est, et quae creatura non est deus est.'

[7] While Hill (1991), 49, vaguely assumes that these 'Arians' are 'Arian metaphysicians of the fourth century, the chief of them being Eunomius', Barnes (1993), 189, identifies them with Latin Homoians Augustine would have known during the 380s in Milan: 'Augustine's time in Milan corresponded with the peak of Homoian strength'; 'in 385 Justina and the pro-Homoian court in Milan made the faith of Rimini and Constantinople 360 legal in their city'. Thus, Barnes does not agree with the hypothesis of Augustine's 'intellectual distance from the Arian controversy' (p. 193) and finds that the arguments refuted in books 5 to 7 can be those of

of God' (*forma dei*) Christ was equal to the Father; in his 'form of a servant' (*forma serui*) he was inferior to the Father.[8] When, therefore, Scripture seems to affirm the inferiority of Christ, this means that it refers to the humanity of Christ (*forma serui*), whereas when the equality between the Son and the Father are clearly stated, this means that Scripture is talking about his divinity (*forma dei*). This rule, however, plays a role in the first book only. In fact, Augustine becomes increasingly aware that the relation between the humanity and the divinity in Christ is more than a simple question of the attribution of his actions to each of his two natures. A far more sophisticated notion of the union of the Son of God with human nature is required to account for the daring assertions of 'crucified God' (*deus crucifixus*)[9] and of the 'humility of God' (*humilitas dei*).[10]

The way leading to this greater Christological sophistication goes through the elaboration of another hermeneutical rule, formulated at the beginning of the book 2, which we can label the rule 'God from God'.[11] Augustine has noticed that there are passages of Scripture which, although referring to the divinity of the Son, nevertheless seem to imply some sort of subordination with respect to the Father—not to talk about the Holy Spirit who seems dependent on both Father and Son. The rule for the interpretation of these

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Palladius and Maximinus (p. 190). He also notices that the doctrines ascribed to Arius in book VI 'are all doctrines to be found in the three Western anti-Arian texts...Augustine knew: Hilary's *De Trinitate*, Victorinus' *Aduersus Arianum* and Ambrose's *De Fide*' (p. 185). The same argument is developed in Barnes (2003). The vicissitudes of the Arian community in Milan in the 380s and of their conflict with Ambrose in 385–386 are described in Meslin (1967), 44–58. We are inclined to agree with Barnes as to the really polemical (and not just literary or instrumental) nature of the controversy against 'Arians' in the *De Trinitate* and think that Augustine would not have lingered as long as he did in the discussion of their logical and ontological categories had this not been necessary to determine the best way of confuting them. At the same time, to avoid the drawbacks of an overindulgent taxonomy which has all but helped to clarify the Trinitarian controversy in the early Church, the safest option is to adopt Augustine's own terminology and refer to his opponents as 'Arians'. This term shall always appear in inverted commas because for Augustine, as for his predecessors, it had become the label for virtually any position at variance with what in the end became the mainstream orthodox confession of the mystery of the Trinity.

⁸ 1.14 (44 ff.), summed up again in 2.2 (81).   ⁹ 1.28 (69).
¹⁰ 4.4 (164). Cf. also 8.7 (276): 'Hoc enim nobis prodest credere et firmum atque incon-cussum corde retinere, humilitatem qua natus est deus ex femina et a mortalibus per tantas contumelias perductus ad mortem summum esse medicamentum quo superbiae nostrae sanare-tur tumor et altum sacramentum quo peccati uinculum solueretur' and 13.22 (412): 'Est etiam illud ut superbia hominis quae maximo impedimento est ne inhaereatur deo per tantam dei humilitatem redargui posset atque sanari.'
¹¹ Pelikan (1990) treats the issue of the *canonica regula* underpinning Augustine's Trinitarian hermeneutics, but seems to have detected only the first rule in 1.14 (44 ff.), and not the more the-ologically sophisticated rule of book 2 we call 'God from God'. This explains why he mistakenly declares that Augustine did not formulate 'a "canonical rule" about the Holy Spirit to correspond to that about the Son' (p. 23). The rule 'God from God' is precisely meant to fulfil this role.

passages, inspired by the Creed of Nicaea, is that, although equal to the Father, the Son is 'God from God' (*deus de deo*) and 'light from light' (*lumen de lumine*).[12] In the same way, the Holy Spirit is God but 'he proceeds from the Father' (*a patre procedit*).[13] What appears to be subordination, therefore, only means 'direction', so to speak, in the relation between the divine persons: only the Father is 'God' without qualification. The Son is 'from God', *de deo*. The Holy Spirit is *a deo* or *ex deo*. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, however, are equally 'God'.[14] The Scriptural foundation of this rule is not immediately discernable.

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[12]   2.2 (82).   [13]   2.5 (86).

[14]   To determine the genesis and the chronology of these two hermeneutical rules, Berrouard (1977) offers some observations on the basis of *Jo. eu. tr.* The first 35 treatises on the Gospel of John refer to 'Arians' some 16 times (p. 27), in a stereotyped way (p. 30), thus giving the impression that this heresy is not perceived as a real threat by Augustine, cf. *Jo. eu. tr.* 40.7 (CCL 36, 354). In this group of treatises, the rule applied in Christology is exactly the same as the first rule Augustine explains in *Trin.* 1.14 (44 f.) and *Trin.* 2.2 (81): the New Testament describes Christ as either equal or inferior to the Father according to whether it refers to his form of God or to his form of servant, cf. *Jo. eu. tr.* 18.2 (CCL 36, 180 f.) (Berrouard (1977), 44). However, within this uniform set, three treatises stand out, *Jo. eu. tr.* 20–22 (CCL 36, 202–232), precisely owing to the appearance in them of a more sophisticated explanation of New Testament controversial Christological passages which is the exact equivalent of the rule 'God from God' we encounter in book 2 of the *De Trinitate*. In *Jo. eu. tr.* 22.14 f. (CCL 36, 231), Augustine offers the following exegesis of John 5:30 ('*As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me*'): in this sentence the Son proclaims his equality to the Father, but he affirms that he is from the Father, and not from himself. Berrouard (pp. 42–46) explains the contrast between the set of *Jo. eu. tr.* 1–19 (CCL 36, 1–202); 23–35 (CCL 36, 232–323) and the set of *Jo. eu. tr.* 20–22 (CCL 36, 202–232) arguing that they belong to a different period and that between the writing of the first and the second set of treatises Augustine was confronted with a new array of Arian arguments. This indeed happened with the reading of an Arian sermon, which Augustine refuted in the *c. s. Ar.* written in 419. In this work, Augustine offers an exegesis of John 5:30 which encompasses both the Christological rules of *De Trinitate*: '*Dixit ergo Filius: Sicut audio, iudico*: siue ex humana subiectione, quia et Filius hominis est [*first rule*]; siue secundum illam incommutabilem simplicemque naturam, quae sic est Filii, ut tamen ei de Patre sit [*rule "God from God"*]', *c. s. Ar.* 14.9 (PL 42, 693); cf. also 17.9 (PL 42, 696). Therefore, from this and a whole array of many other arguments, Berrouard draws the conclusion that Augustine worked out his rule 'God from God' after 419 in his *c. s. Ar.* and that whereas the set of *Jo. eu. tr.* 1–19 (CCL 36, 1–202); 23–35 (CCL 36, 232–323) was written in 414, the set of *Jo. eu. tr.* 20–22 (CCL 36, 202–232) was written after 419, implying that the same should apply to book 2 of the *De Trinitate* (p. 45). The cogency of this conclusion is strengthened by another crucial element. It was through the reading of the Arian sermon in 419 that Augustine discovered how the 'Arians' claimed the inferiority of the Son arguing from his mission from the Father, cf. *c. s. Ar.* 4, 14 and 32 (PL 42, 686, 693 f. and 704 f.) (p. 32 and pp. 757 f.). Thus, whereas in the first set of *Jo. eu. tr.* (1–19; 23–35), Augustine interprets the sending of the Son as his Incarnation (cf. *Jo. eu. tr.* 23.13 (CCL 36, 242); 26.19 (CCL 36, 268 f.) etc.), in the *Jo. eu. tr.* 21.17 (CCL 36, 222) we find an explanation of the sending of the Son which interprets it in terms of his inseparability with the Father: '*Ecce, inquit aliquis, missus est Filius; et maior est Pater, quia misit. . . . Pater autem qui misit Filium, non recessit a Filio. Ipsum Dominum audi dicentem: Ecce ueniet hora, ut unusquisque discedat ad sua, et me solum relinquatis: sed non solus sum, quia Pater mecum est. Quomodo eum misit cum quo uenit? quomodo eum misit a quo non recessit? Alio loco dixit: Pater autem in me manens facit opera sua. Ecce in illo est, ecce operatur. Non recessit a misso mittens, quia missus et mittens unum sunt.*' Cf. also Berrouard (1988), 467–471 and 485 f.

In fact, it results not only from some passages in particular, but from the whole scriptural material concerning the issue of 'missions' (*missiones*), which can be summed up as follows: in the New Testament the sending (*missio*, from *mittere*, 'send') of the Son takes place in the Incarnation, whereas the sending of the Holy Spirit is said to have happened at Pentecost.[15] As for the Father, he is never said to have been sent. This scriptural material raises some questions:

(i) why is the sending of the Son and of the Holy Spirit said to have occurred only at the Incarnation and at Pentecost, when Scripture refers to their manifestation in the economy of salvation even before these events (cf., for example, for the Holy Spirit, his role in the Incarnation of Jesus, his manifestation at Jesus' baptism etc.)?[16]

(ii) why is the Father never said to have been sent, when he also manifested himself personally in the history of salvation (cf., for example, the baptism of Jesus and the transfiguration)?[17]

(iii) is the relation of sender to sent—of *mittens* to *missi*—which exists between the Father on one side and the Son and the Holy Spirit on the other side, the sign of the superiority of the Father and the inferiority of Son and Holy Spirit and hence of the fact that the latter are not God in exactly the same sense as the Father is God?[18]

Before he answers these questions, however, Augustine needs to deal with the issue of the revelation of the Trinity in the Old Testament. This question is occasioned by the anti-'Arian' polemical context of these books. Scripture reveals the immutability of God (Wisd. 7.27) and his invisibility (1 Tim. 1.17 f. and 6.15 f.).[19] Some unspecified 'Arians', however, referred these attributes only to the Father on the pretext that whenever God manifested himself in the theophanies of the Old Testament it was through the Son. According to them, the Son is 'visible in himself' ('uisibilis per se ipsum') because even before the Incarnation he could appear to mortal eyes[20] and, as a result, is not God in exactly the same sense as the Father is God[21]. Against this view,

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[15] 2.11 (95).   [16] 3.3 (129 f.).   [17] 1.7 f. (35–37); 2.18 (103 ff.).
[18] 3.3 (128 f.).   [19] 2.14 (99).   [20] 2.15 (101).
[21] Barnes (2003), 333 and 336 f., traces back this argument especially to Palladius, the bishop of Ratiaria, condemned by the Council of Aquilaea (AD 381), cf. Meslin (1967), 85–92. In a fragment of a declaration by Palladius we find all the main tenets of the doctrine Augustine opposes in the *De Trinitate*:

There is the question of whether the Son is the invisible God. It is written of the Father: *No man has ever seen, nor can see* [1 Tim. 6:16] him; and similarly *The invisible, immortal and only God* [1 Tim. 6:17]; and *No one has seen God and lived* [Exod. 33:20]; and again *No one has ever seen God, the only-begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known* [John 1:18]. But about the Son it is said *We have seen his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father* [John 1:14]' and *God appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre* [Gen. 18:1]; and then there is the episode

Augustine embarks upon a detailed analysis of the accounts of theophanies in the Old Testament, with the aim of answering these two questions: (i) who did appear in the theophanies of the Old Testament: the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit? (ii) How did theophanies of the Old Testament happen?[22]

His answer to the first question is that if we adhere closely to what Scripture says, it is often impossible to attribute God's theophanies to any of the three persons in particular.[23] Sometimes, hints are given which, on the basis of the properties (*proprietates*) of each divine person revealed in the New Testament, allow the reader to conjecture that not only the Son, but also the Father or the Holy Spirit did appear. For example, the story of God strolling in the Garden of Eden and talking to Adam and Eve could be taken as a manifestation of the Father, since the voice from heaven in the New Testament (cf. Jesus's baptism and transfiguration) is attributed to the Father.[24] Or, just to give another example, when it is said that the tablets of the Law on Mount Sinai were written by the finger of God, why should this not be attributed to the Holy Spirit who is called the finger of God in the New Testament (reference to Luke 11:20 and Matt. 12:28)?[25]

Augustine's view that attribution of divine action to one person more than to another in the Old Testament can only be object of conjecture, has led some commentators to argue that in his understanding of the inseparability of divine action, the role played by one divine person in the economy of salvation could equally have been played by another. This would be the mark of the modalistic tendency of his Trinitarian thought.[26] *In reality, Augustine is simply saying that revelation of the Trinity only occurred with the Incarnation and Pentecost.* Whatever hints we might discover in the Old Testament, these can only be interpreted in the light of the New Testament and are often insufficient to attribute these manifestations to one of the divine persons in particular.

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with the blind man, who said *Where is the Son of God, that I may believe in him?* and the Son of God himself said in reply *He whom you would see, and to whom you would speak, I am that one* [John 9:36 f.]. (Gryson (1980), 290 f., English translation by Barnes (2003), 337).

However, the subordinationist interpretation of the theophanies of the Old Testament and the attribution of visibility to the Son as opposed to the invisibility of the Father was also part of a 'mainstream, authoritative tradition in Latin Trinitarian theology which allows for a subordinationist Christology for the sake of combating Modalism', Barnes (2003), 341, who, on the same page, gives the examples of Novatian and Tertullian, and concludes 'It is not simply anti-Nicene Homoians who understand the Son to be visible while the Father is invisible, it is the tradition' (p. 342).

[22] 2.13 (97 f.) and 3.3–5 (128–131).   [23] 2.18 (103 ff.).

[24] 2.18 (103).   [25] 2.26 (114 f.).

[26] Cf. Rahner (1966), 80 ff., and Gunton (1977), 42. The latter also attributes Augustine's treatment of the Old Testament theophanies to 'anti-Incarnational Platonism' (p. 34), and to 'a spiritualising tendency' which 'by losing the mediatorship of the Word at once distances God from the creation and flattens out the distinctions between the persons of the Trinity'.

Moreover, there is a fundamental difference between God's self-manifestation in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, highlighted through the second line of enquiry into this issue, namely that which tries to determine how the theophanies in the Old Testament happened. Theophanies happened 'by means of the creature made subject to him' ('per subiectam creaturam').[27] Augustine wonders whether it was through creatures created solely for that particular manifestation or through angels who made use of existing creaturely realities or finally through angels using their own 'bodies' which they can transform at will.[28] This point is discussed throughout the third book and is closed by the invitation not to pry too closely into the way angels use creaturely reality for the purpose of serving God's self-manifestation in these theophanies.[29] The only important conclusion to be retained is that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equally invisible[30] and that the crucial difference between God's self-revelation in the two testaments is that 'the word which was then delivered through angels, is now delivered through the Son'[31] and that the whole Old Testament is a prophecy of God's full self-manifestation in Christ through the Holy Spirit.[32]

II. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The anti-'Arian' exposition of the mystery of the Trinity can be considered, we have said, the outer layer of Augustine's argument in this initial section of the *De Trinitate*. We have outlined the way this outer layer is unfolded through the first three books and to fully appreciate the complexity of its outcome in the fourth book, we need to highlight a less explicit, but equally fundamental layer of the argument of the treatise. This inner layer is less explicit because it is introduced almost casually in the course of the exegesis of the passages from the New Testament in book 1, with the sole apparent aim of upholding the divinity of the Son. In reality, book 4 will show that this topic launched so offhandedly is crucial for the exposition of the mystery of the Trinity. This inner layer deals with the way we know God. We will attempt an analytical examination of this inner layer shortly. For the present sequential account, a simple outline of Augustine's line of reasoning will be enough.

The sentence of 1 Corinthians 15:28 '*And when all things shall be subjected to him, then the Son himself shall also be made subject to the one who subjected*

[27] Cf. 2.35 (126) and *passim*.   [28] 3.4 (130).
[29] 3.21 (149 f.).   [30] 3.21 f. (150).
[31] 3.22 (151): 'tunc autem per angelos, nunc per filium sermo factus est'.
[32] 3.26 (156 f.).

all things to him, that God may be all in all' is among the apparently subor-
dinationist passages of the New Testament which have been used to deny the
Son's full divinity. Just as he does with the other passages, Augustine suggests
an alternative interpretation which, in this particular case, seems slightly far-
fetched at first: Christ's handing over of the kingdom to the Father means
that Christ will lead the just who now live through faith to the contemplation
or vision of God face to face.[33] This explanation is not occasional, but is
developed and restated through the whole final section of the first book, over
several pages.[34] The relation between faith and vision introduced here does in
fact allow Augustine to define the terms of the issue of knowledge of God. How
do we know God the Trinity? Right from the first formulation of this question,
Augustine already points to the answer which he will fully unfold later on, that
is Christ.

Thus, even as he embarks upon an apparently detached exposition of
the Trinitarian mystery resorting to the categories of equality, inseparability,
consubstantiality, invisibility, and immutability, Augustine already prepares
his reader for the necessary change of perspective needed when the object
of this 'exposition', the object of knowledge, is God himself. He does so in
several ways. Added to the relation between faith and vision just mentioned,
there is the role played by invisibility in the argument of the divinity of the
Son and the Holy Spirit. By arguing that invisibility is an essential attribute
of God, Augustine is already asking a fundamental question of theologi-
cal epistemology: *how can the essentially invisible i.e. unknowable God make
himself known to us? How does God preserve his invisibility and immutabil-
ity, that is his freedom, as he makes himself visible and enters into mutable
history?*

Then, the same epistemological issue underlies the discussion on theopha-
nies: even when Augustine seems only intent on upholding the divinity of
the Son and of the Holy Spirit, his real concern is the way in which God
revealed himself in the Old Testament. What is the difference between his
Old Testament theophanies and the Incarnation? How does God make himself
known? On the epistemological side of the issue of theophanies, it is also worth
noticing something else: Augustine does not think that in the Old Testament
God makes himself known through creation because creation would have an

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[33] 1.16 (49). Augustine owes this exegesis of 1 Cor. 15:28 to Hilary's *De Trinitate* XI.39 (CCL
62/A, 566), 'Tradet enim Filius deo regnum eos quos uocauit in regnum, quibus et beatitudinem
sacramenti huius spopondit dicens: *Beati mundi corde, quoniam ipsi deum uidebunt*' ('The Son
shall deliver to the Father, as his kingdom, those whom he has called into his kingdom, to whom
also he has promised the blessedness of the mystery *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see
God*', quoted by Barnes (2003), 339).

[34] 1.15–18 (46–55); 20–21 (56–59); 28–31 (69–79).

intrinsic capacity to signify him.[35] His point is rather that, being the Lord of creation, God has the power to use creation to reveal his will to creatures, as we shall see in more detail later on. It should never be forgotten that Augustine is talking about '*theo*-phanies', i.e. God's self-manifestation, and that these theophanies are miracles.[36]

III. THE INSEPARABILITY OF SOTERIOLOGY AND REVELATION

Only in the fourth book, the apparently detached and neutral exposition of the Trinitarian mystery (what we have provisionally labelled the outer layer of the argument) and the issue of knowledge of God (the inner layer) meet together and their link is fully disclosed. Even setting aside for one moment the prologue of the fourth book added at the time of the final editing,[37] the change of tone, pace, intensity in the argument is striking. Detachment and neutrality disappear in the sudden and dramatic confrontation with a question which could be rendered as follows: '*Anyway, why did God want to make himself known in the first place?*'

In the fourth book Augustine makes clear that the dependence of the doctrine of the Trinity on God's self-manifestation is the consequence of a fundamental soteriological point, namely the identity between God's self-revelation and the reconciliation accomplished through Christ in the Holy Spirit. As a result, the exposition of the Trinitarian mystery needs to take into account Incarnation and soteriology, needs to talk about sin, Christ's sacrifice, faith, and love. In its simplest terms, the argument goes as follows: if God made himself known to us, it was because we were unable to know him by ourselves. Our inability to know God is the consequence of our separation from him and from the happiness (*beatitudo*) and truth which can only be found in

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[35] Hanby (2003), 32. He refers to Lewis Ayres's argument that 'because we cannot any longer perceive God through those things which were made in the Word, the heavens and the earth, the Incarnate Christ provides "smaller" signs and testimonies which will enable us to move to the bigger signs and testimonies (the structure of the Incarnation)', Ayres (1998), 125, quoted in Hanby (2003), 205 n. 171. Cf. also Daniels (1977), 48, 'the visible things of creation make known the invisible'.

[36] Cf. 3.19 (146): 'Sed his ut dicere coeperam exceptis, alia sunt illa quae quamuis ex eadem materia corporali ad aliquid tamen diuinitus annuntiandum nostris sensibus admouentur, quae proprie miracula et signa dicuntur, nec in omnibus quae nobis a domino deo annuntiantur ipsius dei persona suscipitur.'

[37] The limits of this prologue are difficult to detect precisely, but should on the whole correspond to 4.1 (159 f.).

him.[38] This sinful situation is variously described as pride (*superbia*), despair (*desperatio*),[39] covetousness (*cupiditas*),[40] and blindness.[41] Through his self-manifestation God wanted to persuade us of what sort of people we are that he loves (*quales dilexerit nos*), i.e. of our sinful condition and our need for his love, and of how much he loved us (*quantum nos diligeret*), so as to heal simultaneously our pride and our despair.[42] At heart, this is what Augustine has in mind even when he seems to be pursuing only an apparently uncommitted exposition of the Trinitarian mystery. The exposition of Trinitarian doctrine can only be an echo of God's own self-exposition and cannot even for a moment, even provisionally make abstraction from the consequences of our sinfulness on knowledge of God. In other terms, without Christ's soteriological and epistemological mediation, in the Holy Spirit, no knowledge of God, no union with God, no exposition of the Trinitarian mystery is conceivable. Hence the polemic of a good portion of the fourth book against any form of soteriological or epistemological mediation other than Christ's[43] and even more vehemently against the pretension of those who thought they did not need any mediation at all.[44]

In this context, Augustine brings the discussion on missions to its resolution. Their nature can only be grasped in the light of their purpose. The sinfulness which prevented us from knowing God is summed up by Augustine in the covetousness (*cupiditas*) which weighs us down or turns us outside ourselves in an immoderate love for sensible and mutable realities, which he calls *temporalia*, 'temporal realities'. Therefore, God decided to purify us through these same *temporalia* which had become the occasion of our sin, in the Incarnation of Christ.[45]

Hence the issue of 'missions'. First of all, the only real mission is the Incarnation. Only in the Incarnation does God make himself known to us and thus bridge from his side the abyss between his immutability and our mutability.[46] The mission of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is entirely linked to that of the Son at the Incarnation. In fact, since the humanity of Christ is not revelatory as such, God makes himself known through love (*dilectio*) i.e. through the action of the Holy Spirit.[47]

Finally, Augustine also begins to answer the other questions raised by the issue of missions. In the first question he was asking why is the sending (*missio*)

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[38] 4.2 (161).   [39] Ibid.   [40] 4.4 (163) and 4.12 (177).

[41] 4.4 (163).   [42] 4.2 (161).

[43] The theme of Christ mediator between faith and *uisio* outlined in book 1 comes again to the surface in 4.11 (175 f.).

[44] Argument against purification through τελετάς in 4.13–19 (178–187) and against the auto-purification of philosophers in 4.20–24 (187–193).

[45] 4.24 (191 ff.).   [46] 4.25 (193 f.).   [47] 4.29 (199 ff.).

of the Son and of the Holy Spirit said to have occurred only at the Incarnation and at Pentecost, when Scripture refers to their manifestation in the economy of salvation even before these events (see, for example, in the case of the Holy Spirit, his role in the Incarnation of Jesus, his manifestation at Jesus's baptism etc.)?[48] The answer is that only with the Incarnation, with Christ's sacrifice on the cross, his resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit, do we have a revelation of inner-Trinitarian life. Only then, does the way God acts correspond to what he is in the deepest possible way. This is what Augustine means when he says that 'to be sent' means 'to be known', 'to be perceived'[49] and that 'Just as being born means for the Son his being from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to be from him.'[50]

This also answers the third question, concerning the relation of sender to sent (of *mittens* to *missi*) which exists between the Father on one side and the Son and the Holy Spirit on the other side: is this relation the sign of the superiority of the Father and of the inferiority of Son and Holy Spirit and hence of the fact that the latter are not God in exactly the same sense as the Father is God?[51] The answer simply is that the sending is the consequence of the 'rule God from God' we summed up above: the Son and the Holy Spirit can be sent because they are respectively *de deo* and *a deo* and their role in the economy corresponds to their identity in the inner-life of the Trinity.

This also is the answer to the second question, namely why is the Father never said to have been sent, when he too manifested himself personally in the history of salvation (see, for example, the baptism of Jesus and the transfiguration)?[52] Again according to the 'rule God from God', the Father is never said to have been sent because he alone is *deus* and not *de deo* or *a deo* in the inner-life of the Trinity.

IV. THE LOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL CATEGORIES
OF THE 'ARIANS'

The sequential link between the section going from book 1 to 4 and the following section of books 5 to 7 is their anti-'Arian' polemic. Books 1 to 4 as a whole are the discussion of the Scriptural passages which had been used to deny the divinity of the Son. Their correct interpretation required not only the

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[48] 3.3 (129).   [49] 4.28 (198).
[50] 4.29 (199. Trans. Hill, 174): 'Sicut enim natum esse est filio a patre esse, ita mitti est filio cognosci quod ab illo sit. Et sicut spiritui sancto donum dei esse est a patre procedere, ita mitti est cognosci quod ab illo procedat.'
[51] 3.3 (129).   [52] 1.7 f. (35); 2.18 (103 ff.).

procedure which had become classical in the Trinitarian controversy, that is to provide an alternative orthodox explanation of these passages; it also called for the elaboration of some fundamental rules of theological hermeneutics based on Christology and soteriology. 'Arians' however, especially those belonging to the second generation (sometimes called 'Eunomians'), had developed another set of polemical arguments to support their interpretation of Scripture. This other set of polemical arguments was based on logical and ontological categories and designed to disprove the 'consubstantial' (*homoousios*) which had slowly become the watchword of 'Nicene' orthodoxy. Therefore, having dealt with the controversial passages from Scripture in books 1 to 4, Augustine embarks upon the discussion of this other set of arguments.

This explains why, with this new section, we have the impression that Augustine goes back to the outer layer of his argument, that of a detached and apparently uncommitted exposition of the Trinitarian mystery, leaving behind the issue of knowledge of God and its soteriological connotations. The argument of these books seems confined to the discussion on the correct application of logical and ontological categories to Trinitarian doctrine and of the right terminology for the designation of what is one and what is three in God. From the outset, however, some considerations might help us to perceive the other concerns hidden behind the polemic against 'Arians'.

We have seen that the revelation of the identity, divinity, and properties of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is linked to the issue of missions, hence to soteriology. Revelation and soteriology are linked to each other for two reasons: first of all because sin does not allow us to know God, and secondly because the way God saves us is the enactment of his own identity. Therefore, our sequential analysis of this new section going from book 5 to 7 has to pay attention to the relation between the account of consubstantiality which emerges from it and the account of consubstantiality which was presupposed by the link between soteriology and revelation of the Trinity established in the previous book. To reformulate this issue the other way round, we have to examine the extent to which the understanding of the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit presupposed by the economy of salvation in books 1 to 4 corresponds to the polemical approach to the issue of consubstantiality in books 5 to 7.

The main line of these three books is the discussion of the formula elaborated during the Trinitarian controversy: '$\mu\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ $o\mathring{v}\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ $\tau\rho\epsilon\hat{\iota}\varsigma$ $\mathring{v}\pi o\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, which in Latin is one essence, three substances (*unam essentiam tres substantias*)'.[53] Thus, the first half of the fifth book discusses the use of essence ($o\mathring{v}\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$),[54] and the second half that of person (*persona*, the Latin word chosen instead of the more equivocal 'substance' to translate the Greek $\mathring{v}\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$).[55] This

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[53] 5.10 (217).   [54] 5.3–9 (207–216).   [55] 5.10–17 (216–227).

Trinitarian formula seems then to disappear, but in reality it remains in the background of the discussion and comes to the surface again in the middle of the seventh book to be discussed until the end of the same book.[56]

The discussion on substance can be summed up as follows.

First of all, the topic is set in an anti-'Arian' polemical framework. Ontological vocabulary of substance, accidents, and the distinction between what is said substantially (*ad se*) and what is said relatively (*ad aliquid*) of God comes from the 'Arians' and forces those who want to fight them to argue along the same lines.[57] They use these categories to argue for the diversity of substance between Father and Son. Therefore, Augustine has to determine which is the proper way of using vocabulary of substance and accidents and the distinction *ad se/ad aliquid* for God.[58] Then, in most of the sixth book, starting from the subordinationist interpretation of the sentence from 1 Corinthians 1.24, '*Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*', Augustine establishes how attributes must be applied to God and discusses the equality and consubstantiality of the Father and the Son.[59] This is applied to the Holy Spirit as well, but with a significant change of perspective which shall be discussed in detail in our analytical examination of the issue of consubstantiality.[60] Finally, the issue of consubstantiality is taken up again at the beginning of the seventh book on the basis of the question left open in the sixth book: is *deus* to be predicated of each person or of the whole Trinity instead?[61] The outcome of the argument is that each person is the 'substance'—i.e. God-[62] and that the three together are 'the one substance', i.e. the one God. Yet within the unity of this substance there is a 'direction' (*de deo*). This whole point is made through the attribute of wisdom (*sapientia*). In virtue of God's simplicity, everything we say about substance is true about any of his attributes, including that of wisdom. Thus each person is wisdom and yet the three together are one wisdom, but with a direction (i.e. the Son is 'wisdom from wisdom').[63]

The discussion of person—or ὑπόστασις—is also unfolded in the same wave-like form. In the fifth book, once he has discussed the issue of essence (οὐσία), Augustine takes up that of hypostasis (ὑπόστασις),[64] quickly replaced by what had become its Latin equivalent, person. Augustine does not hide

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[56] 7.7–12 (255–267).

[57] 'Arian' positions are quoted three times in 5.4 (208 f.) and 5.7 (211 f.).

[58] 5.3–9 (207–216).   [59] 6.1–6 (228–235).   [60] 6.7 (235 f.).

[61] 7.1 (244): 'Iam nunc quaeramus diligentius quantum dat deus quod paulo ante distulimus', referring to 6.6 (234), 'quod diligentius discutiendum est.'

[62] Cf. Tertullian, *Aduersus Praxean* 7.9 (*Fontes Christiani*, Freiburg 2001, 128) where the *substantia filii* is his *persona*: 'Quaecumque ergo substantia sermonis fuit, illam dico personam et illi nomen fili uindico et, dum filio agnosco, secundum a patre defendo.'

[63] 7.1–3 (244–250).   [64] 5.10 (217).

his deep reluctance to resort to an ontological category to encompass what is common to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He famously declares that 'We say three persons, not in order to say that precisely, but in order not to be reduced to silence,'[65] and spends most of the rest of the section devoted to person trying to determine the content of this term. The driving question is *Quid tres?*, 'Three what?'. The determination of the content of the notion of person calls for the discussion of the properties (*proprietates*) of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Since the determination of the property (*proprium*) of the Holy Spirit is the most problematic, a large section of the fifth book deals with it.[66] The issue of the property of each person is taken up again in the sixth book, with a quotation of Hilary of Poitiers and Augustine's discussion of it.[67] Finally, Augustine resumes the question in the middle of the seventh book and proceeds to a relentless criticism of the application of some metaphysical categories to the mystery of the Trinity, especially that of person.[68]

Before we bring to an end this sequential account of the first seven books of the *De Trinitate*, we need to highlight some more lines of enquiry which go through the whole section and attest to its unity. First of all, we have seen that the equality and the inseparability of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit resulting from their unity of substance were formulated right from the outset in the first book[69] and remain visibly present behind the discussion of other topics in books 1 to 3. Then they become the central topic of the section going from books 5 to 7. Ought we hastily to suppose that this line disappears in the fourth book? In reality, it remains at the centre of the fourth book as well, even though from a different viewpoint. The fourth book is wholly centred around Christ as 'one', *unum*, and contains a reference to Father and Son's unity of will and unity of substance. This point will play a crucial role in our analytical account of Augustine's notion of consubstantiality and of his pneumatology.[70] An echo of this conception of unity of the Trinity as unity of will comes to the surface again in the middle of the sixth book.[71] The second thread cutting across books 1 to 7 concerns the issue of missions. An echo of it appears in the middle of the discussion of the divine attribute of wisdom in the seventh book.[72] In this passage, Augustine explains that, through the Incarnation, the Son, who is 'wisdom from wisdom' (*sapientia de sapientia*), becomes for us 'wisdom coming from God' (*sapientia a deo*). That which he becomes for us, 'wisdom coming from God', is identical to that which constitutes his relation with the Father, namely to be 'wisdom from wisdom'.

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[65] 5.10 (217. Trans. Hill, 196): 'dictum est tamen tres personae non ut illud diceretur sed ne taceretur'.

[66] 5.12–17 (218–227).　　[67] 6.11–12 (241 ff.).　　[68] 7.7–12 (255–267).

[69] 1.7 (35).　　[70] 4.12 (176 ff.).　　[71] 6.7 (235 f.).　　[72] 7.4 f. (251 f.).

V. CONCLUSION

This sequential account of the first seven books of the *De Trinitate* illustrates the heuristic concern which presides over the order Augustine follows in the unfolding of the Trinitarian mystery. The reader is constantly appealed to[73] and Augustine does not set out all the aims he pursues explicitly: he only declares some of them, leaving the others, often those which most matter to him, gradually to emerge in the course of the exposition, sometimes, as we have seen, in a surprisingly casual way. The *De Trinitate* is shaped by this heuristic concern to such an extent that the reader will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to draw any real benefit from the treatise unless he actively plays the role imparted to him. Otherwise, he might see the interest of some of its sections, say for example for philosophical purposes, but he will be unable to grasp the overall architecture of the work.

This explains the difficulty we face as we bring this sequential account to a close in order to embark upon a more analytical approach to the *De Trinitate*. The attempt to restate Augustine's argument analytically can be compared to the rendering of a poem into prose: something is gained in terms of clarity, but at the cost of sacrificing poetic style. Unable to summon the same range of aesthetic experiences, prose leads the reader right to the outcome, or rather one or some of the possible outcomes intended by the poem and does not exert on him the same arresting and converting power. The version in prose only gives to the reader something to be understood, whereas poetry intended to offer him something to enjoy, Augustine would say *frui*: 'For the fulness of our happiness, beyond which there is none else, is this: to enjoy God the Trinity in whose image we were made.'[74] Having said that, some methodological precautions should allow us to pursue this attempt all the same and to reduce its disadvantages.

First of all, any analytical approach to a treatise as complex as the *De Trinitate* cannot confine itself to disentangling each line of enquiry and exhibiting them in a more linear form. In reality, choices about the order to be followed in the exposition of these lines of enquiry, more or less consciously, betray an interpretation concerning their hierarchy. Starting, for example, by determining Augustine's notion of consubstantiality from books 5 to 7 and then proceeding from there to Christology, soteriology, and pneumatology, could lead us to interpret the latter in the light of the former, thus subjecting Augustine's exegesis of scriptural passages to ontological categories which were

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[73] Cf. for example several times in 1.1–5 (27–34); 3.1 (127 f.) etc.

[74] 1.18 (52. Trans. Hill, 77, modified): 'Hoc est enim plenum gaudium nostrum quo amplius non est, frui trinitate deo ad cuius imaginem facti sumus.'

not intended for that purpose. Therefore, since an order in the analytical approach is both inevitable and potentially misleading, it is necessary to single out the most appropriate one for our purpose and to justify its suitability.

The sequential account of books 1 to 7 has revealed the crucial role of the fourth book, where the doctrine of the Trinity—the outer layer of the argument—and the issue of the knowledge of God—the inner layer—converge into the identification between reconciliation and revelation. In this book Christ appears as the only Mediator of reconciliation and revelation and the real presupposition of Augustine's argument up to that point. The same topic, although from a slightly different viewpoint, is resumed in an exactly parallel way in the middle of the second half of the treatise, in the thirteenth book. This leads us to postulate the centrality of Christology and soteriology in Augustine's approach to knowledge of God, to be established through a close analysis of books 4 and 13. Before this, however, we shall take up another important topic discussed in these two books, again in a strikingly parallel way, namely the polemic against philosophers, i.e. those who think they can reach or know God without the Mediator. The first chapter of our analytical approach to the first half of the *De Trinitate*, therefore, is devoted to Augustine's relation to philosophers (Chapter 3), whereas the following chapter takes up the relation of Christology and soteriology to knowledge of God (Chapter 4). The following step of our analysis shall determine the way Augustine elaborates his doctrine of the inner-life of the Trinity. This shall be the object of a chapter on his doctrine of revelation, that is of divine action in revelation (Chapter 5). Once Augustine's way of envisaging the transition between economic and immanent Trinity has been established, we shall be equipped to tackle Augustine's doctrine of the Holy Spirit from the whole treatise (and not just the first half of the *De Trinitate*) and, inseparably, his doctrine of the inner-life of the Trinity (Chapter 6). On the basis of Christology, soteriology, doctrine of revelation, and doctrine of the Holy Spirit, we shall be able to examine Augustine's use of ontological categories in his doctrine of the Trinity (Chapter 7) and then embark upon the second half of the treatise.

3

Augustine and Philosophers

I. KNOWLEDGE OF OUR ILLNESS

The preamble added to the fourth book of the *De Trinitate* at the time of the final editing of the treatise,[1] is one of these passages where Augustine leaves behind for a moment the distance which suits his pedagogical and carefully progressive method of exposition and opens his heart to his reader. We immediately guess that he is about to unveil some of his key thoughts.

He opposes two sciences: the first, described in slightly sarcastic terms, deals 'with earthly and celestial things', 'explores the course of stars', 'the foundations of the earth and the pinnacles of the sky' and is 'highly prized by the human race'; the other, despised by those who devote themselves to the first type of science, is the knowledge of ourselves, *nosse semetipsos*, which is identified with knowledge of our illness (*infirmitas*).[2] The need for conversion is suggested when Augustine states that we have to value the latter kind of science above the former, *praeponere scientiam scientiae*, and describes this process in terms of love: awoken by the warmth of the Holy Spirit, in the love for God, and in the light which comes from God, we find out about our sickness (*aegritudo*). He is not referring to theological science in particular. His criticism of philosophers—which includes all kinds of academic or scientific activity, even those we would consider more objective or neutral today, like, for example, natural sciences—makes clear that he is aiming at scientific method and attitude as such. Those who boast in the first kind of science underestimate one of the critical marks of our condition of knowing subjects in this life: our illness (*infirmitas*), our sickness (*aegritudo*), betrayed by the fact that this kind of science, according to Paul, puffs up. It is only too easy to predict the condescending smile of a scientist or a philosopher hearing Augustine's own idea of what a proper scientific attitude should be: 'find relief in weeping and imploring God over and over again to take pity and pull us altogether out

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[1] *ep.* 174 (CCL 50, 26).
[2] *Infirmitas* could also be translated 'weakness'. In view, however, of Augustine's notion of the seriousness of sin, the stronger translation 'illness' is more appropriate, as it is confirmed by the word *aegritudo* which occurs in this same passage. Cf. also 13.14 (400 f.).

of our pitiful condition', 'pray with all confidence, on the basis of the free gratuitous pledge of health received through the one and only saviour and enlightener granted to us by God'.[3] Tears, repentance, prayer, trust in Jesus Christ: these are the conditions of a science which does not yield pride, but stems from the charity which builds up.[4]

Augustine's striking ambition is not just to explore the way God makes himself known, but to shake the foundations of the common received epistemology altogether. He knows that all scientific endeavour is susceptible to vanity and the constant temptation of preferring vain images (*phantasmata*) and fictions (*figmenta*) to the truth.

II. PHILOSOPHERS ON HAPPINESS

Augustine does not confine himself to general assertions about the illness, the depravity (*prauita*s)[5] and the act of turning away from divine light (*auersio*)[6] of the human heart and about their consequences on the knowledge of God. He also delights in providing evidence for this in frequently ironical sections devoted to philosophers. The point he tries to make through criticism of philosophers is not only that our illness does not allow us to reach happiness and truth, but that any unaided human attempt to strive after them or still yet pretending to have attained them, if anything, makes the situation worse, because to illness it adds pride and self-delusion. This is developed in two parallel sections of the books devoted to Christology, books 4 and 13. We start with the section devoted to the views of philosophers on happiness in book 13,[7] where methods and procedures are very similar to those of the *De ciuitate dei*, explicitly referred to.[8] He aims in particular at Stoic philosophers and piles up quotations from Cicero and Terence to state his case against them.

First of all, these philosophers, each in their own way, constructed their own notion of the happy life. It was a fiction, more a name than a reality: 'As long as they despair of immortality, without which true happiness is impossible, they will look for, or rather make up, any kind of thing that may be called,

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[3] 4.1 (159. Trans. Hill, 152).

[4] 4.1 (159): 'hunc ita egentem ac dolentem scientia non inflat quia caritas aedificat'. Cf. the statement in 4.31 (204): 'Quod si difficile intelligitur, mens fide purgetur magis magisque abstinendo a peccatis et bene operando et orando cum gemitu desideriorum sanctorum ut per diuinum adiutorium proficiendo et intellegat et amet.'

[5] 13.9 (393).   [6] 13.2 (382)   [7] 13.10–12 (394–399).

[8] 13.12 (398), quotation of *ciu. Dei* 12.20 (CCL 48, 376).

rather than really be, happiness in this life.'[9] Thus, the Stoic ideal of happiness prescribed that the philosopher, having accepted that evil and sufferings are inevitable in this life, bears them patiently. Is this a happy life, wonders Augustine? Who would bear any suffering if he had the possibility of avoiding pain altogether or doing whatever he wants? Can anyone be called happy who, despairing of ever being happy, simply tries to be bravely unhappy, 'prepared to take whatever adversity comes upon him and to bear it with equanimity'?[10] Since he cannot have what he wants, he bends his will to want that which happens to him. This attitude, for Augustine, is not heroic, but proud: 'That is the sum total, whether it makes you laugh or cry, of the happiness of proud mortals who boast that they live as they want because they bear patiently with what they do not want to happen to them.'[11]

In Augustine's eyes, however, the clearest sign of the artificiality and the failure of this ethical model is the absence of love. If to be happy consists in not wanting nor fearing anything, and only in trying to be equally prepared to welcome whatever might happen, this means that we have to be neutral with regard to happiness itself and neither wish nor shun it. But how can a way of life be considered happy if it is not desired, if it is not the object of love (*amor*)? Absence of love makes ethical life unintelligible:

But then this life can scarcely be the happy one if it does not merit the love of the man it is supposed to make happy. How can the life be happy which the happy man does not love? And how can he really love it if he does not care whether it flourishes or perishes? Unless perhaps the very virtues which we only love for the sake of happiness would dare to persuade us not to love happiness itself. If they do this, then we stop loving them too, when we no longer love the happiness for whose sake alone we loved the virtues.[12]

This criticism encapsulates one of the most important themes of the *De Trinitate*: without love, it is not possible to explain any human activity. This is as

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[9] 13.11 (396. Trans. Hill, 351): 'Sed qualiscumque beatitudo quae potius uocetur quam sit in hac uita quaeritur, immo uero fingitur, dum immortalitas desperatur sine qua uera beatitudo esse non potest.'

[10] 13.10 (395. Trans. Hill, 351): 'paratus excipere et aequo ferre animo quidquid aduersitatis acciderit.'

[11] Ibid.: 'Haec est tota, utrum ridenda an potius miseranda, superborum beatitudo mortalium gloriantium se uiuere ut uolunt quia uolentes patienter ferunt quae accidere sibi nolunt.'

[12] 13.11 (397. Trans. Hill, 352):

Sed nec ista beata est uita quae talis est ut quem beatum facit amore eius indigna sit. Quomodo enim est beata uita quam non amat beatus? Aut quomodo amatur quod utrum uigeat an pereat indifferenter accipitur? Nisi forte uirtutes quas propter solam beatitudinem sic amamus persuadere nobis audent ut ipsam beatitudinem non amemus. Quod si faciunt, etiam ipsas utique amare desistimus quando illam propter quam solam istas amauimus non amamus.

valid for ethics as it is for epistemology, which are inseparable in Augustine's mind. We only act out of love and the character of this love determines the moral value of our actions. Therefore, a philosophical system like that of Stoicism which keeps love out of the equation ends up by making human action absurd.[13]

The other element of the happiness of philosophers Augustine criticizes is related to the inherent condition of what makes a life happy, that is to say the fact that it has to be without end. Any attempt to locate happiness in our present mortal condition amounts to self-delusion.[14] Some philosophers have indeed guessed the immortality of the soul, but even this insight Augustine is not prepared to concede to them without some ironical comments: 'People have tried to work these things out by human reasoning, but it is the immortality of the soul alone that they have succeeded in getting to some notion of, and then only a few of them and with difficulty, and only if they have had plenty of brains and plenty of leisure and plenty of education in abstruse learning.'[15] The verdict on these attempts is peremptory: 'They never discovered a lasting, which is to say a true, life of happiness for this soul.'[16] Very significantly, the essential element for a true blessed life is the presence of the body, a truth only faith can make known to us: 'This faith of ours promises on the strength of divine authority, not of human argument, that the whole man, who consists of course of soul and body too, is going to be immortal, and therefore truly happy.'[17]

III. PHILOSOPHERS ON KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

An even more compelling criticism of philosophers can be found in the fourth book, where it fulfils exactly the same role as in the thirteenth book. The main theme of the book 4, as we shall see more in detail soon, concerns Christ's mediation, which Augustine opposes to its two main parodies, the first enacted by demons and the second by philosophers. After the section on demons, broadly organized around the idea of pagan worship and its

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[13] Cf. Hanby (2003), 'The modernity of Stoicism', 109–114, but also the whole chapter, 'The subtle triumph of Pelagianism', 106–133.

[14] 13.10 f. (394–398).   [15] 13.12 (398).

[16] 13.12 (398. Trans. Hill, 352): 'Cui tamen animae beatam uitam non inuenerunt stabilem, id est ueram.'

[17] 13.12 (398 f. Trans. Hill, 353): 'Fides autem ista totum hominem immortalem futurum, qui utique constat ex anima et corpore, et ob hoc uere beatum non argumentatione humana sed diuina auctoritate promittit.'

inability to purify,[18] a new section is devoted to philosophers, i.e. those who think that they can purify themselves and that they do not need any mediator at all.[19] The main charge against them is their pride, *superbia*. Just as, in book 13, the reproach against them was that they relied in their own strength (*uirtus*): 'the philosophers have all constructed their own happy lives as each has thought best, as though they could manage by their own virtue what they could not manage in their common condition of mortal men, namely to live as they would';[20] so, in book 4, they are guilty of the same proud self-sufficiency: 'there are some people who think that they can purify themselves for contemplating God and cleaving to him by their own power and strength of character, which means in fact that they are thoroughly defiled by pride'.[21] In both cases, this attitude is sinful, since it runs right against the confession that Christ is the only and necessary Mediator with regard to both happiness and contemplation. The theme of contemplation is one of those which, in the *De Trinitate*, designates the issue of the knowledge of God. The impossibility of reaching the contemplation or the sight of God by one's own strength means that no real knowledge of God is possible without Christ.

Indeed, Augustine is fond of quoting Romans 1:21 to say that philosophers have had some sort of knowledge of God '*through the things that have been made*'. On the basis, however, of his strong sense of the inseparability of knowledge and love, such knowledge does not count as *real* knowledge, as real science. In fact, our illness cannot be healed by simply trying to relate the objects of our science to God: this is not possible to us any more. In our present condition of illness (*infirmitas*) and depravity (*prauitas*), truth is taken captive by wickedness (*iniquitas*):

But the most eminent heathen philosophers, who *were able to behold the invisible things of God, being understood through the things that have been made* (Rom 1.20), philosophised nonetheless without the mediator, that is without the man Christ, as they neither believed the prophets that he would come nor the apostles that he had. And so *they held on to the truth*, as it is said of them, *in wickedness* (Rom 1.18).[22]

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[18] 4.13–19 (178–187).   [19] 4.20–24 (187–193).

[20] 13.10 (394. Trans. Hill, 350): 'Nunc uero fecerunt quidem sibi philosophi sicut eorum cuique placuit uitas beatas suas ut quasi propria uirtute possent quod communi mortalium conditione non poterant, sic scilicet uiuere ut uellent.'

[21] 4.20 (187. Trans. Hill, 167): 'Sunt autem quidam qui se putant ad contemplandum deum et inhaerendum deo uirtute propria posse purgari, quos ipsa superbia maxime maculat.'

[22] 13.24 (416. Trans. Hill, 363):

Illi autem praecipui gentium philosophi qui *inuisibilia dei per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspicere potuerunt*, tamen quia sine mediatore, id est sine homine Christo philosophati sunt, quem nec uenturum prophetis nec uenisse apostolis crediderunt, *ueritatem detinuerunt* sicut de illis dictum est *in iniquitate*.

Without Christ, even if in theory it is possible to know God because he is the creator and as such he is objectively immanent in his creation, we do not recognize him as the Lord and instead of being led to God through created realities, we transform them into idols:

Established as they were at this lowest level of things, they could not but look for some middle level things, by which to reach the topmost things they had understood; and in this way they fell into the hands of fraudulent demons, who brought it about that *they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image, of corruptible man and birds and quadrupeds and creeping things* (Rom 1.23). Such were the shapes of the idols they set up or worshipped.[23]

This passage is the best introduction to one aspect of the section on philosophers of book 4, in which, at first, Augustine seems to make generous concessions to their ability to know: they have indeed been able 'to direct the keen gaze of their intellect (*acies mentis*) beyond everything created and to attain, in however small a measure, the light of the immutable truth (*lux incommutabilis ueritatis*)'[24] or the 'sublime and unchanging substance'[25] or even the 'eternity of the creator', through the things he has created.[26] However, a closer analysis of these assertions reveals that, in Augustine's eyes, this does not count as real science (*scientia*) because it is severed from wisdom (*sapientia*). Again, this amounts to saying that it is not a real knowledge of God.

Philosophers have indeed been right to argue that all temporal realities have been made according to 'eternal ideas' (*aeternae rationes*), but this does not mean that they were able to know *in* these ideas.[27] This is a way of restating the argument already mentioned above: philosophers do not possess real science because they do not know through wisdom itself (*in ipsa sapientia*), they do not really know even what seems to be within their reach in the mutable and temporal realm of senses because they cannot contemplate the eternal ideas (*aeternae rationes*) of these things in God himself. Of course, some sort of science can indeed be attributed to philosophers. However, it is the result of the study of natural history or the accumulation of empirical experience:

[23] 13.24 (416. Trans. Hill, 363):

Non potuerunt enim in his rebus infirmis constituti nisi quaerere aliqua media per quae ad illa quae intellexerant sublimia peruenirent, atque ita in deceptores daemones inciderunt per quos factum est *ut immutarent gloriam incorruptibilis dei in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et uolucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium.* In talibus enim formis etiam idola instituerunt siue coluerunt.

[24] 4.20 (187).   [25] 4.21 (188. Trans. Hill, 167): 'praecelsa incommutabilis substantia'.
[26] 4.23 (190. Trans. Hill, 169): 'creatoris aeternitas'.
[27] 4.21 (188. Trans. Hill, 167 f.): 'But just because they can show very truly by the most persuasive arguments and convincing proofs that all temporal things happen according to eternal ideas, does it follow that they have been able to inspect these ideas themselves (*in ipsis rationibus perspicere*)?'

'Surely they have not sought the truth about these matters via that unchanging wisdom, but by studying the natural history of times and places, and by believing what others have discovered and recorded.'[28] No surprise, therefore, if philosophers find fault with Christians for their belief in the resurrection of the flesh and in a happiness which is for the after-life: their proud and idolatrous minds are neither capable (*idonei*) to know through wisdom itself, nor, like the prophets of the Old Testament, to welcome these things through revelations.[29]

Again, the assertion that the Word is the 'only word of God' (*unum uerbum dei*) in whom everything was created and that he is the life and light in whom we all live, move, and have our being[30] must not be isolated from the trenchant sentence which follows, encapsulating all the main terms Augustine uses to label epistemological sinfulness, i.e. *prauitas, cupiditas, infidelitas* and blindness: 'But *the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it* (Jn 1.5). The darkness is the foolish minds of men, blinded by depraved desires and unbelief.'[31] The very Augustinian theme of enlightenment (*illuminatio*) needs to be handled cautiously. In the same passage just quoted, it depends on the Incarnation and on the cleansing (*mundatio*) resulting from the blood of Christ and the humility of God:

Our enlightenment is to participate in the Word, that is, in the *life which is the light of men* (Jn 1.4). Yet we were absolutely incapable of such participation and quite unfit for it, so unclean were we through sin, so we had to be cleansed. Furthermore, the only thing to cleanse the wicked and the proud is the blood of the just man and the humility of God: to contemplate God, which by nature we are not, we would have to be cleansed by him who became what by nature we are and what by sin we are not.[32]

Because of the inseparability between knowledge and love, our sinfulness is as damaging with regard to happiness as it is to the possibility of knowing God, i.e. to reach what really counts as knowledge of God. The sentence just quoted anticipates the next step of our analysis of Augustine's argument: only

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[28] 4.21 (188. Trans. Hill, 168): 'Nonne ista omnia non per illam incommutabilem sapientiam sed per locorum ac temporum historiam quaesierunt et ab aliis experta atque conscripta crediderunt?'

[29] 4.23 (190).   [30] 4.3 (162 f.).

[31] 4.4 (163. Trans. Hill, 154): 'Sed *lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt.* Tenebrae autem sunt stultae mentes hominum praua cupiditate atque infidelitate caecatae.'

[32] 4.4 (163 f. Trans. Hill, 154 f.):

Inluminatio quippe nostra participatio uerbi est, illius scilicet uitae quae *lux* est *hominum*. Huic autem participationi prorsus inhabiles et minus idonei eramus propter immunditiam peccatorum; mundandi ergo eramus. Porro iniquorum et superborum una mundatio est sanguis iusti et humilitas dei, ut ad contemplandum deum quod natura non sumus per eum mundaremur factum quod natura sumus et quod peccato non sumus.

in Christ is our sinfulness healed and the possibility of the knowledge of God, i.e. of acknowledgement of God as the Lord, restored.

* * * *

Before going further, however, a little pause in our analysis of the *De Trinitate* is needed, to submit our findings to some indispensable verification. Our assumption that only a straightforward theological reading of this treatise can grasp its unity, through the many variations introduced in the unfolding of the main argument, might have led us to overemphasize Augustine's critical attitude towards philosophy, particularly with regard to knowledge of God. What do we make, then, of the rather optimistic stance towards philosophy in some of Augustine's other works? Is not Augustine even thought to have attributed knowledge of the Trinity to philosophers, contrary to what has emerged from our inquiry into the *De Trinitate*?[33]

IV. PHILOSOPHY IN AUGUSTINE'S THOUGHT

Let us try, then, to trace briefly the evolution of Augustine's attitude towards philosophy, throughout his writings and his life, focusing especially on the aspects of this issue related to our findings in the *De Trinitate*. For this purpose, it is preferable to leave aside those philosophers Augustine openly and sternly criticized because of their hedonism, their materialism or their atheism, like the Cynics, Epicureans, and to a certain extent even the Stoics.[34] We shall concentrate on those he labelled 'Platonists'[35] or whom he related to Plato, *the* philosopher of the antiquity,[36] in general terms.

His praises of Plato and Plotinus right from his oldest extant writing, the *Contra Academicos* (AD 386) up to the *De ciuitate Dei*, completed some forty years afterwards, are well known and we shall look at them closely in a moment.[37] In apologetic writings like the *De uera religione* (AD 390/391), he could go as far as to state:

[33] Rahner (1966), 86.
[34] Cf., for example, *ciu. Dei* 5.20 (CCL 47, 156) and 14.2 (CCL 48, 414) for Epicureans; 14.20 (CCL 48, 442) for Cynics; cf. also *Trin* 10.8 (322).
[35] *conf.* 7.13 (CCL 27, 101).
[36] Van Fleteren (1999a), 651. He observes that 'Plato and its cognates occur 252 times in Augustine's works.'
[37] *c. Acad.* 3.xvii.37–xviii.41 (CCL 29, 57–60); *ciu. Dei* 8 (CCL 47, 216–249).

Thus, if those men had been able to live this life again with us, they would have seen immediately to whose authority people could more easily turn for such advice, and, with a few changes here and there in their words and assertions, they would have become Christians, as indeed several Platonists have done in recent times and our own days.[38]

In the same way, in his letter to the enlightened pagan Volusianus—someone he was evidently keen to win over to Christianity and whose honesty he valued[39]—he is prepared to acknowledge preparations to Christ's teaching (*magisterium*) not only in the writings of the prophets, but also in those of philosophers and poets:

He [Christ] came as a source of teaching in order that, once his authority became present also in the flesh, it might confirm those truths that were usefully uttered here before, not only by the holy prophets who spoke only the truth but also by the philosophers and the poets and authors of such literature who mingled many truths with errors, as no one can doubt.[40]

Even at the height of the censorious mood of his late years, while regretting his praise of Plato, of Platonic philosophers and of Academics,[41] he is still prepared to acknowledge where Plato was right: 'Plato, indeed, did not err in saying that there is an intelligible world if we are willing to consider not the word, which in that connection is unusual in ecclesiastical usage, but the thing itself.'[42]

   The role 'Platonism' played in Augustine's life to extricate him from scepticism and Manichaean materialism is one of the main reasons of such a positive evaluation. To illustrate this role, we shall concentrate on Augustine's struggle against scepticism.

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   [38] *uera rel.* 4.7 (CCL 32, 192. Trans. Hill, 34):

Itaque si hanc uitam illi uiri nobiscum rursum agere potuissent uiderent profecto cuius auctoritate facilius consuleretur hominibus, et paucis mutatis uerbis atque sententiis Christiani fierent, sicut plerique recentiorum nostrorumque temporum Platonici fecerunt.

Echoed in *ep*. 118.21 (CSEL 34/2, 685), to Dioscorus: 'paucis mutatis quae christiana improbat disciplina', Madec (1989), 71.
   [39] Lancel (1999), 445.
   [40] *ep*. 137.12 (CSEL 44, 112. Trans. Teske, vol. II/2, 219):

Magisterium quidem ut ea quae hic ante dicta sunt utiliter uera, non solum a prophetis sanctis, qui omnia uera dixerunt, uerum etiam a philosophis atque ipsis poetis, et cuiuscemodi auctoribus litterarum quos multa uera falsis miscuisse quis ambigat?.

   [41] *retr*. 1.iv.3 (CCL 57, 13 ff.).
   [42] *retr*. 1.iii.2 (CCL 57, 12. Trans. Bogan, 14): 'Nec quidem Plato in hoc errauit, quia esse mundum intelligibilem dixit, si non uocabulum, quod ecclesiasticae consuetudini in re illa inusitatum est, sed ipsam rem uelimus attendere.'

i. The struggle against scepticism

Too rigid an approach to Augustine's intellectual life in terms of 'conversions' from one philosophical system to the other can lead to the neglect of fundamental factors of continuity. The most pervasive of these factors, his belief in Christ, will be the object of a detailed analysis later on. For the time being, due attention is to be paid to his keenness to relate—with the necessary demarcations—the different stages of his intellectual evolution to his earliest and foundational discovery of philosophy, through the reading of Cicero's *Hortensius*, in 372–373. Beside the well-known description of this experience in the *Confessions*[43] (397–401), this discovery is already mentioned in the *De beata uita*[44] (386–387) and much later in the *De Trinitate* (probably after 420 for book 14).[45] The scepticism of the *Academia* did not take hold of him only at the time of the crisis of his Manichaean infatuation (early 380s), but had already been instilled into his mind through his first contact with Cicero and did not leave him until he firmly grappled with it after his conversion in 386. In the *De beata uita*, for example, he regrets the time he fell under the spell of the Manichaean superstition, but he acknowledges that even then he 'did not agree with them' ('non adsentiebar').[46]

When Augustine is finally able to shake this intellectual poison off, we discover how more deeply ingrained in his thought it had been than even Manichaean materialism, and the extent to which this liberation sets free fundamental epistemological concerns which will guide his research for the rest of his life.

From the fourteenth book of the *De Trinitate*, we learn that the *Hortensius* taught Augustine to look for the aim of his life in the 'inquiry into the truth' (*inuestigatio ueritatis*)[47] which, as the *Contra academicos* confirms, would be a sufficient ground for happiness, *whether truth could actually be found or not*. If Augustine's first concern after his conversion is that of writing a *Contra academicos*, it is because such a narrow understanding of happiness and wisdom based on scepticism and ἐποχή is the only remaining intellectual obstacle to one of the main perspectives his conversion had opened up for him, namely that of the availability of truth and of the possibility of knowledge. With faith, comes the persuasion that knowledge and truth are not to be despaired of;[48] this is of momentous significance for his life because, as he explains, grasping the truth (*comprehensio ueritatis*) is not just a matter of academic achievement,

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[43] *conf.* 3.7–8 (CCL 27, 29 f.).   [44] *b. uita* 1.4 (CCL 29, 66 f.).
[45] *Trin.* 14.26 (457 ff.).   [46] *b. uita* 1.4 (CCL 29, 67. Trans. Schopp, 47).
[47] *Trin.* 14.26 (457 ff.).
[48] 'nec cognitionem desperandam', *c. Acad.* 2.iii.9 (CCL 29, 23); '[ueritas] non me arbitror desperare', *c. Acad.* 3.xx.43 (CCL 29, 60).

but 'concerns our life, our morals and the soul';[49] it does not concern 'glory—
which is something trivial and puerile—but life itself, and whatever happiness
of mind we may dare to hope for'.[50]

Whether we are convinced or not by the appeal to esoteric teaching to detect
'Platonic' philosophy behind the Academic affectation of scepticism—this is
the theory Augustine puts forward at the end of the *Contra Academicos*—this
treatise establishes two enduring guidelines for his intellectual and theological
research, namely trust in Christ's authority (*auctoritas*) and the hope to find
truth in Plato: 'God knows what this [truth] is; I think it was Plato's theory. . . . I
am resolved never to deviate in the least from the authority of Christ, for I find
none more powerful. . . . Meanwhile, I am confident that I shall find among the
Platonists what is not in opposition to our Sacred Scriptures.'[51]

Declarations of this kind, together with the generous praises of Plato and
'Platonism' we have quoted above, can easily lead one to cast doubts on the
integrity of Augustine's theological enterprise. For a fair assessment of their
significance, however, we should start by taking Augustine's rhetorical versa-
tility into account: surprising concessions to Platonism recur especially when
he is dealing with 'enlightened' pagans he is eager to convert to Christianity,
as in the case of Volusianus mentioned above[52] or with those he addresses
through the *De ciuitate Dei*, a work for the most part contemporary to the
Pelagian controversy and to the writing of the *De Trinitate*, in which, however,
'the person of Christ does not appear almost at all'.[53]

Then, any evaluation of these declarations should not be severed from two
essential qualifying factors: the nature of what is called 'Platonism' and the
actual impact of this 'Platonism' on his theology.

ii. The nature of Augustine's 'Platonism'

'Augustine knew Plato exclusively through secondary sources. Almost cer-
tainly he read Plato's *Timaeus*[54] in Cicero's Latin translation. Likewise, he
knew *Phaedo*,[55] *Phaedrus* and *Republic* through encyclopedias, doxographies

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[49] *c. Acad.* 2.ix.22 (CCL 29, 30. Trans. Kavanagh, 156): 'de uita nostra, de moribus, de animo
res agitur'.

[50] *c. Acad.* 3.ix.18 (CCL 29, 45. Trans. Kavanagh, 188, modified): 'iam non de gloria, quod
leue ac puerile est, sed de ipsa uita, et de aliqua spe animi beati, quantum inter nos possumus,
disseramus'.

[51] *c. Acad.* 3.xx.43 (CCL 29, 60 f. Trans. Kavanagh, 220, modified): 'Quae sit autem ista
[ueritas], deus uiderit; eam tamen arbitror Platonis fuisse. . . . Mihi certum est nusquam prorsus
a Christi auctoritate discedere: non enim reperio ualentiorem. . . . Apud Platonicos me interim
quod sacris nostris non repugnet reperturum esse confido.'

[52] *ep.* 137 (CSEL 44, 96–125).   [53] Van Bavel (1954), 8.

[54] *cons. Eu.* 1.35.53 (CSEL 43, 59).   [55] *ciu. Dei* 1.22 (CCL 47, 23 f.).

or other authors.'[56] The identification of the 'books of the Platonists' translated into Latin by Marius Victorinus[57] that he comes across before his conversion has proved notoriously controversial. Were they books by Plotinus,[58] Plato *rediuiuus*,[59] or the *Philosophy from Oracles* by Porphyry, 'the real "mediator" or "conveyer" of Neoplatonic philosophy from Plotinus to Augustine', not named in the *Confessions* simply because he was 'too imbued with elements of anti-Christian polemics'?[60] Whoever the authors of these books might be, the 'Platonism' they conveyed reached Augustine through people like Manlius Theodorus, 'the Christian equivalent of Symmachus, a fervent disciple of Plotinus, to whom Augustine attributed the edifying remarks on God and the nature of the soul he benefited from';[61] through Simplicianus, former disciple of Marius Victorinus,[62] and even through the bishop Ambrose.[63] It was 'a kind of Neo-Platonism already mingled with Christianity and which already established parallels [between Platonism and John's Gospel] and taught them to Augustine'.[64] As it is possible to see in the *Confessions*,[65] the main result of this encounter with 'Christianized' Platonism was that of lifting Augustine's last philosophical reservations against Christianity, especially the materialism inherited from Manichaeism and the scepticism towards the possibility of reaching knowledge and truth contracted from Cicero. An overview of this 'Platonism' throughout some of Augustine's major works easily reveals its deeply religious and ethical nature, which sees the representative figures of Plato and Pythagoras as theologians just as much as philosophers.

The first characteristic of this 'Platonism' is that Plato is credited with the elaboration of a perfect philosophy,[66] which does not differ from Aristotle's. As a result, this 'Platonism' is not just nor primarily Plato's own thought any more, but the only true philosophy, a sort of *philosophia perennis* in no real need of any further improvement:

But as regards erudition and doctrine and morality, by which the interests of the soul are consulted, one system of truest philosophy has been crystallized through multifarious disputes throughout many centuries. Indeed, the times did no lack men of the utmost discernment and industry who, in their disputations, continued to teach

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[56] Van Fleteren (1999a), 651.
[57] *conf.* 8.3 (CCL 27, 114. Trans. Chadwick, 135): 'quosdam libros Platonicorum'.
[58] As in Solignac (1962c), 110–111 and Du Roy (1966), 69 f., who gives a list of the treatises Augustine knew or quoted.
[59] *c. Acad.* 3 xviii. 41 (CCL 29, 59 f.).   [60] Beatrice (1989), 259 f.
[61] Lancel (1999), 124. Translation from French.   [62] Lancel (1999), 124.
[63] *b. uita* 1.4 (CCL 29, 67).   [64] Chadwick (1991), 134 n. 3.
[65] *conf.* 7 (CCL 27, 92–112).
[66] 'perfectam dicitur composuisse philosophiae disciplinam', *c. Acad.* 3.xvii.37 (CCL 29, 57).

that Aristotle and Plato agree with each other in such a manner that to the inattentive and unskilled only they seem to be out of harmony.[67]

This one and true philosophy is so akin to Christian faith because of its deep religious character. God is no more an unmoved First Mover as in Aristotle[68] nor a Demiurge as in Plato[69] and, despite similarity of vocabulary, not even the highest source of unity and being, with no determinate properties itself,[70] as in Plotinus. As a matter of fact, Augustine's ontology in AD 390–391 does indeed identify being with that which endures (*manet*) insofar as it is one (*unum*); it does see unity as the form of beauty[71] and it does distinguish three levels of being accordingly: the highest (God), the lowest (the body), and the intermediate level (the soul) which can either reach happiness through conversion to the higher level or become wretched through turning to what is below its nature. More than the actual threefold representation of reality, however, this rather simplistic ontological outline betrays one of the main aspects of late 'Platonism', namely *its dynamic understanding of the destiny of the soul and of the ethical implications of the latter's 'location'.*

In the same eighteenth letter where this ontology is outlined, without the slightest attempt to make any transition, Augustine directly translates this ontology in terms of faith, of love (*dilectio*), and of pride: 'One who believes in Christ does not love the lowest, is not proud over the intermediate, and thus becomes fit to cling to the highest. And this is the whole of what we are commanded, admonished, and set afire to do.'[72] In the same way, in the *De ciuitate dei*, the philosopher is he who imitates, knows and loves God and thus participates in God's life and reaches happiness. No surprise, then, if these

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[67]   *c. Acad.* 3.xix.42 (CCL 29, 60. Trans. Kavanagh, 219, modified):

Quod autem ad eruditionem doctrinamque attinet, et mores quibus consulitur animae, quia non defuerunt acutissimi et solertissimi uiri, qui docerent disputationibus suis Aristotelem ac Platonem ita sibi concinere, ut imperitis minusque attentis dissentire uideantur; multis quidem saeculis multisque contentionibus, sed tamen eliquata est, ut opinor, una uerissimae philosophiae disciplina.

[68]   Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Λ (*Metaphysica*, ed. W. Jaeger, Oxford: Clarendon, 1957, 242–262).
[69]   Plato, *Timaeus* 28a-30 (*Platonis Opera*, ed. Ioannes Burnet, Oxford: Clarendon, 1902, vol. IV, 28a–30).
[70]   Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.9 (*Plotinus with an English Translation by A. H. Armstrong*, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, vol. VII, 302–345), cf. Edwards (1999), 588.
[71]   *ep.* 18.2 (CSEL 34/1, 45): 'cum autem omne quod esse dicimus, in quantum manet dicamus, et in quantum unum est, omnis porro pulchritudinis forma unitatis sit'.
[72]   *ep.* 18.2 (CSEL 34/1, 45. Trans. Teske, II/1, 51): 'Qui Christo credit, non diligit infimum, non superbit in medio atque in summo inhaerere fit idoneus: et hoc est totum quod agere iubemur, monemur, accendimur.'

'Platonists' come out rather positively: 'There are none who came nearer to us then them.'[73]

A very good example of integration of Platonic elements precisely to overcome Plato's representation of the 'divine' is offered by Augustine's question *De ideis*.[74] A careful reading of this *quaestio* proves just how misleading an interpretation of Augustine's use of 'Platonic' elements can be if it neglects the context in which it occurs. Is Augustine's *De ideis* just aiming at ascribing what could be seen as one of Plato's portrayal of the 'divine'—namely the eternity, the immutability, and the universal exemplary role of ideas—to the Christian God? The drawbacks caused by too material an interpretation of this *quaestio* throughout its phenomenal intellectual posterity are well illustrated by the medieval tangle of five interpretations of this text ranging from the literal assertion of a plurality of really distinct ideas to the flat denial of any idea at all in the mind of God.[75] Little notice has been paid, in the interpretation of this text, to the philological shift from the literal Latin translation of 'ideas' (*ideae*) into 'forms' (*formae*) or 'species' (*species*) to what Augustine himself acknowledges to be a less literal translation of the same word: 'reasons' (*rationes*).[76] As soon as the main characteristics of these reasons have been summed up, Augustine appeals to the 'holy and pure soul', to the 'religious person steeped into true religion' to argue that everything was created according to particular reasons. The real climax of the passage is reached when Augustine asks

This having been established and conceded, who would dare to say that God has created all things without a rational plan? But if one cannot rightly say or believe this, it remains that all things are created on a rational plan, and man not by the same rational plan as horse, for it is absurd to think this. Therefore individual things are created in accord with reasons unique to them.[77]

Behind this passage, there is the Christian doctrine of creation and of God. The attribution of the characteristics of eternity, immutability, and especially of universal exemplar causality of Plato's ideas to God aims at excluding the

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[73] *ciu. Dei* 8.5 (CCL 47, 221. Trans. Bettenson, 304): 'Nulli nobis quam isti propius accesserunt.'

[74] *diu. qu.* 46 (CCL 44A, 70–73).   [75] Putallaz (2003), 412.

[76] Augustine states that 'Ideas igitur Latine possumus uel formas uel species dicere, ut uerbum e uerbo transferre uideamur. Si autem rationes eas uocemus, ab interpretandi quidem proprietate discedimus; rationes enim Graece λόγοι appellantur, non ideae: sed tamen quisquis hoc uocabulo uti uoluerit, a re ipsa non abhorrebit', *diu. qu.* 46.2 (CCL 44A, 71).

[77] *diu. qu.* 46.2 (CCL 44A, 72. Trans. Mosher, 80 f.):

Quo constituto atque concesso, quis audeat dicere Deum irrationabiliter omnia condidisse? Quod si recte dici uel credi non potest, restat ut omnia ratione sint condita. Nec eadem ratione homo, qua equus: hoc enim absurdum est existimare. Singula igitur propriis sunt creata rationibus.

identification of Plato's Demiurge with the Christian creator: 'For it would be sacrilegious to suppose that he [God] was looking at something placed outside himself when he created in accord with it what he did create.'[78] Because he is aware of the mythical character of Plato's explanations of the relation between the Demiurge and the Paradigms in the *Timaeus*, Augustine is not so much interested in determining whether distinct ideas can really be postulated in the 'mind' of God or not. On the contrary, once again he is driven by his usual ethical thrust: the dependence of the intelligibility of the cosmos on God the creator (both objectively and subjectively, that is both with regard to the fact that 'all things are created on a rational plan' ('omnia ratione sunt condita') and that 'every soul but rational is denied the power to contemplate these ideas' ('anima negatur eas intueri posse nisi rationalis'))[79] means that progress in the understanding of this 'rational' structure of reality must coincide with progress in union with God. Thus, as early as in 388–391, the date of composition of this question, light (*lux*) and charity (*caritas*) already are inextricably bound to each other in this progress:

Now among the things which have been created by God, the rational soul is the most excellent of all, and it is closest to God when it is pure. And in the measure that it has clung to him in love, in that measure, imbued in some way and illumined by him with light, intelligible light, the soul discerns—not with physical light, but with its own highest part in which lies its excellence, i.e., with its intelligence—those reasons whose vision brings to it full blessedness.[80]

The *De uera religione* represents another significant testimony of Augustine's high regard for the ethical and religious aspects of the 'Platonism' he encountered in Milan in the 380s. At its simplest, the tenets of 'Platonism' he relates to Christianity are (i) the purification of soul through virtue, (ii) the conversion from inordinate longing (*cupiditas*) of temporal or sensible goods to the hope of eternal life, (iii) the enjoyment of spiritual and intelligible reality, and (iv) surrender to God.[81] This same passage, however, clearly represents

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[78] *diu. qu.* 46.2 (CCL 44A, 72. Trans. Mosher, 81): 'Non enim extra se [deus] quidquam positum intuebatur, ut secundum id constitueret quod constituebat: nam hoc opinari sacrilegum est.'

[79] *diu. qu.* 46.2 (CCL 44A, 71).

[80] *diu. qu.* 46.2 (CCL 44A, 73. Trans. Mosher, 81):

Sed anima rationalis inter eas res quae sunt a deo conditae, omnia superat; et deo proxima est, quando pura est; eique in quantum caritate cohaeserit, in tantum ab eo lumine illo intelligibili perfusa quodammodo et inlustrata cernit, non per corporeos oculos, sed per ipsius sui principale, quo excellit, id est per intellegentiam suam, istas rationes, quarum uisione fit beatissima.

[81] *uera rel.* 4.6 (CCL 32, 192).

a censure of paganism and theurgy, since Augustine harshly reproaches the 'Platonists' of his time for the contradiction existing between the refined religious and ethical character of their philosophy and their disconcerting religious practice.[82] This explains why the issue of worship figures so prominently at the heart of the long section of the *De ciuitate Dei* where he discusses the 'physical theology' (*theologia physica*)[83] as well as in the fourth book of the *De Trinitate*.[84]

This leads us to the most complex aspect of this issue, that is the extent to which what counts as *real* knowledge of God can be attributed to 'Platonist' philosophers. We do not pretend to offer an exhaustive inquiry into this issue here, but we would like to explore some few examples which illustrate the difficulty of interpretation of the texts usually quoted to prove that Augustine did ascribe knowledge of the Trinity to philosophers.

At times, awareness of the temptation to be over-optimistic about the agreement between 'Plato' and Scripture is betrayed by Augustine's timid attempt to invoke the classical apologetical argument that Plato knew Scripture.[85] In the *De ciuitate Dei*, though acknowledging that this argument is unlikely for chronological reasons,[86] he is inclined to view it with sympathy for two reasons. The first reason echoes what we have seen so far concerning the striking religious and ethical dimension of the kind of 'Platonism' he was initiated into in Milan, i.e. 'Plato says that the philosopher is "the lover of God". Nothing shines out from the pages of Scripture more clearly than this.'[87]

The other reason consists in the relation Augustine sees between God's name in the book of Exodus and Plato's ontology:

But what impresses me most, and almost brings me to agree that Plato cannot have been unacquainted with the sacred books, is that when the angel gave Moses the message from God, and Moses asked the name of him who gave the command to go and free the Hebrew people from Egypt, he received this reply, '*I am He who is, and you will say to the sons of Israel, He who is has sent me to you*'. This implies that in comparison with him who really is, because he is unchangeable, the things created changeable have no real existence. This truth Plato vigorously maintained and diligently taught. And I do not know whether it can be found anywhere in the works

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[82] *uera rel.* 4.8 (CCL 32, 193).   [83] *ciu. Dei* books 8–11, especially book 10.

[84] *Trin* 4.13–19 (178–187), concerning purification through τελετάς.

[85] Cf. Justin, *First Apology*, 59 (*Apologiae pro Christianis*, ed. M. Marcovich, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994, 115) and Clement, *Stromateis*, 1.150 (*Stromata Buch I–VI*, ed. Otto Stählin, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985, 92 f.)

[86] *ciu. Dei* 8.11 (CCL 47, 227 f.).

[87] *ciu. Dei* 8.11 (CCL 47, 228. Trans. Bettenson, 315, modified): 'Plato dicit amatorem dei esse philosophum: nihil sic illis sacris litteris flagrat.'

of Plato's predecessors, except in that book which has the statement, '*I am He who is; and you will say to them: He who is has sent me to you*'.[88]

Let us compare this text of the *De ciuitate Dei* with a sermon delivered few years before where Augustine details the theological implications of the correspondence he sees between Exodus 3 and 'Platonist' ontology. In his sixth sermon (AD 408–411?), where he is not concerned with looking for parallels between Scripture and philosophers, he sets side by side the two names of God revealed in Scripture. Under Moses's request, God begins by giving him his 'name of *esse*'—'*Ego sum qui sum*'—for the following reason:

'That I abide for ever, that I cannot change'. Things which change are not, because they do not last. What is, abides. But whatever changes, was something and will be something; yet you cannot say it is, because it is changeable. So the unchangeableness of God was prepared to suggest itself by this phrase, *I am who I am*.[89]

However, this 'name of *esse*' cannot be isolated from the second name God gives immediately afterwards, the 'name of compassion (*misericordia*)':

What does it mean then that later on he gave himself another name, where it says, *And the Lord said to Moses, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob: this is my name for ever*? How is it that there I am called this name that shows *I am*, and lo and behold here is another name: *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaaac and the God of Jacob*? It means that while God is indeed unchangeable, he has done everything out of mercy, and so the Son of God himself was prepared to take on changeable flesh and thereby to come to man's rescue while remaining what he is as the Word of God. Thus he who is, clothed himself with mortal flesh, so that it could truly be said, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob*.[90]

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[88]   *ciu. Dei* 8.11 (CCL 47, 228. Trans. Bettenson, 315):

et maxime illud (quod et me plurimum adducit, ut paene assentiar Platonem illorum librorum expertem non fuisse), quod, cum ad sanctum Moysen ita uerba dei per angelum perferantur, ut quaerenti quod sit nomen eius, qui eum pergere praecipiebat ad populum Hebraeum ex Aegypto liberandum, respondeatur: *Ego sum qui sum, et dices filiis Israel: qui est, misit me ad uos,* tamquam in eius comparatione, qui uere est quia incommutabilis est, ea quae mutabilia facta sunt non sint, uehementer hoc Plato tenuit et diligentissime commendauit. Et nescio utrum hoc uspiam reperiatur in libris eorum, qui ante Platonem fuerunt, nisi ubi dictum est: *Ego sum qui sum, et dices eis: qui est, misit me ad uos.*

[89]   *s*. 6.4 (CCL 41, 64. Trans. Hill, vol. III/1, 229):

Quia maneo in aeternum, quia mutari non possum. Ea enim quae mutantur, non sunt, quia non permanent. Quod enim est, manet. Quod autem mutatur, fuit aliquid, et aliquid erit: non tamen est, quia mutabile est. Ergo incommutabilitas dei isto uocabulo se dignata est intimare, *Ego sum qui sum.*

[90]   Cf. Exod. 3, 15. *s*. 6.5 (CCL 41, 64. Trans. Hill, III/1, 228 f.):

Quid est ergo, quod postea iterum aliud nomen sibi dixit, cum diceretur: *Et dixit dominus ad Moysen: Ego sum deus Abraham, et deus Isaac, et deus Iacob*; *hoc mihi nomen est in sempiternum*? Quomodo illac hoc uocor, quia sum; et ecce hac aliud nomen, *Ego sum deus Abraham, et deus*

The correspondence between 'Platonic' ontology and God's 'name of *esse*' coincides with a stark contrast to the same Platonic ontology when this first name is coupled with its inseparable counterpart, the 'name of compassion (*misericordia*)': 'while God is indeed unchangeable, he has done everything out of mercy' ('quomodo est Deus incommutabilis, fecit omnia per miseri-cordia'), says Augustine. God's immutability becomes the background which reveals the real nature of his implication in history, in the becoming, in the realm of changeable realities (*mutabilia*). Because God is by nature immutable, his involvement in changeable realities is an act of 'compassion' or 'conde-scension'. Because, as Augustine continues, the Son of God remains the Word of God while taking up mutable flesh, it is really God that comes to help humanity. In other words, *immutability*—and its ontological corollaries of incorporeality and simplicity[91]—becomes a synonym for God's lordship and a way of restating the truth that grace indeed is *grace*.

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This overview of the nature of Augustine's 'Platonism', therefore, can be summed up as follows:

- that which Augustine refers to as 'Platonism' is the result of an already long-standing conscious effort by Christian thinkers—also followed by preachers like Ambrose—to elaborate a 'one and true philosophy' starting from various philosophical tenets, in the light of Christian beliefs;

- it is a fact that this Christianized version of philosophy was instrumental in Augustine's intellectual reconciliation to Christianity, since it helped him to overcome scepticism and materialism;[92]

- Augustine valued this 'one and true philosophy' especially because of its ethical potential and its pronounced religious character, enhanced by the

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Isaac, et deus Iacob? Quia quomodo est deus incommutabilis, fecit omnia per misericordiam, et dignatus est ipse filius dei mutabilem carnem suscipiendo, manens id quod uerbum dei est, uenire et subuenire homini. Induit ergo se carne mortali ille qui est, ut dici posset, *Ego sum deus Abraham, et deus Isaac, et deus Iacob*.

Cf. Gilson (1999 [1947]) and Vannier (1997), 101 n. 66. Cf. also *uera rel.* 8.14 (CCL 32, 197).

[91] cf. *ciu. Dei* 8.6 (CCL 47, 223).

[92] Exploring the relation between faith and thought according to Augustine's well-known definition *fides est cum assensione cogitare* (cf. *praed. sanct.* 2.5, PL 44, 963), Studer (1997b) observes that the believer has to think about what is proposed, to overcome 'in advance the errors which might hinder his assent. He excludes for instance any materialist understanding of the divinity which would render it impossible to accept that the Trinity is one God' (p. 24), cf. *Trin.* 1.1 (27 f.) and 8.3 (270): 'Non enim paruae notitiae pars est cum de profundo isto in illam summitatem respiramus si antequam scire possimus quid sit deus, possumus iam scire quid non sit.'

undeniable influence of Christian faith on it; this accounts for Augustine's shock at the absurdity of philosophers' religious practice in the light of the high ethical and religious standards he credited them with;

- at the same time, a critical stance towards 'Platonism' is illustrated by the freedom with which 'Platonic' philosophical tenets are used to criticise Plato's own representation of the divine or to develop an ontology which does not escape the conversion required by the revelation of God's identity in the Incarnation.[93]

Having said that, the evaluation of Augustine's attitude towards philosophy also needs to assess the *actual impact* of his optimistic declarations about 'Platonism' on his theology. For this, we shall select the case most relevant both in itself and for the topic of our book, namely Trinitarian theology, and look at some texts usually quoted to argue that Augustine does ascribe knowledge of the Trinity to philosophers. The present book, as a whole, aims to unravel this question on the basis of the *De Trinitate*. Here, we shall simply resort to a passage from the *De ordine* (AD 386–387) and to another from the *De ciuitate dei*, to gauge the difficulty of interpretation of texts dealing with this issue and to set up some useful landmarks for our inquiry in the *De Trinitate*.

iii. Do philosophers know the Trinity?

A passage from the *De ordine* and the contrasting interpretations given to it, best represents the complexity of the texts relating philosophical views to knowledge of the Trinity:

The philosophy that is true—the genuine philosophy, so to speak—has no other function than to teach what is the First Principle of all things—Itself without beginning—and how great an intellect dwells therein, and what has proceeded therefrom for our welfare, but without deterioration of any kind. Now the venerated mysteries, which liberate persons of sincere and firm faith-not indiscriminately, as some say; and not harmfully, as many assert—these mysteries teach that this First Principle is one God omnipotent, and that he is tripotent, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Great, indeed, though it be that so great a God has for our sake deigned to take up and dwell in this body of our own kind, yet the more lowly it appears, so much the more is it replete with clemency and the farther and wider remote from a certain characteristic pride of ingenious men.[94]

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[93] Cf. the conclusion of Vannier (1997), 96: '[Augustine] utilise le Platonisme pour dégager l'apport du Christianisme. C'est pour lui une méthode de réflexion.'

[94] *ord.* 2.v.16 (CCL 29, 116. Trans. Russell, 291):

Nullumque aliud habet negotium, quae uera, et, ut ita dicam, germana philosophia est, quam ut doceat quod sit omnium rerum principium sine principio, quantusque in eo maneat intellectus,

The assumption that Augustine discovered the Christian Trinity in Plotinus,[95] can lead to seeing Plotinian triads everywhere in the former's writings. Thus, in the passage of the *De ordine* just quoted, the 'Neoplatonic' triad of 'principle, intellect, and emanation' (*principium*, *intellectus*, and *emanatio*) would be a good example of the philosophical rendering of the Christian Trinity which is supposed to have shaped Augustine's understanding of this mystery.[96]

However, the contrast between the present tense of *sit* and *maneat* and the past of *manauerit* in this text invites us to be more cautious in its interpretation. The sentence 'what has proceeded therefrom for our welfare, but without deterioration of any kind' ('quidue inde in nostram salutem sine ulla degeneratione manauerit') could be interpreted as referring to the Incarnation, in opposition to the eternity of the 'principle' and of divine 'intellect'.[97] Even this interpretation, however, is rather problematic, since it would mean that philosophy can teach the mystery of the Incarnation, something explicitly ruled

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quidue inde in nostram salutem sine ulla degeneratione manauerit: quem [i.e. this principium] unum deum omnipotentem eumque tripotentem, patrem, et filium, et spiritum sanctum, docent ueneranda mysteria, quae fide sincera et inconcussa populos liberant; nec confuse, ut quidam; nec contumeliose, ut multi praedicant.

[95] 'Cette succession chronologique qui lui [Augustin] a fait découvrir l'intelligence de la Trinité chrétienne dans Plotin', Du Roy (1966), 97. In another passage of his book, Du Roy states that Augustine attributes a real knowledge of the Trinity to Porphyry (p. 106). According to Cipriani (2001), 479, the basis for this assertion might be the following passage from *ciu. Dei* 10.23 (CCL 47, 296. Trans. Bettenson, 403 f.):

We know what Porphyry, as a Platonist, means by 'principles'. He refers to God the Father, and God the Son, whom he calls in Greek the Intellect or Mind of the Father. About the Holy Spirit he says nothing, or at least nothing clear; although I do not understand what other being he refers to as holding the middle position between these two. If, like Plotinus in his discussion of the three 'principal substances', he had intended it to be inferred that this third entity is the natural substance of the soul, he would certainly not have said that this held the middle place between the two others, the Father and the Son. Plotinus certainly regards the nature of the soul as inferior to the Intellect of the Father; whereas Porphyry, in speaking of an entity in the middle position, places it between, not below, the two others. Doubtless he meant what we mean when we speak of the Holy Spirit, who is not the spirit of the Father only or of the Son only, but of both; and he described him to the best of his ability, or according to his inclination.

But Cipriani (2001), 479 f., also quotes *qu. Hept.* ii.25 (CCL 33, 80) where Augustine states exactly the contrary: 'Commendatur enim fortasse trinitas et, quod uerum est, summi philosophi gentium, quantum in eorum litteris indagatur, sine spiritu sancto philosophati sunt, quamuis de patre et filio non tacuerint, quod etiam Didymus in libro suo meminit, quem scripsit de Spiritu Sancto'; cf. also *ep. Rm. inch.* 15 (CSEL 84, 164–168).

[96] Du Roy (1966), 125 f.: 'La philosophie enseigne la même Trinité que la foi chrétienne.... Aussi, avant de la traduire dans le langage clair et assuré de 'nos mystères', la désigne-t-il d'abord en termes néo-platoniciens: le Principe, l'Intellect et l'Émanation. Le Principe est le Père, l'Intellect est le Fils.... Donc il faut conclure que l'Émanation désigne l'Esprit.'

[97] Cf. Madec (1989), 79 f., and Solignac (1962a), 78.

out in the same paragraph of the *De ordine*.[98] Thus, it is better to acknowledge the difficulty in the interpretation of this text—since the past tense of *manauerit* does not authorize us to adopt the first interpretation either. In any case, the assertion of a relation between the findings of philosophy and the confession of faith does not entail that Augustine reads the latter into the former. There is an unbridgeable difference between the understanding that there is a *principium* and the confession of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through faith (*ueneranda mysteria*).

The *De ciuitate Dei* provides us with one of Augustine's most explicit statements concerning the relation between philosophy and knowledge of the Trinity. We can start by a key sentence from the book 9:

It is evidently not a rash presumption but a reasonable inference to find a hint of the Trinity in the description of God's creative works, expressed somewhat enigmatically, so as to exercise our speculations.[99]

A few lines down, we are told that 'the whole Trinity is inculcated in us through its works'.[100]

The wider context of these statements is the praise of 'Platonism', one of the main threads of the section of the *De ciuitate Dei* going from the eighth to the eleventh book. Just as in the *Contra academicos*, the elaboration of a perfect and all-encompassing philosophy is traced back to Plato, even though Augustine is significantly aware of the difficulty of establishing Plato's own philosophy with certainty: 'it is not easy to discover his [Plato's] own opinion, even on important matters'.[101] In book 8 of the *De ciuitate Dei*, the section devoted to Plato is entirely built on triadic formulas, which it would be tedious to quote here in full.[102] A threefold classification of philosophy is attributed to Plato: physics, logic, and ethics.

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[98] *ord.* 2.v.16 (CCL 29, 116): 'Quantum autem illud sit, quod hoc etiam nostri generis corpus, tantus propter nos deus adsumere atque agere dignatus est, quanto uidetur uilius, tanto est clementia plenius, et a quadam ingeniosorum superbia longe lateque remotius.'

[99] *ciu. Dei* 11.24 (CCL 48, 343. Trans. Bettenson, 457):

Illa diligentia rationis est, non praesumptionis audacia, ut in operibus dei secreto quodam loquendi modo, quo nostra exerceatur intentio, eadem nobis insinuata intellegatur trinitas.

[100] *ciu. Dei* 11.24 (CCL 48, 344. Trans. Bettenson, 457, modified): 'uniuersa nobis trinitas in suis operibus intimatur.'

[101] *ciu. Dei* 8.4 (CCL 47, 220. Trans. Bettenson 304): 'factum est ut etiam ipsius Platonis de rebus magnis sententiae non facile perspici possint.'

[102] *ciu. Dei* 8.4 (CCL 47, 220): *pars moralis, pars naturalis, pars rationalis* of philosophy; *causa, lux, finis*; *causa, ratio, ordo*; *natura, doctrina, usus*; *ciu. Dei* 8.5 (CCL 47, 221): *imitatorem, cognitorem, amatorem*; *auctor, illustrator, largitor*; *ciu. Dei* 8.6 (CCL 47, 223): *esse, uiuere, intellegere* etc.

(i) In his account of *physics*, Augustine argues that 'Platonists' have found the incorporeality, the immutability, and the simplicity of God and have seen God as the origin of everything which has being.[103]

(ii) Concerning *logic*—which corresponds to epistemology[104]—he credits 'Platonists' with the view that 'the creator of all things is the light of the mind which makes possible every acquisition of knowledge'.[105]

(iii) Finally, with regard to *ethics*, he identifies Plato's highest good (*summum bonum*) with God; God is the good we desire for itself (*propter se ipsum*) and not with reference to something else, according to the usual distinction between using and enjoying (*uti* and *frui*) Augustine is fond of. Two key factors need to be highlighted here. First of all, God is to be 'enjoyed' in the way the eye enjoys light: this suggests a relation between the unitive role of love and the ability/possibility of contemplating God which plays a crucial role in Augustine's theory of knowledge. Then, love is not enough for happiness. Happiness, i.e. 'fulfilment', is only reached through enjoyment, which entails the possibility of reaching the highest good. In his discussion of the relation between love and enjoyment (*amare/frui*), Augustine repeats what he had argued against Academic philosophers: the quest for truth (*inquisitio ueritatis*) is not enough for fulfilment, but we need to know that truth can indeed be reached and enjoyed.[106]

Throughout this exploration of the threefold classification of philosophy ascribed to Plato, Augustine does not mention the Trinity at all. He rather focuses on the 'cause of existence' (*causa subsistendi*), the 'principle of reason' (*ratio intellegendi*) and the 'rule of life' (*ordo uiuendi*) of everything according to the philosophy he ascribes to 'Platonists'[107] and he finds that their answer corresponds to that which Christians know even without the study of Plato's three branches of philosophy.[108] The correspondence strikes him to the point that he wonders whether Plato knew Scripture—a point we mentioned above.[109]

When he resumes the same issue in book 11, however, he pushes the 'careful search of reason' (*diligentia rationis*) further on and openly mentions the Trinity. It should be noted, however, that *a profession of Christian faith on the*

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[103] *ciu. Dei* 8.6 (CCL 47, 223).

[104] Cf. *ciu. Dei* 8.10 (CCL 47, 227. Trans. Bettenson, 313): 'et rationalem siue logicam, in qua quaeritur quonam modo ueritas percipi possit'.

[105] *ciu. Dei* 8.7 (CCL 47, 224. Trans. Bettenson, 309): 'Lumen autem mentium . . . ad discenda omnia eundem ipsum deum, a quo facta sunt omnia.'

[106] *ciu. Dei* 8.8 (CCL 47, 224 f.); cf. *c. Acad.* 1.iii.9 (CCL 29, 8 f.) and 2.ix.22 (CCL 29, 28 f.).

[107] *ciu. Dei* 8.4 (CCL 47, 220. Trans. Bettenson, 304).

[108] *ciu. Dei* 8.10 (CCL 47, 226 f.).　　　　[109] *ciu. Dei* 8.11 (CCL 47, 227 f.).

mystery of the Trinity opens the discussion.[110] In this profession of faith, the
section devoted to the Holy Spirit is noteworthy. In the *Confessions*, Augustine
stated that he had found God and his word (*uerbum*) in the 'Platonists'[111]—
the establishment of a parallel with the Prologue of St John was one of the
traits of the 'Platonism' Simplicianus might have inherited from Marius Vic-
torinus and transmitted to Augustine.[112] Here, he is trying to see whether
there might be some aspects of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as well that he
could read into 'Platonic' philosophy. Very interestingly, only with the benefit
of some caution does he venture an hypothesis concerning the determination
of the property of the Holy Spirit:[113] holiness (*sanctitas*) is the more usual
property, but goodness (*bonitas*) could also be attributed to him.

Thus, it is possible to detect in creation not only the properties of the Father
who creates and of the Word through whom everything is created, but also the
property of goodness of the Holy Spirit:

And the statement '*God saw that it was good*' makes it quite plain that God did not
create under stress of any compulsion, or because he lacked something for his own
needs; his only motive was goodness; he created because his creation was good. And
the assertion of the goodness of the created work follows the act of creation in order to
emphasize that the works corresponded with the goodness which was the reason for
its creation.[114]

Thus, there seems to be a correspondence between the mystery of the Trinity
and Plato's threefold classification of philosophy—and of reality—in physics,
logics, and ethics, corresponding to the 'origine' (*origo*), the 'enlightenment'
(*informatio*), and the 'felicity' (*beatitudo*) of everything or, put otherwise,
the 'whence it arises: God founded it' ('unde sit: deus eam condidit'), the
'whence comes its wisdom: it receives light from God' ('unde sit sapiens: a
deo illuminatur'), and finally the 'whence comes its bliss: it rejoices in God'
('unde sit felix: deo fruitur') of the *ciuitas sancta*.[115]

Very significantly, however, Augustine balances this declaration first of
all with the statement that Plato did not invent this threefold classification

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[110] *ciu. Dei* 11.24 (CCL 48, 343).   [111] *conf.* 7.13 f. (CCL 27, 101 f.).

[112] Chadwick (1991), 134 n. 3.

[113] Cf. the expressions 'non audeo temerariam praecipitare sententiam'; 'facilius ausus fuero';
'ad hoc enim me probabilius ducit', *ciu. Dei* 11.24 (CCL 48, 343).

[114] *ciu. Dei* 11.24 (CCL 48, 343 f. Trans. Bettenson, 457):

in eo uero quod dicitur: *Vidit deus, quia bonum est,* satis significatur deum nulla necessitate,
nulla suae cuiusquam utilitatis indigentia, sed sola bonitate fecisse quod factum est, id est, quia
bonum est; quod ideo postea quam factum est dicitur, ut res, quae facta est, congruere bonitati,
propter quam facta est, indicetur. Quae bonitas si spiritus sanctus recte intelligitur, uniuersa
nobis trinitas in suis operibus intimatur.

[115] *ciu. Dei* 11.24 (CCL 48, 343 f. Trans. Bettenson, 457 f.).

but discovered it: 'they did not establish this division but found it already there'.[116] Then, in a crucial declaration, this parallel between one possible way of detecting some of the properties of the persons of the Trinity in creation and 'Platonist' philosophy ends with the most unambiguous disavowal of the attribution of knowledge of the Trinity to philosophers:

As far as I can understand, it was on this account that philosophers decided on a tripartite division of philosophical division, or rather it was for this reason that they were able to see that philosophy was in fact threefold, for they did not establish this division but found it already there. One part is called physics, the second logic, the third ethics. The names now in common use among Latin authors are natural, rational, and moral philosophy . . . *Not that it follows that these philosophers had any idea of a Trinity in the nature of God* in these three division, although Plato is said to have been the first to discover and to give currency to this division, and in his view God alone was the author of all nature, the giver of all reason, the inspirer of the love which is the condition of a good and happy life.[117]

The presence of a declaration of this kind in an apologetical work like the *De ciuitate dei* is of great significance. We have seen already that, when writing to 'Platonists' he admires,[118] Augustine is usually keener to stress the corre-spondence between Christians belief and their tenets—with the evident exclu-sion of the Incarnation—than he is inclined to do in more theological works like the *De Trinitate.* For this reason, this explicit refusal to ascribe knowledge of the Trinity to 'Platonists' in the *De ciuitate Dei* is crucial. Any finding whatsoever about the threefold dynamism of our being; any classification of reality in patterns like 'origin, beauty and order' or 'existence, intelligence and love' or whatever else might be declined in this threefold way; the fact that our fulfilment can somehow be expressed as going back to our origin, recovering our beauty and adhering to it: all this does not mean that philosophers knew the Trinity nor does it say anything about God the Trinity to those who do not know him (that is to those who do not start, as Augustine does in the

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[116] *ciu. Dei* 11.25 (CCL 48, 344. Trans. Bettenson, 458 f.): 'neque enim ipsi instituerunt ut ita esset, sed ita esse potius inuenerunt'.

[117] *ciu. Dei* 11.25 (CCL 48, 344. Trans. Bettenson, 458):

Quantum intellegi datur, hinc philosophi sapientiae disciplinam tripertitam esse uoluerunt, immo tripertitam esse animaduertere potuerunt (neque enim ipsi instituerunt ut ita esset, sed ita esse potius inuenerunt), cuius una pars appellaretur physica, altera logica, tertia ethica . . . *non quo sit consequens, ut isti in his tribus aliquid secundum deum de trinitate cogitauerint*, quamuis Plato primus istam distributionem repperisse et commendasse dicatur, cui neque naturarum omnium auctor nisi deus uisus est neque intellegentiae dator neque amoris, quo bene beateque uiuitur, inspirator.

[118] Cf. the case of Volusianus quoted above, *ep.* 137.12 (CSEL 44. 111–114), Lancel (1999), 445.

section we are analysing, with a *profession of Christian faith on the mystery of the Trinity*).[119]

In fact, the parallel between the confession of faith in the mystery of the Trinity and the threefold classification of reality discovered by philosophers does not seem to be intended as an apologetical or speculative tool to argue for the Trinitarian nature of God. The aim of this parallel should rather be looked for elsewhere and the sentence from book 11 quoted above gives us a very useful lead into it: trying to find hints of the Trinity in creation aims at 'exercising our attention' (*exercere intentionem*).[120] Indeed, the way such 'exercise' is carried through is related to the Trinity. However, just as we have seen with regard to Augustine's use of 'Platonic' ontology, so this 'exercise' is driven by ethical concerns. It is not to be understood as a means for the knowledge of immanent Trinitarian identity and life, alternative or complementary to revelation, but rather as instrumental to the identification of God's image in us, with a view to its reformation. Since this issue is developed at length in the *De Trinitate* and will be the object of the final section of this book, for the moment we will confine ourselves to outline just some of its aspects.

Augustine resorts to 'Platonic' philosophy to spell out the threefold nature of our dependence on God with precise epistemological and ethical applications in mind. Just as God is at the origin not only of our existence but also of our very possibility of knowing and loving, so the fulfilment of our existence, of our quest for truth and of our desire for happiness rests on him. From the threefold structure of creation's dependence on God, Augustine shifts towards the specific form this dependence takes for us from the viewpoint of our being in the *image of God*. Already in the *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine develops the main lines of the topic which will occupy him throughout most of the second half of the *De Trinitate*, from book 8 to book 15. Resorting to his pervasive polemic against scepticism, Augustine argues from certitude of our being, from knowledge of our being and from love of both our knowledge and our being, and leads his reader towards the identification of the threefold pattern of the image of God precisely in these three elements: being, knowledge and love.[121]

However, *certitude about these three dimensions of our being is entirely instrumental to the discovery of the depth of our dependence on God*, who is not only at the root of our being, but also of our very possibility of knowing and loving:

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[119]   *ciu. Dei* 11.24 (CCL 48, 343). Other passages stating the impossibility to know the mystery of the Trinity without divine revelation are listed by Cipriani (2001), 480 f.
[120]   *ciu. Dei* 11.24 (CCL 48, 343 f.).   [121]   *ciu. Dei* 10.26–28 (CCL 48, 345–349).

Now, (i) if our nature derived from ourselves, (ii) we should clearly have produced our own wisdom; we should not be at pains to acquire it by training, which means learning it from some other source. (iii) And our love would start from ourselves and be related to ourselves; and thus we should not need any other good to enjoy. But, as it is, (i) our nature has God as its author; (ii) and so without doubt we must have him as our teacher, if we are to attain true wisdom; (iii) and for our happiness we require him as the bestower of the delight in our hearts which only he can give.[122]

The *exercitatio intentionis* mentioned above consists in the 'collection' of traces and hints of this threefold dependence of creation and more particularly of our being, knowledge, and love on God.

Therefore let us run over all these things which he created in such wonderful stability, to collect the scattered traces of his being, more distinct in some places than in others. And let us gaze at his image in ourselves, and, '*returning to ourselves*', like the younger son of the Gospel story, let us rise up and go back to him from whom we have departed in our sinning. There (i) our existence will have no death, (ii) our knowledge no error, (iii) our love no obstacle.[123]

This last text clearly shows that, for Augustine, this *exercitatio intentionis* is not a purely intellectual process, but does correspond to the process of conversion towards God. The reference to the parable of the Prodigal Son[124] and to our sinful condition gives full theological meaning to the three stages of this process of conversion, as Augustine sees it, namely the 'gazing at the image' (*contuitio imaginis*), the 'returning to ourselves', and the act of going back to God. Luke's gospel says about the Prodigal Son that 'having reverted to himself he said: "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger?" ';[125] this is what Augustine calls the

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[122] *ciu. Dei* 11.25 (CCL 48, 345. Trans. Bettenson, 459):

Si ergo (i) natura nostra esset a nobis, (ii) profecto et nostram nos genuissemus sapientiam nec eam doctrina, id est aliunde discendo, percipere curaremus; (iii) et noster amor a nobis profectus et ad nos relatus et ad beate uiuendum sufficeret nec bono alio quo frueremur ullo indigeret; nunc uero (i) quia natura nostra, ut esset, deum habet auctorem, (ii) procul dubio ut uera sapiamus ipsum debemus habere doctorem, (iii) ipsum etiam ut beati simus suauitatis intimae largitorem.

[123] *ciu. Dei* 11.28 (CCL 48, 348. Trans. Bettenson, 463):

tamquam per omnia, quae fecit mirabili stabilitate, currentes quasi quaedam eius alibi magis, alibi minus impressa uestigia colligamus; in nobis autem ipsis eius imaginem contuentes tamquam minor ille euangelicus filius ad nosmet ipsos reuersi surgamus et ad illum redeamus, a quo peccando recesseramus. Ibi (i) esse nostrum non habebit mortem, (ii) ibi nosse nostrum non habebit errorem, (iii) ibi amare nostrum non habebit offensionem.

[124] Luke 15:11–32.

[125] Luke 15:17: 'in se autem reuersus dixit "quanti mercennarii patris mei abundant panibus ego autem hic fame pereo" '.

'returning to ourselves', but which can also be seen as the discovery of our radical dependence on God, corresponding to the 'gazing at the image'. Then, just as the Prodigal Son 'having risen, went to his father' ('surgens venit ad patrem suum'), so Augustine says 'let us rise up and go back to him from whom we have departed in our sinning' ('surgamus et ad illum redeamus, a quo peccando recesseramus').

V. CONCLUSION

Thus, the actual impact of Augustine's optimistic declarations about 'Platonism' on a major theological topic, namely that of knowledge of the Trinity, confirms what we saw above when trying to determine the nature of this 'Platonism'. That which Augustine mostly values in it is its ethical potential, mainly (though not always) with an apologetical view in mind. Resorting to philosophy is part of an exercise in which faith has the upper hand. And even with regard to ontology, the Incarnation plays a crucial critical role and remains the stumbling block against which philosophy's only destiny is to be judged and to undergo a conversion which puts it at the service of our renewal in the image of God.

On this basis, we can now go back to the *De Trinitate*. So far, the evidence we have collected on the issue of knowledge of philosophers has been mainly negative: the delimitation of the pretention to independent philosophical enquiry stems from the epistemological consequences of our depravity (*prauitas*) and our turning away (*auersio*) from truth. Because of the inseparability between knowledge and love, our sinfulness is as damaging with regard to happiness as it is to the possibility of knowing God, i.e. of reaching what counts as *real* knowledge of God.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that this pessimistic attitude towards philosophy is the consequence of a disillusion. On the contrary, Augustine seems to have been always unable to suppress an overpowering tendency towards a more positive *practical* attitude towards philosophy than his declarations, for example in the *De Trinitate*, might lead us to think. The fundamental reason for this apparent ambivalence (betrayed by many of the texts quoted above) is that his critical attitude towards philosophy was above all the consequence of positive theological truths, namely the Incarnation, the unicity of Christ's Mediation, and above all his death on the cross. Flowing from belief in Christ, sinfulness is a matter of faith before being a

matter of experience and becomes a matter of experience only insofar as faith in Christ grows deeper.

This is why, the fundamental theological presupposition of Augustine's attitude towards philosophy is his Christology and this explains why his most scathing criticisms of philosophers in the *De Trinitate* occur precisely in the books devoted to Christology, the fourth and the thirteenth, to the analysis of which we now turn.

4

Christ, Salvation, and Knowledge of God

I. THE INCARNATION

i. Christ

Our findings so far have been that our way to both happiness and truth—i.e. to enjoyment and contemplation of God—is barred by our sinfulness and the mortal condition which stems from it. However confusedly, eternity, truth, and happiness do not cease to be the object of our deepest desires, even though our sinfulness prevents us from union with them. It would be a mistake, however, to think that sinfulness—linked to our changeableness (*mutabilitas*), that is to our contingency—is equated with temporal and bodily reality. Augustine is never tired of repeating that the problem lies in our will, in our love: 'We were incapable of grasping eternal things, and weighed down by the accumulated dirt of our sins, which we had collected by our love of temporal things.'[1] This means that the remedy to this illness (*infirmitas*), far from consisting in a flight away from temporal realities, will find in these very temporal realities the necessary ground for the conversion of our love from covetousness (*cupiditas*) to love (*dilectio*): 'But we could only be purified for adaptation to eternal things by temporal means like those we were already bound to in a servile adaptation.'[2]

Nevertheless, this conversion from covetousness to love is not within our own power nor can temporal things play any mediating role with regard to the contemplation of eternal realities autonomously. We have seen how Augustine's main complaint against philosophers was precisely their pretension to being able to be purified by their own power. The only true means of purification, the only remedy is faith. He praises Plato for a sentence 'true indeed' from the *Timaeus*: '*As eternity is to that which has originated, so truth is to faith.*'[3] The faith Augustine has in mind, of course, is of a completely

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[1] 4.24 (191. Trans. Hill, 169): 'ad aeterna capessenda idonei non eramus sordesque peccatorum nos praegrauabant temporalium rerum amore contractae'.

[2] Ibid.: 'Purgari autem ut contemperaremur aeternis non nisi per temporalia possemus qualibus iam contemperati tenebamur.'

[3] Ibid.: 'Quantum ad id quod ortum est aeternitas ualet, tantum ad fidem ueritas', quoting Plato, *Timaeus*, 29c (*Platonis Opera*, ed. Ioannes Burnet, Oxford: Clarendon, 1902, vol. IV, 29c).

different order as compared to the Platonic faith (πίστις) which, although truthful, lacks a proper foundation both because it is not knowledge of the universal and because its object is constantly in becoming. For Augustine, both the eternity which related to 'that which has originated' and the truth which is related to faith are to be identified with Christ. The epistemological hiatus between what is temporal and what is eternal, between what is the object of faith and what is the object of contemplation, is overcome only in and by Christ. This is stated with regard to happiness in the following passage: 'Man ought to follow no one but God in his search for bliss, and yet he was unable to perceive God; so by following God made man he would at one and the same time follow one he could perceive and the one he ought to follow.'[4] In the Incarnation, some temporal realites are given to us which allow us to 'perceive' (*sentire*) God, while continuing to demand faith. The balance between these two elements—the mediatory role of temporal realities in Christ and faith—is crucial to the understanding of Augustine's approach to the knowledge of God. He is not concerned with epistemology as such, but with sin and reconciliation. Christ does not become an epistemological 'function' destined to solve a Platonic aporia between time and eternity, the realm of senses and the realm of ideas, faith and science (πίστις and νόησις).[5] If, in Christ, what pertains to his humanity becomes for us the way (*uia*) to happiness and vision of God, it is through faith, that is to say through constant adhesion to the person of the only Mediator between God and us, the Word made flesh.

To grasp this point, we must explore the tight connection Augustine establishes between Incarnation and knowledge of God.

ii. Incarnation and knowledge of God

The pre-Chalcedonian Christology of the *De Trinitate*, is remarkably consistent and precise even though the vocabulary is not yet fixed. For example, the use of the word 'person' seems slightly ambivalent: sometimes it designates the result of the union, sometimes the person of the Son uniting human nature to himself. Thus, one way of talking about the Incarnation resorts to the vocabulary of 'joining' (*copulatio*) and 'mixture' (*commixtio*) not of two natures, but of the man with the Word of God, resulting in the unity of *one person*: 'So a man was coupled (*copulatus*) and even in a certain sense

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[4] 7.5 (253. Trans. Hill, 223): 'Quia enim homo ad beatitudinem sequi non debebat nisi deum et sentire non poterat deum, sequendo deum hominem factum sequeretur simul et quem sentire poterat et quem sequi debebat.'

[5] Cf. Gilson (1999 [1947]), 25–39.

compounded (*commixtus*) with the Word of God as one person.'[6] Despite
this way of using the word person to designate the result of the union which
seems to anticipate the formula of Chalcedon, Augustine does not favour
the symmetrical approach to the two natures of Christ we find later in both
Chalcedon and Leo's *Tomus ad Flauianum*. His approach is more akin to
that of Cyril of Alexandria, simply because it is moulded from the Prologue
of the Gospel of John and from the Christological hymn of Philippians. If
Augustine is capable of statements like the following: 'this whole [of Christ]
can be called God because it is God, and man because it is man', it is only
after he has stressed the personal action of the Word of God as the agent of
the Incarnation: 'If you go on to ask me how the incarnation itself was done, I
say that the very Word of God was made flesh, that is, was made man, without
however being turned or changed into that which he was made; that he was
of course so made that you would have there not only the Word of God and
the flesh of man but also the rational soul of man as well.'[7] This is echoed
in the vocabulary of 'taking' (*susceptio*) and 'assuming' (*assumptio*) of either
humanity (*humanitas*) or man (*homo*) and flesh (*caro*).[8] The subject, however,
of this action is always the Word of God himself: 'the Son of God, who is
at once the Word of God and the mediator between God and men, the Son
of man, equal to the Father by oneness of divinity and our fellow by taking
(*susceptio*) of humanity'.[9]

The personal agency of the Son of God in the Incarnation is highlighted
through the Trinitarian meaning of person which, in the following passage,
designates not the result of the act of assuming (*assumptio*), but its agent:
'Nowhere do we find it written that God the Father is greater than the Holy

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[6] 4.30 (201. Trans. Hill, 175): 'Verbo dei ad unitatem personae copulatus, et quodam modo commixtus est homo.'

[7] 4.31 (203 f. Trans. Hill, 176): 'Si autem quaeritur ipsa incarnatio quomodo facta sit, ipsum dei uerbum dico carnem factum, id est hominem factum, non tamen in hoc quod factum est conuersum atque mutatum, ita sane factum ut ibi sit non tantum uerbum dei et hominis caro sed etiam rationalis hominis anima, atque hoc totum et deus dicatur propter deum et homo propter hominem.'

[8] *Homo* and *caro* are for him synonymous, cf. 2.11 (94).

[9] 4.12 (176. Trans. Hill, 161): 'ipse filius dei, uerbum dei et idem ipse mediator dei et hominum, filius hominis, aequalis patri per diuinitatis unitatem et particeps noster per humanitatis susceptionem'. van Bavel (1954), 178, attributes to Augustine the introduction of the word *persona* in Christology, in the Latin tradition at least, as the result of 'efforts personnels et laborieux' rather than from Greek influence. In this process, van Bavel highlights 3 stages: '(a) le Christ homme porte la personne de la Sagesse; (b) la personne du Verbe assume une nature humaine dans l'unité de sa personne; (c) le Christ une seule personne en deux natures'. Cf. also Grillmeier (1965), 408: 'for Augustine the unity of person in Christ was not merely the result of a synthesis of two natures. It is rather the pre-existent person of the Word who is the focal point of this unity and who "takes up" the human nature "into the unity of his person" (*in unitatem personae suae*).'

Spirit, or the Holy Spirit less than God the Father; and the reason is that a created form was not assumed by the Holy Spirit to appear under in the same way that the son of man was assumed (*assumptus*) by the Word of God as the form in which to present his person to the world.'[10] The very person of the Word of God presents himself in the form of a son of man.

The vocabulary of 'assuming' and 'taking' did not have the Nestorian overtones it was to acquire only later and, anyway, it regularly alternates with that of made (*factum*) but not 'converted and changed' (*conuersum atque mutatum*):[11] the person of the Word unites the man/flesh to himself, but is not changed into this same man/flesh. Crucial, however, both for his Christology and the theological epistemology which depends on it, is Augustine's careful understanding of the relation between the man and the Word which not only explicitly counters any Ebionite drift, and this for soteriological reasons, but also clearly shows a firm doctrine of the hypostatic union[12] even without the vocabulary formulated later by theological reflection.[13]

[10] 2.11 (93 f. Trans. Hill, 104): 'Ideo autem nusquam scriptum est quod deus pater maior sit spiritu sancto, uel spiritus sanctus minor deo patre, quia non sic est assumpta creatura in qua appareret spiritus sanctus sicut assumptus est filius hominis in qua forma ipsius uerbi dei persona praesentaretur.'

[11] 1.14 (46); 4.31 (203).

[12] It might of course be objected that the vocabulary of 'hypostatic union' related to Augustine is anachronistic, since its use in Christology is to be traced back to Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) and to the Council of Ephesus (430). However, we reckon that its use is legitimate and useful in the present theological account of Augustine's Christology. In fact, it draws attention to the remarquable affinity between the Christologies of Augustine and of his contemporary Cyril of Alexandria, even though the former did not know the Christology of the latter; (the only trace of a contact between them is a letter of Augustine to Cyril in 417 requiring information related to the Pelagian controversy, cf. Lancel (1999), 476 and 480); the reason for this affinity is quite straighforward: the framework of both Christologies is the Prologue of the Gospel of John and the Christological hymn of Phil. 2. These two scriptural texts provide the basic content of 'hypostatic union': the Incarnation is the personal act through which the Son of God himself became man and therefore also became the subject of all the actions accomplished by Christ (the so-called *communication of idioms*). Its main implication is that the humanity of Christ has no existence independently of the incarnation or of its subsistence in the person of the Son of God. All these features are clearly present in Augustine's Christological thought.

[13] Only progressively did Augustine become aware of the epistemological implications of the different ways of approaching the mystery of the Incarnation. An evolution in his Christological thought is acknowledged by van Bavel (1954), 63: 'Nous croyons qu'on peut même constater une légère évolution chez saint Augustin en ce sens qu'au fil des années, la communication des idiomes prend le dessus sur la distinction des natures.' A noteworthy evolution in this respect can be detected in a passage from the *De agone Christiano* (AD 396), owing to the marked anti-Adoptionist stance of this catechetical writing. The crucial difference between Christ and any other holy man depends on their opposite relation to the Son as wisdom. Christ is not only a wise man, he is wisdom itself. He does not only become wise through God's wisdom but he 'bears the very person of God's Wisdom' ('sustinere personam sapientiae dei' or, some lines down, 'personam gerit'): 'Et propterea sapientia dei, et uerbum in principio per quod facta sunt omnia, non sic assumpsit illum hominem ut ceteros sanctos; sed multo excellentius, multoque sublimius: quomodo ipsum solum adsumi oportuit, in quo sapientia hominibus appareret, sicut

Already in the passage quoted above, Augustine draws a sharp distinction between Christ and any other holy or wise man:

Nowhere do we find it written that God the Father is greater than the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit less than God the Father; and the reason is that a created form was not assumed by the Holy Spirit to appear under in the same way that the son of man was assumed by the Word of God as the form in which to present his person to the world. The son of man was not assumed simply in order to have the Word of God, like other saints and wise men only more so, *above his fellows* (Ps 45.8); not in order to have a more ample share in the Word of God and so excel the rest in wisdom, but quite simply to be the Word of God. The Word in flesh is one thing, the Word being flesh is another; which means the Word in a man is one thing, the Word being man another.[14]

The soteriological connotations of this distinction between Christ and any other holy or wise man are made more explicit in the thirteenth book, where Augustine develops the reasons of the *congruitas* of the Incarnation, i.e. its 'symmetry' or 'fittingness', a key idea in his soteriology, as we shall see shortly. The Incarnation teaches us that we are saved by grace, without any previous merits on our part:[15]

eam uisibiliter decebat ostendi' (*agon* xx.22, CSEL 41, 123) and 'unus mediator dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus, qui sapientiae ipsius, per quam sapientes fiunt quicumque homines, non solum beneficium habet, sed etiam personam gerit' (*agon* xx.22, CSEL 41, 123). Adoptionism comes to the fore again during the Pelagian controversy: Pelagius' heresy, as Augustine interprets it, depends on an Adoptionist form of Christology, cf. van Bavel (1954), 39: 'On se croirait parfois en pleine controverse adoptioniste!'. Since 'ideo necessarium esse Christi nomen, ut per eius euangelium discamus quemadmodum uiuere debeamus, non etiam ut eius adiuuemur gratia, quo bene uiuamus' (*nat. et gr.* 40.47, CSEL 60, 267 f.), so it is not surprising that Augustine uses Paul's assertions in Galatians 2:21 and 5:11 to protest that if this is the case, '*Christus gratis mortuus est*' and that through this form of *sapientia carnis* 'euacuatur crux Christi' (*nat. et gr.* 40.47, CSEL 60, 268). If Christ's salvation is reduced to his teaching, both the mystery of his Incarnation and his death on the cross are made redundant. Cf. also *pecc. mer.* 2.xvii.27 (CSEL 60, 90 f.) and *praes. Dei* (*ep.* 187) 13.40 (CSEL 57, 117) 'Singularis ergo est illa susceptio, nec cum hominibus aliquibus sanctis quantalibet sapientia et sanctitate praestantibus, ullo modo potest esse communis. Ubi diuinae gratiae satis perspicuum clarumque documentum est.'

   [14] 2.11 (93 f. Trans. Hill, 104):

Ideo autem nusquam scriptum est quod deus pater maior sit spiritu sancto, uel spiritus sanctus minor deo patre, quia non sic est assumpta creatura in qua appareret spiritus sanctus sicut assumptus est filius hominis in qua forma ipsius uerbi dei persona praesentaretur; non ut haberet uerbum dei sicut alii sancti sapientes, sed prae participibus suis; non utique quod amplius habebat uerbum ut esset quam ceteri excellentiore sapientia, sed quod ipsum uerbum erat. Aliud est enim uerbum in carne, aliud uerbum caro; id est aliud est uerbum in homine, aliud uerbum homo.

   [15] We have here an echo of the Pelagian controversy, cf. van Bavel (1954), 37: 'La controverse pélagienne donna à saint Augustin l'occasion d'approfondir sa christologie; obligé qu'il fut de chercher un exemple absolu de la grâce, sa pensée se porta vers le Christ comme prototype de toute grâce.' Dodaro (1993) argues that 'the link between the perichoresis involved in religious knowledge and Christology (both of which are present in *sacramentum*) underwent considerable development during the Pelagian controversy' (p. 280). The latter's article is insightful and offers

Another point about the incarnation is that in the man Christ it advertises the grace of God toward us without any previous deserts on our part, as not even he won the privilege of being joined to the true God in such a unity that with him he would be one person, Son of God, by any previous merits of his own; how could he, since from the very moment he began to be man he was also God, which is why it said *The Word become flesh* (Jn 1.14)?[16]

In an unusual way, here the union is envisaged from the 'ascendent' viewpoint of Christ and not within the 'descendent' trajectory of the Word of God. Person designates the result of the union, (*coniunctio*) of Christ with the Son of God. Such an approach could easily slip into the assertion of two subjects in Christ, the man and the Logos, as for example in Theodore of Mopsuestia.[17] Instead we have a remarkably clear statement of what sounds very much like the later doctrine of the anhypostatic character of the humanity of Christ:[18]

a very valuable list of texts on this issue. At the same time, Dodaro's attempt to read Rahnerian epistemology into Augustine's thought (p. 274) puts some strain on the texts. On the influence of the Pelagian controversy on the *De Trinitate*, Plagnieux (1954) opts for an early composition of most of the *De Trinitate* and sees traces of the anti-Pelagian controversy only in the additions Augustine mentions in his *ep.* 174 (CCL 50, 26) (p. 819). However, he himself sees traces of the anti-Pelagian soteriological doctrine throughout the fourth book, well beyond the Prologue added at the time of the final editing. This militates in favour of the idea that the fourth book as a whole was written at the time (or after) the Pelagian controversy, cf. Hombert (2000), 56–80. At the same time, however, Plagnieux (1954) wisely warns that Augustine 'n'a pas attendu Pélage pour sentir sa misère et pour implorer la grâce de l'unique sauveur' (p. 825).

[16] 13.22 (412 f. Trans. Hill, 361):

Deinde ut gratia dei nobis sine ullis praecedentibus meritis in homine Christo commendaretur quia nec ipse ut tanta unitate uero deo coniunctus una cum illo persona filius dei fieret ullis est praecedentibus meritis assecutus, sed ex quo esse homo coepit, ex illo est et deus, unde dictum est: *Verbum caro factum est.*

Cf. *ench.* 11.36 (CCL 46, 69 f.) and *Trin.* 2.8 (89. Trans. Hill, 102): 'It was in being made of woman that the Son was sent' ('Eo ipso missum filium quo factus est ex muliere').

[17] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Incarnation VII*, in *On the Minor Epistles of St. Paul*, ed. H. B. Swete, Cambridge 1880–1882, II, 293–297.

[18] The word 'anhypostatic' is used here in the technical sense it has assumed in theology since the sixteenth century, cf. Daley (1998), 50 f., and in Karl Barth, well summed-up by Webster (1998): 'To assert that the humanity of Christ is anhypostatic is to state in negative terms that God is subject and agent in the human career of Jesus' (p. 95) and 'even in the humanity of Christ, the content of revelation as well as the subject is God alone' (p. 94). Webster (2001) adds that Christ's 'humanity is thus not self-existent, but comes to exist in the event of the Word's "procession". In effect, this reinforces what is secured by speaking of the Word's *assumption* of humanity, namely that—against Adoptionism—Jesus Christ is not merely a human being who pre-exists the action of the Word and is subsequently exalted to union with him; rather, he is himself the sheerly creative life-act of the Word or Son of God' (p. 138). Lang (1998) upholds the patristic roots of this doctrine, even though he does not trace them back to Leontius of Byzantium, but to John of Damascus, 'who achieved an original synthesis in which the Chalcedonian Christology of two natures in one ὑπόστασις was combined with the radical asymmetry of the hypostatic union of the divine and the human nature in the ὑπόστασις of the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity' (p. 657).

as soon as the man comes into existence, he is God. There is no autonomous existence of Christ's humanity: in Christ we have to do with God himself.[19] What immediately follows confirms this interpretation: what is at stake in the Incarnation and the cross is not the humility of the man Jesus, but the humility of God, 'man's pride, which is the greatest obstacle to his cleaving to God, could be confuted and cured by such humility on the part of God'.[20] Just in the same way, the obedience of Christ on the cross *is* the obedience of God the Son to God the Father: 'what greater example of obedience could be given to us, us who had been ruined by disobedience, than God the Son obeying God the Father *even to death on the cross* (Phil 2.8)'.[21] Thus, the victory of Christ over sin and death is such that man has nothing to boast about: it is God's victory. In Augustine's own words: 'the one who eventually conquered was both man and God, and the reason the virgin-born conquered was that God was humbly wearing (*gerebat*) that man, not governing (*regebat*) him as he does the other saints'.[22] Jesus is not the human expression of God's humility

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[19] In the *Enchiridion* (AD 421–422), belonging to the period of the Pelagian controversy, together with the idea that the mystery of Incarnation exemplifies grace (*ench.* 11.36, CCL 46, 69), we also are offered a clear instance of the same assertion of hypostatic union as in the *De Trinitate*: 'Nempe ex quo esse homo coepit, non aliud coepit esse quam dei filius; et hoc unicus, et propter deum uerbum, quod illo suscepto caro factum est, utique deus: ut quemadmodum est una persona quilibet homo, anima scilicet rationalis et caro, ita sit Christus una persona, uerbum et homo' [*ench.* 11.36 (CCL 46, 69); cf. the list of similar passages given by van Bavel (1954), 39: *enchir.* 12.40 (CCL 46, 72); *corrept.* 11.30 (PL 44, 934); *praed. sanct.* 15.30 f. (PL 44, 981 ff.); *c. Iul. imp.* 1.138; 4.84 (CSEL 85/1, 153 f.)]. This is a very well-documented feature of Augustine's Christology:

Dès le premier instant de son existence, la nature humaine du Christ était unie personnellement au Verbe. Celle-ci ne commençait même à exister que par sa susception en la personne du Verbe. Une nature humaine et le Verbe formèrent donc une seule personne, dès que le Verbe devint homme. Il n'y eut pas un instant où il fut purement homme sans être en même temps Fils unique de Dieu, car c'est vraiment le Fils de Dieu que la Vierge a conçu et mis au monde (van Bavel (1954), 39; and also 22 and 26).

Cf. also Madec (1989), 273. This text from the *Enchiridion* is also important because such a clear grasp on Christology goes together with one of the most explicit assertions of the fact that through Christ's human nature, and thus in faith, truth makes itself available to us: 'Veritas quippe ipsa, unigenitus dei filius, non gratia, sed natura, gratia suscepit hominem tanta unitate personae, ut idem ipse esset etiam hominis filius' (*ench.* 11.36, CCL 46, 70).

[20] 13.22 (412 f. Trans. Hill, 361): 'Est etiam illud ut superbia hominis quae maximo impedimento est ne inhaereatur deo per tantam dei humilitatem redargui posset atque sanari.' Cf. also 1.28 (69) 'recte dicitur et deus crucifixus'.

[21] 13.22 (413. Trans. Hill, 361): 'Quod autem maius obedientiae nobis praeberetur exemplum qui per inobedientiam perieramus quam deo patri deus filius obediens usque ad mortem crucis?'

[22] 13.23 (414. Trans. Hill, 362): 'qui autem uicit et homo et deus erat, et ideo sic uicit natus ex uirgine quia deus humiliter, non quomodo alios sanctos regebat illum hominem, sed gerebat'.

and obedience. Rather, in Christ, we encounter God himself in his humility and in his obedience.[23]

This last statement comes at the end of book 13 of the *De Trinitate*. It is the climax of the long Christological argument explicitly developed in the first four books and then in the thirteenth—and also underlying the rest of the treatise—and it constitutes the theological presupposition for the point Augustine is about to make about the relation between science and wisdom at the end of book 13.[24] The formulation of hypostatic union we have just seen entails that indeed God makes himself known in Christ through temporal and bodily realities. If the humility of Christ is the humility of God, this means that our knowledge of temporal realities (science) is connected with knowledge of God (wisdom) once again, thus overcoming the consequences of our sinfulness and changeableness for our knowledge of God. This, however, does not mean that these temporal realities give us a purchase on God. Christ's humanity is not revelatory as such, but only through faith. This point we must now elucidate.

The meaning of Augustine's views on the relation between faith and truth in book 4[25] can be fully appreciated only against the background of the understanding of hypostatic union we have just analysed.[26] In an exceptionally dense passage, he begins by stating that just as disorderly love for temporal realities was the expression of our sinful condition, so these same temporal realities are necessary to the healing process: there are useful temporal realities which

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[23] Cipriani (2001), 501: 'the bishop of Hippo makes use of the so-called *communicatio idiomatum*...and sometimes he even explains it'. Here Cipriani quotes an interesting passage from *ep.* 169.2.8 (CSEL 44, 617):

Proinde quae de Filio dei uerba dicuntur, uidendum est, secundum quid dicantur. Non enim homine adsumpto personarum numerus auctus est, sed eadem Trinitas mansit. Nam sicut in homine quolibet praeter unum illum, qui singulariter susceptus est, anima et corpus una persona est; ita in Christo Verbum et homo una persona est. Et sicut homo uerbi gratia philosophus non utique nisi secundum animam dicitur nec ideo tamen absurde sed congruentissima et usitatissima locutione dicimus philosophum caesum, philosophum mortuum, philosophum sepultum, cum totum secundum carnem accidat non secundum illud quod est philosophus, ita Christus deus, dei Filius, dominus gloriae, et si quid huius modi secundum uerbum dicitur; et tamen recte dicitur deus crucifixus, cum hoc eum secundum carnem passum esse, non secundum illud quo dominus gloriae est, non habeatur incertum.

[24] 13.24–26 (415–420).   [25] 4.24 (191 ff.).

[26] Even though the understanding of hypostatic union we have analysed above is openly formulated only in book 13, the quotations given above from other works show that it was a feature of Augustine's theological thought which came to the fore especially during the Pelagian controversy. With Hombert (2000), 56–80, we believe in a late writing of book 4, at the time of the Pelagian controversy (or even later). Moreover, the internal analysis of book 4 clearly presupposes it, as we are about to see.

'help us to get well and lead us, once we have got well, to eternal things.'[27] At this stage (we are in book 4), he has not yet formulated the distinction between science and wisdom, the former concerning the rational role of the mind in temporal matters—dealing with both knowledge and activity—the latter concerning the superior function of the same rational mind engaged in the contemplation of eternal things, and the necessity of both for Christian life.[28] Yet this distinction can be sensed behind the statement that 'just as the rational mind is meant, once purified, to contemplate eternal things, so it is meant, while still needing purification, to give faith to temporal things.... So now we accord faith to the things done in time for our sakes, and are purified by it; in order that when we come to sight, and truth succeeds to faith, eternity might likewise succeed to mortality.'[29] The way truth will take over from faith, however, is not exactly like the replacement of one thing by another. Faith and truth have the same object, even though each perceives this same object in a different way. This is explained by the hypostatic union:

Now until this happens and in order that it may happen . . . truth itself, co-eternal with the Father, *originated from the earth* (Ps 85.12) when the Son of God came in order to become Son of man and to capture our faith and draw it to himself, and by means of it to lead us on to his truth; for he took on our mortality in such a way that he did no lose his own eternity. . . . So it was proper for us to be purified in such a way that he who remained eternal should become for us 'originated'; it would not do for there to be one person for us in faith, another in truth. Nor, on the other hand, could we pass from being among the things that originated to eternal things, unless the eternal allied himself to us in our originated condition, and so provided us with a bridge to his eternity.[30]

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[27] 4.24 (191. Trans. Hill, 169): 'suscipiunt sanandos et traiciunt ad aeterna sanatos'.

[28] 13.1 (381).

[29] 4.24 (191. Trans. Hill, 169 f.): 'Mens autem rationalis sicut purgata contemplationem debet rebus aeternis, sic purganda temporalibus fidem. . . . Nunc ergo adhibemus fidem rebus temporaliter gestis propter nos et per ipsam mundamur ut cum ad speciem uenerimus quemadmodum succedit fidei ueritas ita mortalitati succedat aeternitas.'

[30] 4.24 (192. Trans. Hill, 170):

Quod donec fiat et ut fiat . . . ipsa ueritas patri coaeterna de terra orta est cum filius dei sic uenit ut fieret filius hominis et ipse in se exciperet fidem nostram qua nos perduceret ad ueritatem suam qui sic suscepit mortalitatem nostram ut non amitteret aeternitatem suam. . . . Ita ergo nos purgari oportebat ut ille nobis fieret ortus qui maneret aeternus ne alter nobis esset in fide, alter in ueritate; nec ab eo quod orti sumus ad aeterna transire possemus nisi aeterno per ortum nostrum nobis sociato ad aeternitatem ipsius traiceremur.

Cf. Cipriani (2001), 502, quotes many more texts from Augustine's works stating that in Christ truth itself became flesh: *conf.* 7.24 f. (CCL 27, 108 f.); *ench.* 11.37 (CCL 46, 70); *Io. eu. tr.* 41.1 (CCL 36, 357). In many other texts, especially from *Io. eu. tr.*, 'when Christ speaks, says, shows or proclaims something, Truth itself is speaking, showing, proclaiming it' (ibid.), cf. *Io. eu. tr.* 19.9 (CCL 36, 192 f.); 41.1 (CCL 36, 357); 54.8 (CCL 36, 462 f.); 59.2 (CCL 36, 476 f.); 81.2 (CCL 36, 530); 85.2 (CCL 36, 539); 89.5 (CCL 36, 550); 97.1 (CCL 36, 572 f.) (ibid., note 115).

We notice again the descending approach of the Incarnation: the Word of God, 'truth itself, co-eternal with the Father', became incarnate in such a way as to remain eternal, which is another way of saying that in Christ we have to do with God himself. The aim was that there should not be 'one person for us in faith, another in truth' (*ne alter nobis esset in fide, alter in ueritate*), i.e. that God might become the very object of our faith just as truly as he will become the object of our vision when we will contemplate him as truth. If he can 'capture' (*excipere*) our faith in himself to lead us to his truth, it is because he really makes himself known in this same faith. Thus, Augustine can say that 'our faith has now in some sense followed him in whom we have believed to where he has ascended'.[31] The passage from faith to vision will not consist in a change of the object of our knowledge, but in a different mode of perception of the same object which gives himself to us already now, *nunc*.[32]

Augustine is often credited with an interpretation of John 14:6—'I am the way and the truth and the life'—according to which Christ is the way through faith whereas he will be truth and life in the future vision only, which would mean that the Incarnation only has a purificatory value, but not an epistemological one. If, indeed, in some texts we find this interpretation [cf. *s*. 346.2 (PL 39, 1523); *Io. eu. tr.* 34.9 (CCL 36, 315 f.) etc.], in many more passages Augustine declares that Christ is truth and life for believers in his Incarnation already now, through faith, because he makes known the Father, cf. *Io. eu. tr.* 22.2 (CCL 36, 223 f.); *en. Ps.* 66.5 (CCL 39, 862); *s*. 189.2 (PL 38, 1005), and several others quoted by Cipriani (2001), 504–507.

[31] 4.24 (192. Trans. Hill, 170): 'Nunc illuc quodam modo secuta est fides nostra quo ascendit in quem credidimus'. For a confirmation of our interpretation of 4.24 and in particular of the relation between faith and contemplation (or truth), see Camelot (1956): 'C'est la même vérité qui est connue dans la foi et dans la vision. . . . Aucune trace chez saint Augustin . . . d'une opposition entre la foi au Christ et la contemplation du Verbe' (p. 168). Among Augustine's texts outside the *De Trinitate* to support this assertion, Camelot quotes *Jo. eu. tr.* 40.9 (CCL 36, 355 f.):

Fides ergo est, quod non uides credere; ueritas, quod credidisti uidere: . . . Quod Dominus ipse adtendens quodam loco ait: *Qui diligit me, mandata mea custodit; et qui diligit me, diligetur a Patre meo, et ego diligam eum, et ostendam meipsum illi.* Quem qui audiebant, utique iam uidebant; eis tamen, si diligebant, uidendum se promittebat. Sic et hic: *Cognoscetis ueritatem.* Quid enim? quod dixisti non est ueritas? Veritas est, sed adhuc creditur, nondum uidetur.

[32] For a valuable answer to Du Roy's denunciation of the 'gnostic' character of Augustine's treatment of the relation between faith and wisdom (Du Roy (1966), 419), see Bailleux (1975). For Du Roy, Augustinian faith is only a means of moral purification and not a real knowledge of God. Having summarized the role of purification in Plotinus (p. 543), Bailleux explains that Augustinian faith is not a simple ascetic means, but the *personal* adhesion to Christ through the Holy Spirit, i.e. it consists in a relation of knowledge and love (pp. 544 f.). Thus Bailleux can show that Augustine does not oppose faith and knowledge of God neither does he consider the latter independent of the former (pp. 543–550), drawing attention to the same passages of the *De Trinitate* we have highlithed above, especially 4.24 (191 f.). However, although he is aware of the necessity to ground the relation between faith and knowledge in the Incarnation (pp. 538, 541, 550), Bailleux does not seem to perceive the extent to which faith (or science) and truth (or wisdom) are united in Christ (cf. p. 546, where he interprets Augustine's position on this issue in the light of Thomas Aquinas, and p. 549). A recent and more exact answer to Du Roy on this issue is given by Cipriani (2001): 'Christian faith already is a kind of vision' (p. 493), who takes great care to ground this statement in Christology (pp. 498–508).

Finally, let us notice that Augustine is talking about *faith*: the fact that in Christ we have to do with God himself is not a self-evident truth. Nor can we say that in Christ we have a 'grasp' on God. It is rather the contrary: in Christ God *can* truly make himself known to us, through the conversion of our love he himself operates in us through the same Christ. In Christ, through the Holy Spirit, we go from covetousness for science to the charity for wisdom (from *cupiditas scientiae* to *caritas sapientiae*), not however through discarding science, but through charity for science as well, since Christ is both our science and our wisdom.[33]

iii. The sending of the Son and the theme of science and wisdom

We are now able to perceive the meaning and the depth of a sentence taken from book 4 which constitutes the outcome of the long discussion on missions of the first four books of the *De Trinitate*:

There you have what the Son of God has been sent for; indeed, there you have what it is for the Son of God to have been sent. Everything that has taken place in time in 'originated' matters which have been produced from the eternal and reduced back to the eternal and has been designed to elicit the faith we must be purified by in order to contemplate the truth, has either been testimony to this mission or has been the actual mission of the Son of God.[34]

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[33] Cf. 7.5 (253) where Augustine invites to adhere to Christ through the charity poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

[34] 4.25 (193. Trans. Hill, 171):

Ecce ad quod missus est filius dei; immo uero ecce quod est missum esse filium dei. Quaecumque propter faciendam fidem qua mundaremur ad contemplandam ueritatem in rebus ortis ab aeternitate prolatis et ad aeternitatem relatis temporaliter gesta sunt aut testimonia missionis huius fuerunt aut ipsa missio filii dei. Sed testimonia quaedam uenturum praenuntiauerunt; quaedam uenisse testata sunt.

Cf. *cons. Eu.* 1.xxxv.53 (CSEL 43, 58 ff.) (AD 404–405?), a text astonishingly similar to *Trin.* 4.24 (191), included the same quotation of Plato's *Timaeus* 'Quantum ad id quod ortum est aeternitas ualet, tantum ad fidem ueritas.' In Christ, truth and faith, eternity and time, are no longer opposed to each other, with a devaluation of the latter to the advantage of the former. Well in advance of the ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν of Chalcedon, the reiteration of *ipse* already appears to be the simplest and the most effective stylistic device for an orthodox confession of the mystery of the Incarnation: 'cum sit ipse Christus sapientia dei' and 'ut eadem ipsa dei sapientia ad unitatem personae suae homine assumpto' etc. The identity between Christ and the wisdom of God entails that the object of faith through temporal realities is the very truth of eternal realities, with the only difference of the modality of knowledge. Through faith, truth really makes itself available to us. In Christ, 'eadem ipsa dei sapientia, ad unitatem personae suae homine adsumpto, in quo temporaliter nasceretur, uiueret, moreretur, resurgeret', makes us wise. Finally, the Trinitarian dynamic of access to wisdom is also suggested in this text through the mention of the role of the Holy Spirit: 'Quapropter, cum sit ipse Christus sapientia dei, per quam creata sunt omnia, cumque nullae mentes rationales siue angelorum siue hominum, nisi participatione

Everything which is performed in the temporal realm and has its origin and its aim in eternity is either a sending (*missio*) or a testimony to it. The abstract terms of this definition of sending refer to a theological issue: this term covers the theophanies or manifestations of God in the Old Testament (as testimonies to sendings), the Incarnation and the sending of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament (the sendings properly speaking). The meaning of the definition, therefore, is that despite the hiatus established by sin between our science and wisdom, between on the one hand our knowledge and use of temporal realities and, on the other hand, the knowledge and the enjoyment of God, a new possibility of overcoming this disjunction has been inaugurated in the Old Testament and completed in the New Testament from God's side.

Therefore, applied to Christ, this definition of sending can be paraphrased as follows: the Incarnation of Christ (his sending) brings about a series of temporal realities (those things which are acted in time, *temporaliter gesta sunt*, i.e. Christ's human nature, his deeds, and his words) the subject of which is the Son of God himself. As a result, they have no existence, and therefore *meaning*, other than that which is given to them by their existence in the Son of God, i.e. the Word of God, the only and most perfect expression of the Father because of his equality with the Father—i.e. they are 'produced from the eternal' (*ab aeternitate prolata*). This is why these same actions which take place in time become a way to the Father and lead us to the contemplation of truth, i.e. they are 'reduced back to the eternal' (*ad aeternitatem relata*).[35]

This, however, only happens through faith (*propter faciendam fidem*), which is both the result of this process in us and the mode of our participation in it in this life. This point is crucial. Just as the Son could not be seen in the Old Testament and theophanies and manifestations only happened through angels or through material realities, so in the Incarnation itself, even in the hypostatic union, even after having been 'sent' (*missus*) as equal to the Father, the Son cannot be seen: 'how then before *the fullness of time* (Gal 4.4), which was the right time for him to be sent, how could he be seen by the fathers before he was sent, when various angelic demonstrations were shown them, especially considering that he could not even be seen, as he is in his equality with the Father, even after he had been sent?'[36] It is only as object of faith through love (*dilectio*) that Christ's humanity and his deeds allow us to see (i.e. know) the Father. Is this not the meaning of what Jesus says to Philip: 'Why, otherwise,

ipsius sapientes fiant, cui per spiritum sanctum, per quem caritas in cordibus nostris diffunditur, inhaeremus, quae trinitas unus deus est', *cons. Eu.* 1.xxxv.53 (CSEL 43, 58 f.).

[35] 4.25 (193).

[36] 4.26 (194 f. Trans. Hill, 171): 'Quomodo ergo ante istam plenitudinem temporis qua eum mitti oportebat priusquam missus esset uideri a patribus potuit cum eis angelica quaedam uisa demonstrarentur, quando nec iam missus sicut aequalis est patri uidebatur?'

should he say to Philip, who of course saw him in the flesh just as those who crucified him did, *Am I with you all this time and you do not know me? Philip, whoever has seen me has seen the Father* (Jn 14.9). Does this not mean that he both could and could not be seen?'[37] The humanity which the Word took in the Incarnation was offered to our faith: 'he was offering the flesh which the Word had been made in the fullness of time as the object to receive our faith'; his divinity will be object of contemplation only in the afterlife: 'but the Word itself, *through whom all things had been made* (Jn 1.3), was being kept for the contemplation in eternity of minds now purified through faith'.[38]

Therefore, the sending does not only coincide with a temporal reality 'captured' by God to be used as a means of self-manifestation, but also coincides with the grace which allows us to know God through this same temporal reality: 'the Son of God is not said to be sent in the very fact that he is born of the Father, but (i) either in the fact that the Word made flesh showed himself to this world; about this fact he says *I went forth from the Father and came into this world* (Jn 16.28). (ii) Or else he is sent in the fact that he is perceived in time by someone's mind.'[39] This idea is again conveyed by another sentence of the same passage where Augustine explains that when someone, in the course of his spiritual progress in time, comes to the knowledge of God—obviously through faith—we also talk about sending, but we do not say that this sending is in this world, as Scripture does with the visible manifestation of the Son of God in Christ. In fact, to the extent that what we know really is God, we ourselves are no more in this world. This means that knowledge of God is a grace. Temporal realities, even those which God himself uses for the purpose of making himself known, do not put knowledge of God at our disposal. This knowledge remains a matter of faith and love (*dilectio*). This is stated again in the following sentence: 'And he is precisely sent to anyone when he is known and perceived by him, as far as he can be perceived and known according to the capacity of a rational soul either making progress toward God or already made perfect in God.'[40] The whole argument of the *De Trinitate*, as we shall see, explains that the progress of the rational soul in God is the result of faith

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[37] 4.26 (195. Trans. Hill, 172): 'Vnde enim dicit Philippo a quo utique sicut a ceteris et ab ipsis a quibus crucifixus est in carne uidebatur: *Tanto tempore uobiscum sum et non cognouistis me? Philippe, qui me uidit uidit et patrem*, nisi quia uidebatur et non uidebatur?'

[38] Ibid.: 'carnem quod uerbum in plenitudine temporis factum erat suscipiendae nostrae fidei porrigebat; ipsum autem *uerbum per quod omnia facta* erant purgatae per fidem menti contemplandum in aeternitate seruabat'.

[39] 4.28 (198. Trans. Hill, 173): 'Non ergo eo ipso quo de patre natus est missus dicitur filius, sed (i) uel eo quod apparuit huic mundo uerbum caro factum unde dicit: *A patre exii et ueni in hunc mundum*, (ii) uel eo quod ex tempore cuiusquam mente percipitur.'

[40] Ibid.: 'Et tunc unicuique mittitur cum a quoquam cognoscitur atque percipitur quantum cognosci et percipi potest pro captu uel proficientis in deum uel perfectae in deo animae rationalis.'

and love or, rather, of the faith which works through love. It is a matter of conversion of our love from covetousness to love (*dilectio*). This point we shall develop in our section on the Holy Spirit.

On this basis, we can understand what Augustine means by distinguishing science from wisdom in the thirteenth book while identifying them both with Christ. First of all, he states that

all these things that the Word made flesh did and suffered for us in time and space belong, according to the distinction we have undertaken to illustrate, to science and not to wisdom. Insofar as he is Word, he is without time and without space, coeternal with the Father and wholly present everywhere; and if anyone can utter a true word about this, as far as he is able, it will be a word of wisdom.[41]

It is evident that this distinction restates what we have seen above, i.e. that knowledge of what the Word did in his flesh (*scientia*) does not necessarily and, one would say, 'automatically' constitute knowledge of the Word himself and, through him, of the Father; the latter is the object of wisdom.

Augustine is fond of quoting a sentence from Colossians where Paul states that in Christ 'are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and science'.[42] This is a way of expressing the relation between hypostatic union and knowledge of God according to what we have seen so far. It is here that we find the well-known, albeit sometimes misinterpreted sentence which follows:

Our science therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through science toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ, *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and science* (Col 2.3). But now we are speaking of science; later on we are going to speak about wisdom, as far as he himself enables us to do so.[43]

The object of both science and wisdom is the same, even though now it is available through faith only, whereas in the afterlife it will be object of contemplation.

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[41] 13.24 (415. Trans. Hill, 362 f.):

omnia quae pro nobis uerbum caro factum temporaliter et localiter fecit et pertulit secundum distinctionem quam demonstrare suscepimus ad scientiam pertinent non ad sapientiam. Quod autem uerbum est sine tempore et sine loco est patri coaeternum et ubique totum, de quo si quisquam potest quantum potest ueracem proferre sermonem, sermo erit ille sapientiae.

[42] Col. 2:3: 'omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi'. Notice the *absconditi*, 'hidden'.

[43] 13.24 (416 f. Trans. Hill, 363 f.):

Scientia ergo nostra Christus est, sapientia quoque nostra idem Christus est. Ipse nobis fidem de rebus temporalibus inserit; ipse de sempiternis exhibet ueritatem. Per ipsum pergimus ad ipsum, tendimus per scientiam ad sapientiam; ab uno tamen eodemque Christo non recedimus *in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi*. Sed nunc de scientia loquimur, post de sapientia quantum ipse donauerit locuturi.

This also explains the slightly enigmatic end of the thirteenth book, where Augustine states that the triad of faith, although pertaining to the inner man, is not yet *the* image of God he is looking for. Talk about triads and the image of God—as we shall see—aims at persuading the reader of the necessity of the conversion of our love if we want to see (know) God the Trinity. What Augustine means is that, although *the object* of faith coincides with the object of contemplation or wisdom, *the mode* through which it is perceived (faith) is still hidden—we still see through a puzzling reflection in a mirror, until the day we shall know face to face.[44]

Faith does not only consist in the words heard, nor yet in those kept in our memory: these still belong to the outer man, says Augustine, i.e. they are not a matter of real knowledge and love. Faith is lived out according to the 'inner man', i.e. 'authentically', when what is kept and remembered—i.e. what we hear in preaching, what is commanded and what is promised—becomes object of love (*dilectio*): 'If, however, he holds in his memory and recollects the meaning of those words, he is now indeed doing something proper to the inner man, but he is not yet to be thought of, or talked of, as living according to the trinity of the inner man, unless he loves what these meanings proclaim, command and promise.'[45] Our faith is authentic only when that which is proclaimed, commanded, and promised to us is believed as true and becomes object of love: 'When you believe it to be true, and love in it what should be loved, then you are already living according to the trinity of the inner man; every man lives according to what he loves.'[46] Authentic faith works through love, as Augustine is fond of repeating through combining Romans and Galatians: '*the just man lives on faith* (Rom 1.17), *and this faith works through love* (Gal 5.6).'[47]

To make this point clearer, we have briefly to anticipate book 14, where Augustine finally unveils the real triad which is image of God, i.e. the triad of wisdom which consists in memory, knowledge, and love *of God*. Our image of God does not simply consist in the fact that we are memory, knowledge, and love, but in the fact that God becomes the object of our memory, knowledge, and love—something possible only thanks to his self-manifestation and

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[44] 1 Cor. 13:12, constantly quoted by Augustine to this effect, cf. for example 14.23 (455).

[45] 13.26 (419. Trans. Hill, 365): 'Si autem quod uerba illa significant teneat et recolat, iam quidem aliquid interioris hominis agit, sed nondum dicendus uel putandus est uiuere secundum interioris hominis trinitatem si ea non diligit quae ibi praedicantur, praecipiuntur, promittuntur.'

[46] 13.26 (419. Trans. Hill, 365): 'Cum autem uera esse creduntur et quae ibi diligenda sunt diliguntur, iam secundum trinitatem interioris hominis uiuitur; secundum hoc enim uiuit quisque quod diligit.'

[47] 13.26 (419. Trans. Hill, 365): '*iustus ex fide uiuit, quae fides per dilectionem operatur*', quoting Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11.

self-giving in Christ and the Holy Spirit. Now, the triad of faith and science of the thirteenth book has exactly the same object: God. What makes it a less perfect triad is the fact that God is remembered and known through faith, which works through love. Insofar as, through God's ever-free self-unveiling act in Christ through the Holy Spirit, we really know God, faith is real knowledge of God and therefore it belongs to the 'inner man'. Insofar, however, as it is not yet the vision face-to-face, it is not yet what can be properly called *the* image of God in us i.e. the triad of wisdom of the fourteenth book.

Thus, the articulation between faith and vision (or contemplation or wisdom) in relation to the Incarnation or hypostatic union of Christ that we have explored so far can be summed up as follows: even though the *modality* of faith and of vision are different, the *object* is the same, i.e. God revealing himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The identity of the object of both faith and vision is grounded in the hypostatic union: Christ is our science and our wisdom.

This conclusion implies that knowledge of God is characterized by an inherent eschatological dimension: God has made himself known once for all in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. In this side of the eschaton, we already are granted this objective knowledge of God through faith even though this same knowledge of God will acquire the character of a vision or a contemplation only in the other side of the eschatology. Before looking at Augustine's construal of this eschatological dimension of knowledge of God, however, we still have to consider the other fundamental aspect of Augustine's epistemology, i.e. the conversion from covetousness to love (*dilectio*).

II. CHRIST'S SACRIFICE AND HIS MEDIATORY ROLE

i. The conversion of love

When dealing with Augustine's powerfully integrated thought, distinctions can be envisaged only provisionally and with a keen awareness of their artificial character. This is particularly true with regard to the articulation between knowledge and love: in Augustinian terms, each is utterly unintelligible without the other. This premise is required at the junction between the aspect of the Christology of the *De Trinitate* we have explored so far, concerning the issue of the Incarnation and of knowledge (under the aspect of the relation between science and wisdom), and the other aspect concerning the issue of the conversion of our will from covetousness to love in connection with redemption. Indeed, we have seen already how tightly these two issues are

intertwined: behind the hiatus between science and wisdom, there is our sinfulness, usually expressed in terms of covetousness, i.e. as a failure of our will.[48] Conversion consists in the passage from covetousness for science to the charity for wisdom.[49] Then, while proper knowledge of God depends on *caritas* or *dilectio*, i.e. on the right kind of love, the conversion of love is the result of the renewal of man 'in the knowledge of God' (*in agnitione Dei*):

> So then the man who is being renewed in the recognition of God and in justice and holiness of truth by making progress day by day, is transferring his love from temporal things to eternal, from visible to intelligible, from carnal to spiritual things; he is industriously applying himself to checking and lessening his greed for the one sort and binding himself with charity to the other.[50]

The conversion of our love is described here as a process which depends on knowledge of the justice and the holiness of truth. Once again, such abstract terms refer to theological realities and more precisely to the justice and the holiness of Christ, particularly in his redeeming activity. Therefore, if, on the one hand, knowledge and love cannot be separated and are reformed simultaneously both in the Incarnation and in the death of Christ on the cross, on the other hand, while reformation of knowledge is more associated with the Incarnation, conversion of love is more associated with Christ's sacrifice.

ii. The devil's rights

As we tackle this crucial aspect of Augustine's Christology, we must resist the temptation to eschew one of its prominent features—at least materially—which we could provisionally label 'the issue of the devil's rights'. Augustine considers the devil a spiritual creature, the first to have rebelled against God. He then deceived the human race and carried it away in his own fall.[51] At the same time, this insistence on the role of the devil does not downplay our moral responsibility with regard to sin. The devil brought about our fall through persuasion, so that our consent was free and our sin inexcusable: 'the devil

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[48] 4.24 (191).   [49] Cf. 4.12 (177) and 12.16 (370).

[50] 14.23 (454 f. Trans. Hill, 389):

> In agnitione igitur dei iustitiaque et sanctitate ueritatis qui de die in diem proficiendo renouatur transfert amorem a temporalibus ad aeterna, a uisibilibus ad intellegibilia, a carnalibus ad spiritalia, atque ab istis cupiditatem frenare atque minuere illisque se caritate alligare diligenter insistit.

> We quote this passage from the fourteenth book of the *De Trinitate* because it sums up ideas which pervade the whole treatise.

[51] *Jo. eu. tr.* 52.7 (CCL 36, 448) and *cat. rud.* 26.52 (CCL 46, 175).

grew high and mighty, he fell, and pulled down man who consented to him';[52] his spiritual nature and his ability to cause physical phenomena which have the appearance of miracles allows him to deceive us;[53] he is the 'mediator of death', 'persuading to sin'[54] and the real object of worship of pagan rites.[55] Statements of this kind recur endlessly in these books, together with the assertion that, because of our free agreement to his seduction, he has acquired a 'rigth of control' (*ius dominandi*) over us,[56] he possesses 'a full property rights over us' (*iure integro*)[57] and deservedly (*merito*) he keeps us liable to death because of our sins.[58]

Before proceeding further, a set of questions must be formulated to guide us through the exploration of the real theological meaning of these assertions and of their consequences. What kind of justice, of right is Augustine referring to? Is he taking for granted a general notion of justice and, wittingly or unwittingly, applying it to soteriology? To give an example, is he implying that there is a justice which would somehow be above God and would force him to give way to the devil for having been more persuasive than him in winning man's trust? Is this kind of 'justice' implacably retributive, so that it can be satisfied only by the expiation of the penalty? In this case, who are the actors of this retribution? In other words, to whom is the price of the penalty paid? To the devil? To the Father?

A couple of significant hints will help us to make our way through Augustine's treatment of these issues. Far from deducing his soteriology from a general and supposedly universally known or knowable notion of justice, Augustine suggests the mysterious nature of the divine justice at work in the atonement: that Christ should save us through a death he did not deserve, is the result of an 'hidden and wholly mysterious decree of his high divine justice'.[59] Moreover, just as he introduces the topic of the 'devil's right' in the thirteenth book, he talks about 'a sort of justice' (*quadam iustitia*), implying by the *quadam* that the very use of the notion of 'justice' when dealing with the devil is inadequate. In the same way, in the fourth book, Augustine says that 'he had as it were acquired full property rights over (us)' (*tamquam iure integro*), again implying—by the *tamquam*, 'as it were'—the metaphorical use of 'right' when applied to the devil. The strains on the notion of 'devil's right' become apparent when the correspondent idea of a 'price' applied to Christ's blood is annulled by the fact that this 'price' does not make the devil richer,

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[52] 4.13 (178. Trans. Hill, 162): 'ille [diabolus] elatus cecidit et deiecit consentientem'.
[53] 4.14 (179).
[54] 4.15 (180 f. Trans. Hill, 163): 'mediator mortis' and 'persuasor peccati'.
[55] 4.18 (184).   [56] 4.20 (187. Trans. Hill, 167).
[57] 4.17 (183. Trans. Hill, 165).   [58] 13.19 (408).
[59] 4.15 (181. Trans. Hill, 163): 'occulta et nimis arcana ordinatione diuinae altaeque iustitiae'.

but ties him instead: 'In this act of redemption the blood of Christ was given for us as a kind of price, and when the devil took it he was not enriched by it but caught and bound by it.'[60]

In reality, there is a fully fledged theological notion of justice at work in Augustine's soteriology, to which, as we shall see, the issue we have improperly called 'the devil's rights' is in the end rather tangential. To the investigation of this theological notion of justice we now turn.

iii. The rhetoric of salvation

Augustine clearly favours what could be labelled a 'rhetorical' approach to salvation, an approach, that is to say, which presents God's action with the characters of rhetorical activity: to teach, delight, move. He finds that God's atoning work has an 'eloquence'[61] of its own which aims at 'persuading' us. This rhetorical presentation of salvation is built around two main and often recurring notions: 'symmetry' (*congruitas*) and 'persuasion' (*persuasio*).

According to the soteriological notion of symmetry, the way we have been saved, through the Incarnation, Christ's death on the cross and resurrection, was devised by God so as to fit our human condition,[62] our double death, i.e. not only our physical death but also our ungodliness (*impietas*),[63] our illness.[64] Expressed with the term of 'suitability' (*conuenientia*), this same symmetry again refers to our sinfulness: 'there neither was nor should have been a more suitable way of curing our unhappy state'.[65]

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[60] 13.19 (408. Trans. Hill, 359): 'In hac redemptione tamquam pretium pro nobis datus est sanguis Christi, quo accepto diabolus non ditatus est sed ligatus.'

[61] Cf. 4.11 (175. Trans. Hill, 160): 'so that all creation might in some fashion utter the one who was to come' ('ut omnis creatura factis quodam modo loqueretur unum futurum').

[62] 4.4 (164. Trans. Hill, 155): 'man did match man' ('congruit homini homo').

[63] Ibid.: 'his single matching our double. This match—or agreement or concord or consonance or whatever the right word is for the proportion of one to two—is of enormous importance in every construction or interlock—that is the word I want—of creation' ('simplum eius congruit duplo nostro. Haec enim congruentia—siue conuenientia uel concinentia uel consonantia commodius dicitur quod est unum ad duo—, in omni compaginatione uel si melius dicitur coaptatione creaturae ualet plurimum'); 4.5 (165. Trans. Hill, 155): 'the single of our Lord Jesus Christ matches our double, and in some fashion enters into a harmony of salvation with it' ('simplum domini et saluatoris nostri Iesu Christi duplo nostro congruat et quodam modo concinat ad salutem').

[64] 4.24 (191. Trans. Hill, 169): 'Health is at the opposite pole from sickness, but the cure should be halfway between the two, and unless it has some affinity with the sickness, it will not lead to health' ('Sanitas enim a morbo plurimum distat, sed media curatio nisi morbo congruat non perducit ad sanitatem').

[65] 13.13 (399. Trans. Hill, 353): 'sanandae nostrae miseriae conuenientiorem modum alium non fuisse nec esse oportuisse'.

However, this should not lead us to attribute to Augustine an anthropological approach to Christology and soteriology, i.e. this does not mean that we can infer or grasp the nature of God's action from reflection on our human condition. Because of our sinfulness and particularly of its aspect of pride, the very perception of this symmetry or suitability of redemption is the result of the conversion brought about by grace and is therefore knowable only because it is revealed and given, without any contribution ('merits') on our part. Only the inconceivable character of the Incarnation and even more so the scandal of the cross compel us to acknowledge the extent of our sinfulness and of our distance from God: 'man learns how far he has withdrawn from God, which is useful for him as a remedial pain, when he returns to him through a mediator like this, who comes to aid men as God with his divinity and to share with them as man in their infirmity.'[66] In fact, we must not forget that one of the main characters of our fallen state is blindness with regard to our very sinfulness: 'But the *light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it* (Jn 1.5). The darkness is the foolish minds of men, blinded by depraved desires and unbelief.'[67]

Further evidence for this is given by the other aspect of the divine rhetoric of salvation, i.e. persuasion. The object and means of this divine persuasion enacted in Incarnation and salvation is love, *dilectio*. The extent and the character of this love overcome our blindness and reveal the extent and the character of our sinfulness, summed up under the headings of despair (*desperatio*) and pride (*superbia*): 'we needed to be persuaded how much (*quantum*) God loves us, and what sort of people (*quales*) he loves; how much in case we despaired, what sort in case we grew proud'.[68] By persuading us of 'how much (*quantum*) he loves us', God reveals, meets and heals our despair: 'nothing was more needed for raising our hopes and delivering the minds of mortals, disheartened by the very condition of mortality, from despairing of immortality, than a demonstration of how much value God put on us and how much he loved us.'[69] In order that the very strength granted to us by grace should not become a new occasion of pride and of fall, we also needed

[66] 13.22 (413. Trans. Hill, 361): 'Discit homo quam longe recesserit a deo, quod illi ualeat ad medicinalem dolorem, quando per talem mediatorem redit qui hominibus et deus diuinitate subuenit et homo infirmitate conuenit.'

[67] 4.4 (163. Trans. Hill, 154): '*lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt*: tenebrae autem sunt stultae mentes hominum praua cupiditate atque infidelitate caecatae.'

[68] 4.2 (161. Trans. Hill, 154): 'Persuadendum ergo erat homini quantum nos dilexerit deus et quales dilexerit: quantum ne desperaremus, quales ne superbiremus.'

[69] 13.13 (400. Trans. Hill, 353): 'Quid enim tam necessarium fuit ad erigendam spem nostram mentesque mortalium conditione ipsius mortalitatis abiectas ab immortalitatis desperatione liberandas quam ut demonstraretur nobis quanti nos penderet deus quantumque diligeret?'

to be persuaded of 'what sort of people (*quales*) he loves', i.e. that we are loved as enemies of God[70] and that no merits whatsoever on our part earn salvation. We need to be made weak and humiliated by the revelation of our sinfulness so that we can be healed first and only then led through the path of perfection: 'in order that they too might be made weak through being humbled by the same faith as we, and once weakened might be perfected'.[71]

Through these introductory remarks, we begin to realize that the kind of 'justice' which determines the symmetry of God's act of salvation in Christ—and the Holy Spirit—coincides with God's inner-Trinitarian life of love (*dilectio*) and more particularly with its highest expression, the humility of God corresponding to the self-emptying and the obedience of Philippians 2. *In other words, the rhetorical power (persuasion) of God's action of salvation depends on its 'symmetry' to God's Trinitarian identity.*

This appears in particular in the flat rejection of any understanding of atonement based on vicarious punishment, where the Father would exact the death of his Son to soothe his anger or to satisfy the implacable requirements of an inflexible retributive 'justice'. This—Augustine argues—is meaningless in Trinitarian terms and goes against Scripture. Basing his argument especially on Romans 5 and 8, Augustine asks whether the Father would have handed over his Son for us, had he not already been appeased towards us. If in Romans 5:10, Paul states that we are reconciled with the Father through the death of the Son, in 8:31 it is said that it was the Father who first loved us and for this reason did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us. Nor did the Son give himself for us unwillingly. On the contrary, just like the Father, he did what he did out of love for us. Any explanation of atonement which drives a wedge between the Father and the Son must be excluded: 'the Father and the Son and the Spirit of them both work all things together and equally and in concord', says Augustine to seal this argument.[72]

Therefore, far from being the result of any transaction or 'disjunction' within the unity of the triune God, salvation is God's self-giving, i.e. the enactment in Jesus Christ, and particularly in his death on the cross, of the immanent Trinitarian life of love, humility and obedience.[73] This understanding of salvation is unfolded through the notions of mediation and sacrifice.

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[70] 4.2 (161).

[71] 4.2 (162. Trans. Hill, 154): 'per eandem fidem etiam ipsi humiliati infirmarentur et infirmati perficerentur'.

[72] 13.15 (402. Trans. Hill, 355): 'Omnia ergo simul et pater et filius et amborum spiritus pariter et concorditer operantur.' Cf. 2.9 (90), where Augustine quotes Gal.: 2:20, the *traditio* of Christ by the Father, and Rom. 8:32, the *traditio* of Christ himself, to argue for their inseparability; then he observes: 'una uoluntas est patris et filii et inseparabilis operatio'.

[73] Cf. 8.7 (276): 'pro nobis deum factum ad humilitatis exemplum et ad demonstrandam erga nos dilectionem dei'. An illuminating passage which could have been written by Augustine

iv. Christ the mediator

The mediation of Christ has a Trinitarian dimension because the Incarnation is not simply the union of divine nature and human nature, but the personal action of the Son of the Father through which he unites human nature to himself. He is mediator not simply because he is God and man, but because he is the Son and the Logos of the Father who has become man. As a result, he can intercede for us to the Father as man and his prayer has the guarantee of being heard because, as the Son,—and this is the crucial point—he is one (*unum*) with the Father. This is what Augustine reads into a passage taken from the Gospel of John, where Jesus says '*I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; (i) even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that (ii) they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that (ii) they may be one even as (i) we are one.*'[74] What Jesus is asking in this prayer is that we might be one in him just as he is one with the Father as the Son consubstantial with him.

If we are not one, it is because we are split (*dissociati*) from each other as a result of our covetousness and we become one by being 'fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity'.[75] There seems to be nothing new in such an assertion: covetousness brings about division; unity is the result of charity. The Trinitarian notion of mediation, however, unveils a new aspect of this assertion, which is expressed in the following sentence:

This is what he means when he says *That they may be one as we are one* (Jn 17.22)—that just as Father and Son are one (i) not only by equality of substance (ii) but also by identity of will, so these men, for whom the Son is mediator with God, might be one (i) not only by being of the same nature, (ii) but also by being bound in the fellowship

on this topic can be found in Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations* 45.22 (PG 36, 653, quoted by Aulen (1950), 74):

'Whom was that blood offered that was shed for us, and why was it shed? ... if to the Father, I ask first, how? For it was not by him that we were being oppressed; and next, on what principle did the blood of his only begotten Son delight the Father, who would not receive even Isaac, when he was being offered by his father, but changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in the place of the human victim? Is it not evident that the Father accepts him, but neither asked for him nor demanded him; but on account of the Incarnation, and because humanity must be sanctified by the humanity of God, that he might deliver us himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to himself by the mediation of his Son, who also arranged this to the honour of the Father, whom it is manifest that he obeys in all things?

[74] 4.12 (177. Trans. Hill, 161): '*Non pro his autem rogo*, inquit, *tantum sed et pro eis qui credituri sunt per uerbum eorum in me ut omnes unum sint (i) sicut tu pater in me et ego in te, (ii) ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint, ut mundus credat quia tu me misisti. Et ego claritatem quam dedisti mihi dedi illis (ii) ut sint unum sicut (i) et nos unum sumus*', quoting John 17:20–22.

[75] 4.12 (177).

of the same love. Finally, he shows that he is the mediator by whom we are reconciled to God, when he says, *I in them and you in me, that they may be perfected into one* (Jn 17.23).[76]

The Son and the Father are united (i) not only through the equality of substance, but (ii) they are one by their unity of will, their mutual love which is the Holy Spirit (although the identification of unity of will between Father and Son with love and with the Holy Spirit is not explicitly made here).[77] In the same way, the unity of Christians with each other is (ii) a unity of love (*dilectio*) and not simply (i) a unity of nature. Christians become one through love (*dilectio*) in Christ the Mediator, 'he wants his disciples to be one in him, because they cannot be one in themselves.'[78] Of course, although it is only implicitly stated here, our unity with each other through love (*dilectio*) coincides with unity with the Father, i.e. with reconciliation, and results from it. This is what the sentence which immediately follows the passage just quoted explains: 'This [the love (*dilectio*) of the Father and the Son given to us in Christ] is our true peace, this is our firm bond with our creator, once we have been cleansed and reconciled by the mediator of life, just as we had withdrawn far away from him, being defiled and estranged by the mediator of death.'[79]

Therefore, Christ's mediation associates us to his unity of will with the Father or, better, unites us—through reconciliation—with the Father and consequently between us, through the same love (*dilectio*) which constitutes his unity with the Father. This, we might argue, is the result of Christ's atoning work, but it is not an explanation of how this result was brought about. Such does not seem to be Augustine's own view. For him, Christ's mediatorial work coincides with the reconciliation resulting from redemption, i.e. with Christ's sacrifice.

v. The sacrifice of Christ

Augustine's well known definition of sacrifice in book 4 of the *De Trinitate* clearly refers to the Son's identity as Mediator and implies that the Son's love

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[76] 4.12 (177 f. Trans. Hill, 161):

Ad hoc enim ualet quod ait: *Vt sint unum sicut et nos unum sumus*, ut quemadmodum pater et filius (i) non tantum aequalitate substantiae (ii) sed etiam uoluntate unum sunt, ita et hi inter quos et deum mediator est filius (i) non tantum per id quod eiusdem naturae sunt (ii) sed etiam per eandem dilectionis societatem unum sint. Deinde idipsum quod mediator est per quem reconciliamur deo sic indicat: *Ego*, inquit, *in eis et tu in me ut sint consummati in unum*.

[77] Cf. 6.7 (235).

[78] 4.12 (177. Trans. Hill, 161): 'uult esse suos unum sed in ipso quia in se ipsis non possent'.

[79] 4.13 (178. Trans. Hill, 162): 'Haec est uera pax et cum creatore nostro nobis firma conexio purgatis et reconciliatis per mediatorem uitae sicut maculati et alienati ab eo recesseramus per mediatorem mortis.'

(*dilectio*) towards the Father is the essential feature of the nature and the effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice:

Now there are four things to be considered in every sacrifice: whom it is offered to, whom it is offered by, what it is that is offered, and whom it is offered for. And this one true mediator, in reconciling us to God by his sacrifice of peace, would remain one with him to whom he offered it, and make one in himself those for whom he offered it, and be himself who offered it one and the same as what he offered.[80]

As we have seen above, he who offers the sacrifice—i.e. the man-Son—is one with him to whom the sacrifice is offered—i.e. the Father—not only through the unity of nature, but also, and decisively, through love ('he would remain one with him to whom he offered it'). Christ's sacrifice is acceptable to the Father because in Christ, the Son unites human nature to himself ('he makes one in himself those for whom he offered it') and therefore grants to human nature the grace of sharing with him the same love which unites him to the Father. Only because of love is a sacrifice acceptable to God. Only love *sacrum facit*, i.e. 'makes holy', unites with God and thus overcomes the division and the rebellion of sin and covetousness.

Love (*dilectio*) is therefore the defining feature of the sacrifice, it explains how the sacrifice saves us, i.e. by operating our reconciliation with the Father. In fact, Christ is Mediator not only, nor primordially, because of the hypostatic union, i.e. because of the ontological union between human and divine nature realized in the Son's Incarnation. On the contrary, Christ's role of mediation, as we have seen above, consists in the fact that *the union of will* between the Son and the Father 'becomes'—thanks to both the descendent movement of the Incarnation and the ascending movement of the sacrifice—the union of will of Christ with the Father and, in Christ, of the whole *redempta ciuitas*, the Church, i.e. the community of believers and partakers of the Eucharist which become the Body of Christ. Of course, what is generically labelled 'union of will' here consists in love (*dilectio*); and this unity of Christ with *the Father* is not (like the union of Christ with *the Son*) just 'ontological', but results from the effective personal love (*dilectio*) of the Son determining the whole life of Jesus Christ through humility and obedience *even unto death and death on a cross*, i.e. through his sacrifice.

We are irresistibly reminded here of the theology of sacrifice expounded in the well-known passage of book 10 of the *De ciuitate Dei*, which can shed a light on the soteriology of the *De Trinitate*. The tenth book of the *De ciuitate*

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[80] 4.19 (186 f. Trans. Hill, 166 f.):

Vt quoniam quattuor considerantur in omni sacrificio: cui offeratur, a quo offeratur, quid offeratur, pro quibus offeratur; idem ipse unus uerusque mediator per sacrificium pacis reconcilians nos deo unum cum illo maneret cui offerebat, unum in se faceret pro quibus offerebat, unus ipse esset qui offerebat et quod offerebat.

Dei has much in common with the Christological books of the *De Trinitate* we are scrutinizing. Its argument is unfolded within the framework of the theme of happiness and of a polemical rebuttal of the pride of philosophers—Porphyry in particular—for having dismissed the mediatory role of Christ because of his humility: the same themes we found in the *De Trinitate* earlier on. The difference, however, between book 10 of the *De ciuitate Dei* and book 4 of the *De Trinitate* is in their treatment of the notion of sacrifice: the *De ciuitate Dei* does not aim primarily at explaining how Christ's sacrifice saved us, but at elaborating a systematic account of the defining features of the sacrifice of the Christians as opposed to pagan sacrifices.[81] What happens, then, if we look at Christ's sacrifice in the light of this account?

The passage of the *De ciuitate Dei* starts by the biblical foundation of this theology of sacrifice. Countless texts from the Old Testament openly state that God does not need anything, neither the things we offer to him nor even man's justice. Sacrifices, therefore, do not benefit God, but us: 'it is man, not God, who is benefited by all the worship which is rightly offered to God'.[82] Still from the Old Testament, Augustine establishes that the visible sacrifice is the sacrament (*sacramentum*) i.e. the *sacrum signum*, the 'sacred sign' of the invisible sacrifice. This simply means that the killing and the shedding of the blood of an animal deserves the qualification of sacrifice only if it is the sign of an attitude of the heart which is described as a 'broken and humbled heart' and '*to practice justice, to love mercy and to be prepared to go with the Lord your God*' (Mich 6.7)'.[83] Sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament gave way to the sacrifice of the New Testament precisely to bring the signified aspect to the fore and fully identify it with charity: 'The instructions about the multifarious sacrifices in the service of the Tabernacle or the Temple are recorded in Scripture as divine commands. We see now that they are to be interpreted as symbolizing the love of God and the love of one's neighbour. For *on these two commands the whole Law depends, and the Prophets* (Mat 22.40).'[84]

The Christological applications, or better, the Christological foundations of this theology of sacrifice are easy to discern. First of all, Christ's death on the cross and the shedding of his blood cannot be said to have benefited God in

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[81] See the recapitulating conclusion of *ciu. Dei* 10.6 (CCL 47, 279): 'Hoc est sacrificium christianorum.'

[82] *ciu. Dei* 10.5 (CCL 47, 276. Trans. Bettenson, 377): totum quod recte colitur deus homini prodesse, non deo'.

[83] *ciu. Dei* 10.5 (CCL 47, 277. Trans. Bettenson, 378): 'facere iudicium et diligere misericordiam et paratum esse ire cum domino deo tuo'.

[84] *ciu. Dei* 10.5 (CCL 47, 278. Trans. Bettenson, 379): 'Quaecumque igitur in ministerio tabernaculi siue templi multis modis de sacrificiis leguntur diuinitus esse praecepta, ad dilectionem dei et proximi significando referuntur. *In his* enim *duobus praeceptis*, ut scriptum est, *tota lex pendet et prophetae*.'

any way. They cannot be considered as a price paid to him, as we have seen above. Augustine is as far from any form of satisfaction theory of redemption as it is possible to be. Then, the death of Christ is a sacrifice insofar as it is the sign of his 'invisible sacrifice' that is to say, in the light of the theology of mediation we have explored above, of the unity of will of the Son with the Father. Whereas the sacrifices of the Old Testament were hopeless human attempts to adhere to God, Christ's sacrifice, because of the hypostatic union, coincides with the union of will which from all eternity exists between the Son and the Father. The same thing can be said of the humility and the obedience of Christ shown in his life, passion, and death: they are the humility and the obedience of the Son vis-à-vis the Father; they are the expression of the union of love between the Son and the Father.

vi. A theological notion of justice

This exploration of Augustine's notions of mediation and sacrifice, therefore, makes clear that the justice at work in the salvation God realized in Christ coincides with the love which unites the Son to the Father and which was displayed in Christ's humility and obedience *even unto death and death on a cross*. On this basis, we can go back to the issue of the 'devil's rights' and try to understand what role it plays in Augustine's soteriology.

Right from the introduction of this topic in book 4 of the *De Trinitate*, the aim of setting the devil's action in contrast with Christ's salvation is precisely to stress that the justice through which God saved us in Christ is the humility of God (which in its turn, as we have seen, is the manifestation of the *dilectio* which unites the Son to the Father). The devil led us to death by deceiving us into proud rebellion against God; the humble Christ leads us back to life through obedience and raises up those who believe in him through his humiliation.[85] Setting the devil in contrast with Christ in this way is a rhetorical device. When Augustine attributes a mediatory role both to the devil and to Christ, or presents them in a parallel way with regard to the issues of sacrifice, of power (*potentia*), and of justice, this does not mean that he puts Christ and the devil on the same level. A closer analysis of this rhetorical parallelism will prove this point.

First of all, the devil only becomes 'mediator' of sin and death because we freely sin and become proud: 'the devil in his pride brought proud-thinking man down to death';[86] only proud people are seduced by his attempts to

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[85] 4.13 (178 f.).
[86] 4.13 (178. Trans. Hill, 162): 'diabolus superbus hominem superbientem perduxit ad mortem'.

present himself as the mediator of happiness through false sacrifices;[87] no other vice hands us over to the power of the devil like pride: 'no vice gives a greater right of control to that proudest of all spirits, the devil, who mediates our way to the depths and bars our way to the heights',[88] or again: 'he [the devil] holds him in subjection by his swollen self-esteem and his determined preference for power over justice.'[89] At the same time, the devil can only cause us to sin, and therefore to die, with our agreement: 'the devil grew high and mighty, he fell, and pulled down man who consented to him';[90] he can only persuade, but not force us;[91] we are under his power only by our agreement: 'by a death of the flesh the devil lost man, who had yielded to his seduction, and whom he had thus as it were acquired full property rights over'.[92]

For this reason, the devil is in reality a 'false mediator'[93] and his power over us is the result of God's permission and does not mean that we are not under the power of the all-powerful God any more: the devil himself is under God's power.[94] It is important to notice that the instrumental role of the devil with regard to our sin is mentioned in the *De Trinitate* only when Augustine talks about the way in which we have been saved by Christ. There are no mentions of the devil in the sections of the treatise where Augustine describes our sinfulness. At the same time, there is a parallel between the sections of the treatise devoted to sin and those devoted to the devil: the 'right of control' (*ius dominandi*) of the devil means that there was no possibility we could free ourselves from his hold on us without Christ. In the same way, our sinful condition described in terms of pride, depravity, iniquity, illness etc. only leads to despair (*desperatio*) because it is irreparable and irreversible, unless Christ comes to heal us through the love of his sacrifice. Whether we resort to the devil or not, the irreparable character of the sinful condition of humanity is the same and so are its causes: pride and covetousness, inherited through the transmission of original sin.[95]

In contrast to the devil, Christ is the real Mediator, first of all because he saved us without our contribution and even against us. We were not in the position of agreeing to his salvation. Had his salvation been a mere example,[96]

[87] 4.17, 18 (182–186).
[88] 4.20 (187. Trans. Hill, 167): 'Nullum enim uitium . . . in quod maius accipiat dominandi ius ille superbissimus spiritus ad ima mediator, ad summa interclusor.'
[89] 4.13 (178. Trans. Hill, 162): 'Sic hominem per elationis typhum potentiae quam iustitiae cupidiorem . . . [diabolus] subditum tenet pollicens.'
[90] Ibid.: 'ille elatus cecidit et deiecit consentientem'.   [91] 4.14, 15 (179 ff.).
[92] 4.17 (183. Trans. Hill, 165): 'Ita diabolus hominem quem per consensionem seductum tamquam iure integro possidebat'.
[93] 4.15 (180).   [94] 13.16 (403).   [95] 13.21, 23 (410–414).
[96] Not in Augustine's sense of 'effective sign', but in the generic sense of exemplary cause.

we would not have been able to give any consent (*consensio*) to it. Christ's salvation is based on an indispensable objective act on God's part, an act, that is, with no merits on our part. This objective dimension is expressed through a variety of images which naturally depend on Scripture: remission of sins compared to the remission of a debt is one of them.[97] Another is the payment of a price for this debt through the blood of Christ, although this price is never said to have been paid to the Father; once it is said to have been paid to the devil in a way, however, which instead of enriching him actually tied him.[98] The redemption from the power of the devil fulfils the same role: it is yet another way of stating the objective aspect of the way we have been saved: we were totally unable to free ourselves from the devil's 'right of control'. However, we have noticed already that the improper use of the notion of 'right' with regard to the devil is suggested by expressions like 'a sort of justice' (*quadam iustitia*) or 'he had as it were acquired full property rights over' (*tamquam iure integro*).[99] The aim of these images is more that of stating the objectivity of Christ's mediatory role and of his salvation than to explain how Christ actually saves us. Augustine's favourite way of explaining how we have been saved is that which we saw above under the heading of sacrifice, formulated in a different way in the following sentence:

And this (salvation) was all done in this way in order to prevent man getting conceited, but *he that boasts let him boast in the Lord* (2 Co 10.17). The one who had been conquered, you see, was only man, and the reason he had been conquered was that he had proudly longed to be God. But the one who eventually conquered was both man and God, and the reason the virgin-born conquered was that God was humbly wearing that man, not governing him as he does the other saints.[100]

Christ conquered because he was man and God, but he conquered in the way he did because in Christ, God was 'wearing' the man (*gerens*) and not governing a man (*regens*). We shall not repeat here what was said above concerning the link between hypostatic union and soteriology. Let us only notice what this means with regard to the objectivity of redemption: not only we have been saved without contribution or merit on our part, but what saved us was the humility of God, i.e., as we have seen, the love (*dilectio*) which unites the Son of God to the Father and explains both why he is a Mediator and why his sacrifice is acceptable to God. It is in the humility of God, i.e. in the justice

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[97] 13.18 (406 f.); 19 (407 f.); 21 (410 ff.).   [98] 13.19 (408).   [99] 4.17 (183 f.).
[100] 13.23 (414. Trans. Hill, 362):

Et hoc [salvation] ita gestum est ut homo non extollatur, sed *qui gloriatur in domino glorietur.* Qui enim uictus est homo tantum erat, et ideo uictus est quia superbe deus esse cupiebat; qui autem uicit et homo et deus erat, et ideo sic uicit natus ex uirgine quia deus humiliter, non quomodo alios sanctos regebat illum hominem, sed gerebat.

which makes us just, therefore, that we have to look to for the explanation of the way we have been saved. The devil was overthrown by Christ not through the power of God but through the justice of God.[101] Here we have the clearest hint to the real nature of the justice through which we were saved. It is not, we have seen, a general notion of cold and implacably retributive justice on which God would be as much dependent as we are. The justice through which we were saved is the justice *of* Christ: 'What then is the justice that overpowered the devil? The justice of Jesus Christ—what else?'[102]

The main reason why the death of Christ saved us is that, whereas we die because of our sin, he died because of his justice, i.e. because of the humility which coincides with the obedience and the love (*dilectio*) of the Son vis-à-vis the Father: 'We came to death by sin, he came by justice; and so while our death is the punishment of sin, his death became a sacrifice for sin.'[103] This is the real justice which Augustine opposes to the semblance of justice through which the devil held us under his power:

In being slain in his innocence by the wicked one, who was acting against us as it were with just rights, he won the case against him with the justest of all rights, and thus *led captive the captivity* (Eph 4.8, Ps 68.19) that was instituted for sin, and delivered us from the captivity we justly endured for sin, and by his just blood unjustly shed *cancelled the handwriting* (Col 2.14) of death, and justified and redeemed sinners.[104]

The 'right' of the devil is here qualified through an 'as it were' and pales into insignificance under the overwhelming weight of the 'justest of all rights' of the 'just death' and the 'just blood' which 'justifies' sinners. What makes Christ's death and blood just is the fact that he did not have to die. He did not have to die not only, nor mainly, because as a man he was without sin. If, as a man, he was without sin, it was because this man was the Son of God[105] and his justice was the justice of the Son of God who, as God, was free, omnipotent (i.e. he had all power) and therefore only died because he freely decided to do so out of love for the Father and for us. Christ's freedom or, rather, the freedom

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[101] 13.17 (404 ff.).

[102] 13.18 (406. Trans. Hill, 357): 'Quae est igitur iustitia qua uictus est diabolus? Quae nisi iustitia Iesu Christi?'

[103] 4.15 (181. Trans. Hill, 164): 'Nos enim ad mortem per peccatum uenimus, ille per iustitiam; et ideo cum sit mors nostra poena peccati, mors illius facta est hostia pro peccato.'

[104] 4.17 (184. Trans. Hill, 165, modified):

ut ab iniquo uelut aequo iure aduersus nos agente ipse occisus innocens eum iure aequissimo superaret [atque ita captiuitatem propter peccatum factam captiuaret] nosque liberaret a captiuitate propter peccatum iusta suo iusto sanguine iniuste fuso mortis chirographum delens et iustificandos redimens peccatores.'

[105] Cf. *c. s. Ar.* 7 (PL 42, 688).

of the Son of God in Christ becomes the essential feature of the redeeming effectiveness of Christ's justice. This is what makes his death a sacrifice:

He was not stripped of the flesh by right of any alien authority; he alone *stripped himself* (Col 2.15) of it. As he was able not to die if he did not wish to, it follows since he did die that it was because he wished to; and thus *he made an example of the principalities and powers, confidently triumphing over them in himself* (Col 2.15). By his death he offered for us the one truest possible sacrifice, and thereby purged, abolished, and destroyed whatever there was of guilt, for which the principalities and powers had a right to hold us bound to payment of the penalty; and by his resurrection he called to new life us who were predestined, justified us who were called, glorified us who were justified.[106]

The same idea is restated in the following passage: 'In this way the justice of humility was made more acceptable, seeing that the power of divinity could have avoided the humiliation if it had wanted to; and so by the death of one so powerful we powerless mortals have justice set before us and power promised to us. . . . What could be more just that to go and face even death on a cross for justice's sake?'[107]

III. SOTERIOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY: THE SUBJECTIVE SIDE OF SALVATION

i. Christ's sacrament and example

Through the themes of hypostatic union, mediation and sacrifice explored so far, we have established part of the objective aspects and ground of Augustine's approach to the knowledge of God—the other, to be treated in a separate chapter, being the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. God makes himself knowable

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[106] 4.17 (183. Trans. Hill, 165):

Neque enim cuiusquam iure potestatis exutus est carne, sed ipse se exuit. Nam qui posset non mori si nollet, procul dubio quia uoluit mortuus est, et ideo *principatus et potestates exemplauit fiducialiter triumphans eas in semetipso.* Morte sua quippe uno uerissimo sacrificio pro nobis oblato quidquid culparum erat unde nos principatus et potestates ad luenda supplicia iure detinebant purgauit, aboleuit, exstinxit, et sua resurrectione in nouam uitam nos *praedestinatos uocauit, uocatos iustificauit, iustificatos glorificauit.*

The freedom of the Son of God in Christ is constantly restated in these two books: see 4.16 (181 f.), 18 (184 ff.) and 13.18 (406 f.), 22–23 (412 ff.).

[107] 13.18 (407. Trans. Hill, 357 f.): 'Ideo gratior facta est in humilitate iustitia quia posset si noluisset humilitatem non perpeti tanta in diuinitate potentia, ac sic a moriente tam potente nobis mortalibus impotentibus et commendata est iustitia et promissa potentia . . . Quid enim iustius quam usque ad mortem crucis pro iustitia peruenire?'

and known through Christ. All the obstacles to knowledge of God, mainly identified with pride and covetousness, are simultaneously made known and overcome through the act by which the Son of God became man and reconciled us to the Father through the same love (*dilectio*) which unites the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit, also presented as the justice of Christ or the humility of God.

We now have to explore the way in which Augustine presents the subjective side of this process with regard to Christology. We shall see that the knowledge of God is not something handed over to us which somehow becomes our property. On the contrary, the same identity between revelation and reconciliation which characterizes the objective side of the knowledge of God shapes its subjective side as well, simply because these two sides coincide in Christ: God makes himself known in the act through which, in Christ, the Son reconciles us to the Father in the Holy Spirit. It is God's action and as such it is accomplished once for all. From the subjective side of its manifestation in us, however, it has an eschatological connotation: it is already accomplished in and for us in this side of the eschatology and yet it still moves towards its full manifestation in the other side of the eschatology, i.e. the coming back of Christ in glory and the handing over of his kingdom to the Father.[108] This eschatological dimension of the manifestation of God's revelation and reconciliation in us can be seen at work in all the pairs around which Augustine structures the subjective side of soteriology: science and wisdom, faith and truth, sacrament and example, victory over the devil through justice now, reserving the victory through power for the second Coming. The first element of each pair is given to us in this side of the eschatology, the second is reserved for the end of times. And yet, already wisdom is given in science, truth in faith, justice is an act of power etc. because, as we have seen, in Christ we really have to do with God himself.

This is particularly evident in the Christological pair of sacrament and example which needs to be carefully unpacked. Its interpretation in Augustine's works is notoriously difficult, due to the frequent shifts of the meaning

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[108] Cf. 1.15–18 (46–55); 20–21 (56–59); 28–31 (69–79). Cf. also 9.1 (292 f.): 'The certitude of faith at least initiates knowledge; but the certitude of knowledge will not be completed until after this life when we see *face to face* (cognitio uera certa non perficietur nisi post hanc uitam cum uidebimus *facie ad faciem*).' O'Donovan (1980), 79, observes that 'It is characteristic of the mature Augustine that he will not, as once he might have done, evade the implications of eschatology. Instead, he attempts to develop a theory of knowledge-by-faith which has room for it, showing a continuity between what may be known and loved now and what may only be known and loved then.' Further on, he stresses the same point with regard to self-knowledge: 'Yet by a dramatic Christianization of all Platonism, the true self-knowledge of *cogitatio* is attainable only eschatologically.'

of his vocabulary.[109] However, as far as the *De Trinitate* is concerned, the meaning of this pair is crystal-clear. Sacrament is used in the sense of 'effective sign' and designates what Christ has realized in us already, even if it is not yet visible. Example also means 'effective sign', but it refers to what Christ will manifest in us visibly at the end of time. Augustine combines this pair with that of inner and outer man, so that what happened for Christ once for all, i.e. his resurrection, is the example of the resurrection of our body at the end of time and is the sacrament of the resurrection of the inner man already now.[110] This need for a double resurrection arises out of a double death. The death of the body, our mortality, only is a sign and a consequence of the real death, which afflicts our soul and, as we have seen, has an epistemological connotation: the death of the soul is the ungodliness (*impietas*) through which we are made unwise (*insipientes*, the contrary of *sapientes*, wise): 'the death of the soul is ungodliness . . . as the soul becomes wisdomless in that'.[111] The way in which Christ heals the death of our soul—ungodliness and wisdomlessness— is described through a renewal or conversion expressed in terms which echo the object of the real science, that is the self-knowledge of the beginning of book 4: knowledge of our illness, tears and grief, trust in the pledge of salvation granted to us in Christ the saviour and the giver of light.[112] Thus, Christ is the sacrament of the renewal of the soul first of all in his crucifixion, which is the sign and the cause (i.e. the 'effective sign') of our repentance and conversion.[113] At the same time, he is the sacrament of our renewal in his resurrection as well: 'The soul is resuscitated by repentance, and in the still mortal body the renewal of life takes its start from faith by which one *believes in him who justifies the ungodly* (Rom 4.5), and it grows and is strengthened by good behaviour *from day to day*, while *the inner man is renewed* (2 Cor 4.16) more and more.'[114] Therefore, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ are (i) the sacrament of our 'inner' death and resurrection, because of the repentance and the renewal from the ungodliness and the wisdomlessness which is the death of the soul, and are (ii) the example of the final resurrection of our body.

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[109] Cf. Dodaro (1993), 274: 'It [*sacramentum*] remains one of the most elusive notions in his theological vocabulary.'

[110] 4.5 f. (165–169).

[111] 4.5 (165. Trans. Hill, 155): 'Mors autem animae impietas est . . . unde illa [anima] fit insipiens.'

[112] 4.1 (159).   [113] 4.6 (166–169).

[114] 4.5 (165. Trans. Hill, 155): 'Resuscitatur ergo anima per poenitentiam, et in corpore adhuc mortali renouatio uitae inchoatur a fide qua creditur *in eum qui iustificat impium*, bonisque moribus augetur et roboratur *de die in diem* cum magis magisque *renouatur interior homo*.' Cf. also 4.17 (183): 'sua resurrectione in nouam uitam nos praedestinatos uocauit, uocatos iustificauit, iustificatos glorificauit'.

This sacrament of the 'inner' crucifixion and resurrection has direct consequences on the knowledge of God, already suggested in the sentences quoted above, but made even more evident in the overcoming of the main obstacle to contemplation, i.e. our pride: 'the only thing to cleanse the wicked and the proud is the blood of the just man and the humility of God; to contemplate God, which by nature we are not, we would have to be cleansed by him who became what by nature we are and what by sin we are not'.[115] To the healing of this pride and the covetousness and despair related to our sinfulness we now turn.

ii. Christ as sacrament and the healing of pride, covetousness, and despair

The main advantage of the notion of sacrament is that it establishes a direct relation between the objective and the subjective aspects of salvation, between the way in which we are saved and the nature of salvation, that is the way it reaches us and transforms us. When considering the objective side of redemption, we have seen that we are saved through the unique sacrifice of Christ. On the subjective side, Christ's sacrifice is a sacrament because it is the efficacious sign of that which Christ has realized in us already now: we ourselves have become sacrifices acceptable to God, thanks to the charity poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Christ has given to us. This love enables us to love God 'as far as contempt of self', i.e. to offer our bodies and souls in sacrifices acceptable to him.

At the same time, we have also seen the 'symmetry' (*congruitas*) which characterizes redemption: the same love, which is the essence of Christ's sacrifice, takes different forms, each corresponding to the main aspects of our sinfulness. Just as sin is characterized especially under the headings of pride, covetousness, and despair, so Christ's love heals each of these forms of our illness: he overcomes pride through his humility, which is the humility of God; he overcomes the scattering effects and the dissipation resulting from covetousness through the unification of our whole being and desire within his unity of will with the Father;[116] he overcomes our despair through the display of how much God loves us in his sacrifice: '*Greater love has no one than to*

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[115] 4.4 (163 f. Trans. Hill, 155): 'iniquorum et superborum una mundatio est sanguis iusti et humilitas dei, ut ad contemplandum deum quod natura non sumus per eum mundaremur factum quod natura sumus et quod peccato non sumus'.

[116] 4.11 (175 f.).

lay down his life for his friends.[117] Let us look at this aspect of the subjective dynamic of salvation through the help of some texts.

The healing from covetousness and despair appears in a passage where the role of Christ as sacrament of our salvation, inaugurating the reformation of the image of God in us through knowledge of God,[118] is linked to hypostatic union:

It was fitting that at the beck and bidding of a compassionate God the many should themselves acclaim together the one who was to come, and that acclaimed by the many together the one should come, and that the many should testify together that the one had come, and that we being disburdened of the many should come to the one; and that being dead in soul through many sins and destined to die in the flesh because of sin, we should love the one who died in the flesh for us without sin, and that believing in him raised from the dead, and rising ourselves with him in spirit through faith, we should be made one in the one just one; and that we should not despair[119] of ourselves rising in the flesh when we observed that we the many members had been preceded by the one head, in whom we have been purified by faith and will then be made completely whole by sight, and that thus fully reconciled to God by him the mediator, we may be able to cling to the one, enjoy the one, and remain for ever one.[120]

In this passage, Christ is the one because through his single death and resurrection he has become both the sacrament of our inner resurrection, i.e. our justification and sanctification, and the example of the resurrection of our body at the end of time. He is the one also because in him the Word through whom everything was created and the man are the same (in Christ). Our covetousness, on the other hand, had fractured both our unity with God, the unity of our knowledge and that of our will.[121] The unity of Christ (the hypostatic union), and of the salvation he has realized, is the most fitting remedy to the

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[117] 4.2 (161) and 4.17 (184) quoting John 15:13: '*Maiorem dilectionem nemo habet quam ut animam suam ponat pro amicis suis.*'

[118] Cf. 4.7 (170).   [119] Notice the aspect of healing from *desperatio* at the same time.

[120] 4.11 (175 f. Trans. Hill, 160 f.):

oportebat nutu et imperio dei miserantis ut ipsa multa uenturum conclamarent unum, et a multis conclamatus ueniret unus, et multa contestarentur uenisse unum, et a multis exonerati ueniremus ad unum, et multis peccatis in anima mortui et propter peccatum in carne morituri amaremus sine peccato mortuum in carne pro nobis unum, et in resuscitatum credentes et cum illo per fidem spiritu resurgentes iustificaremur in uno iusto facti unum, nec in ipsa carne nos resurrecturos desperaremus cum multa membra intueremur praecessisse nos caput unum in quo nunc per fidem mundati et tunc per speciem redintegrati et per mediatorem deo reconciliati haereamus uni, fruamur uno, permaneamus unum.

[121] Cf. 4.11 (175 f. Trans. Hill, 160): 'By wickedness and ungodliness with a crashing discord we had bounced away, and flowed and faded away from the one supreme true God into the many, divided by the many, clinging to the many' ('Quia ab uno deo summo et uero per impietatis iniquitatem resilientes et dissonantes defluxeramus et euanueramus in multa discissi per multa et inhaerentes in multis'). The same idea is expressed in 4.12 (177).

scattering effect and the dissipation of covetousness; faith already is adhesion to the One we will contemplate in the future. Through this faith, our soul is raised up and we are purified so that we can be *redintegrati*, 'made completely whole', *per speciem*, i.e. through the contemplation of God face-to-face in the life to come.

   Another text illustrates the healing symmetry of Christ's redeeming activity with regard to pride. We have seen the extent to which pride, together with the corruption of our love, sums up our sinfulness in general and our epistemological sinfulness in particular. The sacrament of the death and resurrection of Christ heals this pride as well, because these are the enactment of the saving humility of God and because they make this same humility possible for us. The constant background of Augustine's Christology is the hymn of Philippians, built around God's humility manifested in Christ. Not only the self-emptying of Christ, but also his very exaltation manifest this humility: just as Christ did not consider his equality with God something to be grasped, so he waited for God to exalt him in his obedience even unto death on a cross. To the point that, in a passage of book 8 of the *De Trinitate*, sacrament does not refer to the death or the resurrection of Christ, but is plainly identified with humility, the humility through which God became incarnate, died on the cross and waited until God himself decided to exalt him:

It is useful for us to believe and to hold firm and unshaken in our hearts, that the humility thanks to which God was born of a woman, and led through such abuse at the hands of mortal men to his death, is a medicine to heal the tumor of our pride and a high sacrament to break the chains of sin.[122]

God's humility in Christ is the sacrament, i.e. the efficacious sign of the humility which salvation creates in us, thus healing our pride, included its consequences on knowledge of God. These epistemological consequences of the sacrament of the humility, the cross and the resurrection of Christ are beautifully summed up in this sentence:

That the Lord's bodily resurrection is a sacrament of our inner resurrection is shown by the place where he said to the woman after he had risen, *Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father* (Jn 20.17). To this mystery corresponds what the apostle says, *If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at God's right hand; set your thoughts on the things that are above* (Col 3.1). Not to touch

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[122]   8.7 (276. Trans. Hill, 247):

Hoc enim nobis prodest credere et firmum atque inconcussum corde retinere, humilitatem qua natus est deus ex femina et a mortalibus per tantas contumelias perductus ad mortem summum esse medicamentum quo superbiae nostrae sanaretur tumor et altum sacramentum quo peccati uinculum solueretur.

Christ until he has ascended to the Father means not to have materialistic thoughts about Christ.[123]

Once again, this implies the dialectic between the simultaneously revealing and hiding character of the humanity of Christ: knowledge of Christ through the flesh is not yet wisdom (cf. the verb *sapere* in this passage). Knowledge of Christ becomes wisdom, i.e. real knowledge of God, only through the process of conversion in which (i) the humility of God manifested in Christ heals our pride and (ii) the love (*dilectio*) of the same risen Christ poured in our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit heals our covetousness and our despair. In this way we are enabled to believe in God and to love him through those useful temporal realities which, thanks to the Incarnation, have become the way God makes himself known to us.

IV. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the presupposition we have chosen as the starting point of our inquiry, namely that of the theological, i.e. Trinitarian, character of Augustine's approach to knowledge of God, we can sketch a summary of our findings in the analysis of the Christology of the *De Trinitate*. Augustine's Christology entails three fundamental parameters for a proper 'theological' approach to epistemology.

The first of these parameters consists in the dependence of the knowledge of God on the Incarnation: the firm denial of any form of adoptionism and the unambiguous identification of the agent of the Incarnation with the Son of God go hand in hand with the rejection of any concession to philosophy when it comes to the access to wisdom, contemplation or happiness, i.e. to what counts as *real* knowledge of God. Everything Christ did for us is God's action—compare, for example, Augustine's bold appeal to the humility of God—and nothing can be attributed to human merit. The first result of God's saving action is the revelation of our illness, variously described in terms of depravity, aversion, despair, pride, covetousness etc. and of our need for a true Mediator and a true Sacrifice. This revelation is the starting point of the real science described at the beginning of book 4. Finally, the main

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[123] 4.6 (168. Trans. Hill, 157):

Resurrectio uero corporis domini ad sacramentum interioris resurrectionis nostrae pertinere ostenditur ubi postquam resurrexit ait mulieri: *Noli me tangere; nondum enim ascendi ad patrem meum.* Cui mysterio congruit apostolus dicens: *Si autem resurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt quaerite ubi Christus est in dextera dei sedens; quae sursum sunt sapite.* Hoc est enim Christum non tangere nisi cum ascenderit ad patrem, non de Christo carnaliter sapere.

epistemological consequence of this unambiguous identification of the agent
of the Incarnation with the Son of God is that in Christ we have to do with
God himself; the useful temporal realities[124] God assumed have no existence
apart from the personal existence and the reconciling action of the Son of
God; knowledge of these useful temporal realities, i.e. science, can indeed
become knowledge of God, i.e. wisdom; the object of *faith* is the same as the
object of the contemplation or vision of the after life; only the modality is
different.

The second of these parameters, already implied by the first, consists in the
link between the knowledge of God and soteriology. God reveals himself as
he reconciles us to himself in the sacrifice of Christ. This is what Augustine
means when he states that illumination depends on the Incarnation *and* on
the purification resulting from the blood of Christ and the humility of God.[125]
Only through the overcoming of our covetousness through the Son's love for
the Father—which, as we have seen, is the essence of Christ's sacrifice—and of
our pride through the humility of God, is our blindness healed. Our analysis of
the second half of the *De Trinitate* will show the extent to which covetousness
is the main obstacle to the self-knowledge, i.e. to the acknowledgment of our
dependence on God. This identity between God's revelation and reconcilia-
tion also means that even the useful temporal realities assumed by God are
not revealer as such. God *can* make himself known in these useful temporal
realities by the Holy Spirit, the gift through which the risen Christ pours love
in our hearts.

Finally, the third of these parameters, implied in the previous two, is the
eschatological character of the act through which God makes himself known
to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit. If, thanks to the Incarnation, the
object of (i) faith and science is identical with that of (ii) vision, wisdom, and
contemplation, the modality of the manifestation of this object is different:
hidden in the former and fully displayed in the latter. It is very important to
keep this element in mind when tackling the fifteenth book of the *De Trinitate*
in particular, to avoid the temptation of jumping to verdicts of 'failure' too
easily, as some scholars are fond of doing. Augustine's keen awareness of the
eschatological nature of the manifestation of God's revealing and reconcil-
ing act does not allow him to entertain any illusion in his reader's mind:
he subscribes to Paul's declaration that '*We see now through a mirror in an
enigma, but then it will be face to face* (1 Cor 13.12)', combined with the
promise that 'when the image is renewed to perfection by this transformation,

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[124] 13.1 (381).   [125] 4.4 (163 f.).

we will be like God *because we shall see him*, not through a mirror, but *as he is* (1 Jn 3.2)'.[126]

These three parameters, therefore, leave no doubt about the impossibility of understanding the epistemology of the *De Trinitate* apart from its Christology. This is confirmed by the structure of the treatise as well, in which the two books on Christology occupy pivotal places. The issue of books 1 to 4, occasioned by the theophanies of the Old Testament, can be rendered as follows: '*Can we see, i.e. know, God?*' The answer is given in book 4, which explains that God both makes himself visible, i.e. knowable, in Christ, while at the same time remaining invisible, i.e. unknowable because even in the Incarnation he remains God, i.e. the Lord. The issue of the second half of the *De Trinitate* is inaugurated in book 8 with a similar question: '*How do we love the Trinity we do not see, but we believe in?*' 'Seeing' and 'believing' in this question already point to the eschatological articulation between faith and vision or science and wisdom we have met above. This will be the object of books 9 to 15, but the key to the final answer is given in book 13, where science and wisdom are identified with Christ.

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[126] 15.14 (479–482) and 21 (490–493. Trans. Hill, 411): 'cum ergo hac transformatione ad perfectum fuerit haec imago renouata, *similes deo erimus*, *quoniam uidebimus eum*, non per speculum, sed *sicuti est*'.

5

Trinity and Revelation

I. THE TRINITARIAN FORM OF REVELATION

In our sequential account of the first four books of the *De Trinitate*, we have drawn attention to Augustine's treatment of 1 Corinthians 15:28 '*And when all things shall be subjected to him, then the Son himself shall also be made subject to the one who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all*', one of the passages of the New Testament which seem to imply inferiority of the Son to the Father and hence deny his full divinity. We have seen how Augustine interprets it: the handing over of the kingdom by Christ to the Father means that Christ will lead the just who now live through faith to the contemplation or vision of God face to face.[1] The interesting part of this exegesis is that it gives a Trinitarian account of knowledge of God exactly parallel to the Trinitarian account of soteriology we have seen in the chapter of this book on Christology: the Son's mediatory role and sacrifice introduce us into his unity of love (*dilectio*) with his Father; the Father is the end of the movement; salvation ultimately means to be united to him, in the Son, through the Holy Spirit, i.e. through love. In the same way, knowledge of God is explained as follows:

It is of this contemplation that I understand the text, *When he hands over the kingdom to God and the Father* (1 Cor 15.24), that is, when *the man Christ Jesus, mediator of God and men* (1 Tm 2.5), now reigning for *the just* who *live by faith* (Hb 2.4), brings them to the contemplation of God and the Father.[2]

The knowledge of God we have through faith is the result of Christ's mediatory role and its fulfilment and end will be the contemplation of God the Father in the life-to-come. This point is constantly restated in this section: the goal and the end of the knowledge of God is the Father.[3] Of course, knowledge

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[1] 1.16 (49 f.).
[2] 1.17 (50):

De hac contemplatione intellego dictum: *Cum tradiderit regnum deo et patri*, id est cum perduxerit iustos quibus nunc ex fide uiuentibus regnat *mediator dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus* ad contemplationem dei et patris.

[3] Cf. for example 1.16 (49 f.); 18 (54); 21 (57 ff.).

of God the Father means at the same time knowledge of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: the Father does not manifest himself without the Son;[4] as he leads to the contemplation of the Father, the Son manifests himself as well;[5] this also includes the Holy Spirit.[6] *This does not mean, however, that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the object of salvific knowledge in an undifferentiated way.* Knowledge of the Trinity means that God can only be known in a Trinitarian way. Knowledge of God the Trinity, means knowledge *of* the Father *in* the Son *through* the Holy Spirit. In other words, it means that, united to the Son through love, we are introduced into the love and the knowledge of the Son in relation to the Father. We should never lose sight of this notion of the Trinitarian shape of our relation with God, even when it is not explicitly stated.

The exegetical passages we are focusing on have their own way of stating the key role of love (*dilectio*) in this Trinitarian shape of knowledge of God. Augustine argues that even after our death, when we will be raised from the dead for the final judgement, not everyone will see Christ in his divinity. The evil ones will only see him in his human form, but certainly not in the form of God through which he is equal to the Father.[7] This exegesis echoes what we have seen concerning the fact that the humanity of Christ is not revelatory as such. Even in the Incarnation God *can* make himself known in Christ, but his knowledge is not handed over to us, does not become our possession. Another way of rendering the same point consists in saying that faith only works through love, i.e. that knowledge of Christ in his humanity and of his deeds and words only becomes a means to knowledge of God through the Holy Spirit, i.e. through love (*dilectio*). This is why, in this passage, Augustine reminds us that even after our death, vision of God is reserved only to those who love him.[8] Love alone knows God.

II. GOD'S INVISIBILITY AND HIS UNKNOWABILITY IN REVELATION

Another important topic of the first books of the *De Trinitate* which highlights the Trinitarian structure of revelation is the discussion on the theophanies of the Old Testament in relation to God's invisibility. To appreciate the crucial role this divine attribute plays in Augustine's Trinitarian theology we have to

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[4] 1.17 (52).   [5] 1.18 (55).   [6] 1.21 (59).   [7] 1.28 (70 f.).
[8] 1.28 (71) and 1.30 (74 f.). The same point is made in the exegesis of Exod. 33:11 ff. in 2.28 (119), where vision of God results from faith and *dilectio*. For a discussion of Augustine's treatment of 1 Cor. 15:28, who reaches conclusions similar to ours, see Bourassa (1977), 700–705.

be aware that invisibility is Augustine's way of talking about God's unknowability in revelation, i.e. of the gratuitous nature of revelation, as it is expressed for example in the Prologue of the Gospel of John: '*No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known*.'[9] The Trinitarian structure of revelation follows from God's unknowability: no one has ever seen God, i.e. no one *can* know God because he is invisible; this is why we need the Incarnation of the Son and the reconciliation with the Father he accomplishes through his sacrifice to be introduced into this knowledge (which is, in fact, knowledge or contemplation of the Father), through the Holy Spirit.

The main Scriptural reference for God's invisibility, or at least the most explicit, is to be found in Timothy's first letter: '*Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever*' and '*the blessed and only sovereign, the king of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see*'.[10] 'Arians' applied these sentences to the Father alone and argued that the Son is 'visible in himself' (*uisibilis per se ipsum*) and therefore is not God in the same sense as the Father is God.[11] For the same reason, they also attribute the theophanies of the Old Testament to the Son because of what they see as his inferiority with regard to the Father. Augustine's main counter-argument is that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God and therefore equally invisible. Even in the Incarnation, the divinity of Christ is not visible: the Jews crucified Christ because they could not see him in his divinity, even though they saw him in the flesh.[12] This point is constantly restated and plays a crucial role in Augustine's theological epistemology: the humanity of Christ allows us to know God only through the faith which works through love (*dilectio*), i.e. through the action of the Holy Spirit.[13]

To fight the 'Arian' interpretation of the theophanies of the Old Testament, Augustine undertakes a long and detailed exegesis of the scriptural passages reporting them. He aims at proving that most of the time Scripture does not give us any clue as to whether it was the Father who manifested himself in the Old Testament, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit or the whole Trinity. At other times, in the light of the New Testament, we can venture to attribute some theophanies to one of the divine persons, but even in these cases it is sometimes to the Father, sometimes to the Son, and sometimes to the Holy

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[9] John 1:18.

[10] 1 Tim. 1.17, '*Regi autem saeculorum immortali, inuisibili, soli deo honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum*', and 6.15 f., '*Beatus et solus potens, rex regum et dominus dominantium, qui solus habet immortalitatem et lucem habitat inaccessibilem; quem nemo hominum uidit nec uidere potest*', quoted in 2.14 (99).

[11] 2.15 (101).   [12] 1.11 (40).   [13] Cf. 4.26 (195).

Spirit, and each time only tentatively. In any case, it cannot possibly be argued that God himself had been heard or seen in these theophanies. Each time, God manifested himself either through creatures created just for the purpose of that particular manifestation, or through angels who made use of existing creaturely realities or finally through angels using their own 'bodies' which they can transform at will.[14] This point is discussed throughout the third book and in the end Augustine thinks that we should not pry too much into the way angels use creaturely reality for the purpose of serving God's self-manifestation in these theophanies. The only thing we need to know is that God is the Lord of creation and can make use of it for the purpose of making his will known to his people.

Of course, the fact that God used created reality to manifest himself does not mean that creation is endowed by itself with a capacity to signify God[15]— just as, even in the Incarnation, the humanity of Christ is not revelatory as such. Let us remember that theophanies happen 'by means of the creature made subject to him' ('per subiectam creaturam').[16] Augustine insists on the miraculous character of these events: 'these are properly called miracles and signs'.[17] The relation between these miracles and God's action is formulated as follows: God's providential government of creation already is a miracle, a sign of his almightiness and lordship; this miraculous character of his government of creation, however, because of its regularity does not arouse the same astonishment as theophanies do.[18] Is there anything surprising, therefore, if he who is the Lord of creation can make use of it for the purpose of revealing his will to his creatures?[19] This is why revelation through created intermediaries in the Old Testament is to be attributed to God's lordship over his creation and not to any intrinsic ability of creation itself to signify God.

In the explanation of the way God makes himself known, we find that there is a fundamental difference between on the one hand the theophanies of the Old Testament and, on the other hand, the missions of the New Testament, that is the Incarnation and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the risen Christ. Between theophanies and missions there is a *qualitative* difference summed up as follows: 'the word which was then delivered through angels, is now delivered through the Son'.[20] In the Old Testament God manifests himself through created intermediaries. In the New Testament, we are faced with the paradox that, *while remaining invisible*, the Son of God, i.e. God himself, appears in the

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[14] 3.4 (130 f.).   [15] Contrary to Hanby (2003), 32 f.
[16] 2.25 (114); 2.35 (126); and *passim*.
[17] 3.19 (146. Trans. Hill, 138): 'proprie miracula et signa dicuntur'.   [18] 3.11 (138).
[19] 3.10 (137). Cf. also 3.18 (144 f.).
[20] 3.22 (151. Trans. Hill, 141): 'tunc autem per angelos, nunc per filium sermo factus est'.

flesh. Such a paradox requires a Trinitarian understanding of the doctrine of revelation:

> So it is that the invisible Father, together with the jointly invisible Son, is said to have sent this Son by making him visible. If the Son has been made visible in such a way that he ceased to be invisible with the Father, that is if the substance of the invisible Word, undergoing change and transition, had been turned into the visible creature, then we would have had to think of the Son simply as sent by the Father, and not also as sending with the Father. As it is, the form of a servant was so taken on that the form of God remained immutable, and thus it is plain that what was seen in the Son was the work of Father and Son who remain unseen; that is that the Son was sent to be visible by the invisible Father together with the invisible Son.[21]

The simple attribution of invisibility to the 'divinity' is unable to account for the way God makes himself known to us in Christ. We need to talk about this divine attribute in terms of the relation between the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. The attribute of invisibility (which in fact here corresponds to God's unknowability) applies to the Son insofar as he is 'together with' (*una cum*) the Father, i.e. it belongs properly to the Father. The Son becomes 'visible', in such a way however as to remain invisible with the Father, that is equally God as the Father. We do not need to repeat here what we have said in our chapter on Christology to explain how this paradox depends on the mystery of the Incarnation and of hypostatic union.

Let us remember the passage from the fourth book on the sentence of the Gospel of John where Jesus says to the Apostle Philip: '*Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father.*'[22] This, says Augustine, means that the Son of God 'both could and could not be seen' in Christ:

> He could be seen as made and sent; he could not be seen as the one *through whom all things were made* (Jn 1.3). Or what about his saying, *He that has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and shall manifest myself to him* (Jn 14.21)? But there he was, manifest before their eyes; surely then it can only mean that he was offering the

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[21] 2.9 (92. Trans. Hill, 103):

Quapropter pater inuisibilis una cum filio secum inuisibili eundem filium uisibilem faciendo misisse eum dictus est; qui si eo modo uisibilis fieret ut cum patre inuisibilis esse desisteret, id est si substantia inuisibilis uerbi in creaturam uisibilem mutata et transiens uerteretur, ita missus a patre intellegeretur filius ut tantum missus non etiam cum patre mittens inueniretur. Cum uero sic accepta est forma serui ut maneret incommutabilis forma dei, manifestum est quod a patre et filio non apparentibus factum sit quod appareret in filio, id est ab inuisibili patre cum inuisibili filio idem ipse filius uisibilis mitteretur.

[22] John 14:9: '*Tanto tempore uobiscum sum et non cognouistis me? Philippe, qui me uidit uidit et patrem.*'

flesh which the Word had been made in the fullness of time as the object to receive our faith; but that the Word itself, *through whom all things had been made* (Jn 1.3), was being kept for the contemplation in eternity of minds now purified through faith.[23]

In the Incarnation, the Son of God truly is both visible and invisible and, through him, truly the Father makes himself visible, i.e. *known while remaining invisible.* Just as properly as we can talk of humility of God (*humilitas dei*)[24] and and of crucified God (*deus crucifixus*),[25] so, in all truth, we can state that the Father makes himself visible i.e. knowable in the Son through the Holy Spirit while remaining God, that is while remaining invisible, that is unknowable.[26]

Therefore, Augustine unfolds his doctrine of revelation in tight connection to reconciliation and has a Trinitarian understanding of both, an understanding, that is, which envisages both in the light of the full divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The foundations of his doctrine of the inner-life of the Trinity lie here, even though the transition from a Trinitarian account of reconciliation and of revelation to the doctrine of the inner-life of God is carefully and progressively spelt out through his discussion of the mission and the elaboration of an hermeneutical rule which we shall here call the 'rule God from God'.

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[23] 4.26 (195. Trans. Hill, 172):

Videbatur sicut missus factus erat; non uidebatur sicut per eum omnia facta erant. Aut unde etiam illud dicit: Qui habet mandata mea et seruat ea ipse est qui me diligit, et qui me diligit diligetur a patre meo, et ego diligam eum et manifestabo ei me ipsum cum esset manifestus ante oculos hominum, nisi quia carnem quod uerbum in plenitudine temporis factum erat suscipiendae nostrae fidei porrigebat; ipsum autem uerbum per quod omnia facta erant purgatae per fidem menti contemplandum in aeternitate seruabat?

[24] 4.4 (164). Cf. 8.7 (276) and 13.22 (412).   [25] 1.28 (69).

[26] We agree with Barnes (2003) that through the polemical stance against 'Arian' and traditional anti-modalist treatment of the theophanies of the Old Testament, the visibility of the Son and the invisibility of the Father, Augustine is in fact elaborating an 'account of how the Son is revelatory' (p. 332). In his exposition of the Trinitarian shape of the revelatory role of the Son, however, Barnes does not adequately bring to the fore (i) the role of charity, and therefore of the Holy Spirit: even after our death, the vision of God is reserved only to those who love him (cf. 1.28 (71) and 1.30 (74 f.)); (ii) the clear distinction Augustine establishes between the way God reveals himself in the theophanies of the Old Testament and the missions of the New Testament; (iii) the crucial novelty of the relation between human and divine nature, and thus of the relation between faith and vision, in Christ through the Incarnation and the role of the Holy Spirit; and finally (iv) the proper Trinitarian articulation of revelation: the invisible/unknowable Father makes himself visible, i.e. knowable, in the Son through the Holy Spirit. Cf. Barnes's declaration: 'The divinity of the Son is, until the eschaton, unseen and unseeable, although it can be symbolized or signified by some created artifact, *just as* the divinity of the Father and Holy Spirit can be, and is' (p. 335, our emphasis; cf. also p. 344).

III. THE TRANSITION TO THE INNER-LIFE OF THE TRINITY

When outlining the issue of missions, in the sequential account of books 1 to 7 (see Chapter 2), we have detected its core in the assertion of the New Testament that the sending of the Son takes place in the Incarnation, whereas the sending of the Holy Spirit is said to have happened at Pentecost.[27] As for the Father, he is never said to have been sent. The issue is introduced in the framework of the exposition of the Trinitarian mystery to fight the argument that 'he who is sent' is inferior to 'the one who sends him' and that therefore the Son is inferior to the Father and that the Holy Spirit is inferior to both the Father and the Son. Augustine's construal of the sending of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, however, transforms this anti-'Arian' polemical argument into the critical point of transition between the economy of salvation and the inner-life of the Trinity.

First of all, the discussion on missions refines the Trinitarian portrayal of God's invisibility we mentioned earlier: the invisibility of the Father is linked to the fact that he is never said to have been sent and he is 'the one who sends'. The Son is sent because he appeared in the flesh, even though he remained invisible with the Father.[28] The Holy Spirit is also said to have been sent because he was manifested visibly through bodily appearances at Pentecost.[29] Therefore, the Son and the Holy Spirit are said to have been sent when they appeared to us: 'So what their being sent would mean is their coming forth from the hidden world of the spiritual into the public gaze of mortal men in some bodily shape.'[30]

However, this equation between 'to be sent' and 'to be seen' raises the question of the difference between missions and the theophanies of the Old Testament. Setting aside for one moment the Incarnation, in which the unicity of the way God appears is easier to grasp, what difference is there between the apparitions of the Holy Spirit through created intermediaries in the Old Testament and his sending at Pentecost? In fact, even when he was sent by the risen Christ at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was not united to the dove or to the tongues of fire hypostatically, in the same way as the Son took flesh in Christ.[31] Even when he was sent at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit manifested himself through created intermediaries, in exactly the same way as in the theophanies of the Old Testament.

The same question applies to the Father, even though in the opposite way. In his investigation of the theophanies of the Old Testament, Augustine had

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[27] 2.11 (93–96).   [28] 2.9 (92).   [29] 2.10 (93).
[30] 3.3 (129. Trans. Hill, 129): 'ut hoc eis fuerit mitti, ad aspectum mortalium in aliqua forma corporea de spiritali secreto procedere'.
[31] 2.10 f. (93–96).

established that some of them could be attributed to the Father.[32] Of course, this could be done only tentatively for the Old Testament, but the New Testament openly attributes to the Father the voice which was heard both at Jesus's baptism and at the transfiguration.[33] Why, therefore, is the Father not said to have been sent 'if he was signified by those bodily manifestations which were shown to the eyes of men in the Old Testament'.[34]

Augustine's solution to this dilemma is set out by progressive degrees.

First of all, he notices that the Son is said to be sent not only because he appeared (*apparuit*) in the Incarnation, but also because *he made himself known* to us: 'and he is precisely sent to anyone when he is known and perceived by him, as far as he can be perceived and known according to the capacity of a rational soul either making progress toward God or already made perfect in God' and 'or else he is sent in the fact that he is perceived in time by someone's mind, as it says, *Send her to be with me and labor with me* (Wis 9.10) ... But that he is sent means that he is known by somebody in time.'[35] These sentences suggest that God makes himself known to us not only by presenting himself objectively to us, but also by overcoming our opposition to his self-revelation. This is why revelation and reconciliation are inseparable, as we have seen in the section on soteriology. The obstacle represented by our sinfulness and our blindness with regard to the knowledge of God is restated here, just after the sentence quoted above: '*For because in God's wisdom the world could not know God by wisdom (since the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it)* (Jn 1.5), *it was God's pleasure, to save those who believe by the folly of preaching* (1 Cor 1.21), *that the Word should become flesh and dwell among us* (Jn 1.14).'[36]

Then, with regard to the Father, Augustine states that, even though he is never said to have been sent,[37] he too is known 'in time' (*ex tempore*). This implies that just as the Son and the Holy Spirit are known as those who are sent, the Father is known precisely as the one who sends but is not seen. The simple equation between 'to be sent' and 'to be known' breaks down here.

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[32] For example 2.17 (102).   [33] 1.7 f. (34–37); 2.18 (104).

[34] 3.3 (129. Trans. Hill, 129): 'si per illas species corporales quae oculis antiquorum apparuerunt ipse demonstrabatur'.

[35] 4.28 (198. Trans. Hill, 173): 'tunc unicuique mittitur cum a quoquam cognoscitur atque percipitur quantum cognosci et percipi potest pro captu uel proficientis in deum uel perfectae in deo animae rationalis' and 'eo quod ex tempore cuiusquam mente percipitur sicut dictum est: *Mitte illam ut mecum sit et mecum laboret.* ... Quod autem mittitur ex tempore a quoquam cognoscitur.'

[36] 4.28 (198 f. Trans. Hill, 173): 'Quia enim in sapientia dei non poterat mundus cognoscere per sapientiam deum quoniam lux lucet in tenebris et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt, placuit deo per stultitiam praedicationis saluos facere credentes ut uerbum caro fieret et habitaret in nobis.'

[37] 2.8 (89); 2.22 (109); 4.28 (199).

The Father is known precisely as the one who cannot be seen or the one who, although he cannot be seen (i.e. he is unknowable), makes himself knowable in the Incarnation of the Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Again, knowledge of God is not simply knowledge of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but knowledge of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

Thus we reach the final transition from the economy of salvation to the inner-life of the Trinity and we are given an answer to the question as to why only the Son and the Holy Spirit are said to have been sent and not the Father. A key sentence of the fourth book says: 'For he was not sent in virtue of some disparity of power or substance or anything in him that was not equal to the Father, but in virtue of the Son being from the Father, not the Father from the Son.'[38] Or again 'the reason why the Son is said to have been sent by the Father is simply that the one is the Father and the other the Son'.[39] Here we discover the ultimate distinction between the missions and the theophanies of the Old Testament and it is explained why, even though the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit had already made themselves known in the Old Testament, the Father is never said to have been sent and the Son and the Holy Spirit are only said to have been sent at the Incarnation and at Pentecost.

With the Incarnation and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the risen Christ (i.e. the missions),[40] *the form and content of revelation—and of reconciliation—are the expression of the inner Trinitarian identity of the revealer.* The Son is said to have been sent only at the time of the Incarnation because only then he unites human nature to himself in a personal—i.e. hypostatic—union to lead us to union with his Father. Only then, the Son appears and makes himself known as he is, i.e. as the Son coming from the Father, God from God. This is why the sentence quoted above identifies the mission of the Son with his divine filiation: 'he [the Son] was sent in virtue of the Son being from the Father'.[41]

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[38] 4.27 (196. Trans. Hill, 172): 'non secundum imparem potestatem uel substantiam uel aliquid quod in eo patri non sit aequale missus est [filius], sed secundum id quod filius a patre est, non pater a filio'.

[39] 4.27 (195. Trans. Hill, 172): 'secundum hoc missus a patre filius dicitur quia ille pater est, ille filius'.

[40] The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are therefore *that through which God saves us, that through which he makes himself known to us*, that through which he leads us from faith to happiness, vision, enjoyment of the Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit.

[41] 4.27 (196. Trans. Hill, 172): 'missus est [filius] secundum id quod filius a patre est'. Thus, we find it difficult to agree with Studer's declaration that Augustine 'was not concerned with the need to argue from the teaching of Jesus to his eternal condition as complete expression of the Father', cf. Studer (1997b), 40. Studer himself, arguing from a passage of book 2 where Augustine declares that 'for him [the Son] being from the Father, that is being born of the Father, is not something different from seeing the Father (non enim aliud illi est esse de patre, id est nasci de patre, quam uidere patrem)' (*Trin.* 2.3 (83)), reaches the conclusion that 'Augustine could then interpret the whole attitude of Jesus as a manifestation of his eternal filiation' (p. 41).

The same thing is declared even more openly with regard to the Holy Spirit: 'And just as "being born" means for the Son his "being from the Father", so his "being sent" means his "being known to be from him". And just as for the Holy Spirit his "being the gift of God" means his "proceeding from the Father", so his "being sent" means his "being known to proceed from him" '.[42] The Holy Spirit is said to have been sent only when he makes known to us his own inner Trinitarian identity, namely his being 'he who proceeds from the Father'. The following passage explains this point more in detail:

What then can it mean to say that *the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified* (Jn 7.39), except that that giving or bestowal or sending of the Holy Spirit was going to have some special quality about it that there had never been before?[43]

The Gospel of John explains that the Holy Spirit is said to be given (*datus*) or sent only after his resurrection, because only then that gift (*datio, donatio*: here is the origin of the notion of Holy Spirit as *donum*, 'gift') or mission was going to have a new characteristic, a new property, which is described as follows:

Nowhere else do we read that men had spoken in languages they did not know as the Holy Spirit came upon them, in the way that occurred at Pentecost. For then his coming needed to be demonstrated by perceptible signs, to show that the whole world and all nations with their variety of languages were going to believe in Christ by the gift of the Holy Spirit.[44]

The property of the gift of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation which corresponds to his inner-Trinitarian identity is that he constitutes us believers in Christ, i.e he creates in us that faith which works through love (*fides per dilectionem*), through which we adhere to Christ.[45] This is restated even more incisively in another passage: 'In order that faith might work through love, *the charity of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has*

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[42] 4.29 (199. Trans. Hill, 174): 'Sicut enim "natum esse" est filio "a patre esse", ita "mitti" est filio "cognosci quod ab illo sit". Et sicut spiritui sancto "donum dei esse" est "a patre procedere", ita "mitti" est "cognosci quod ab illo procedat" '.

[43] 4.29 (201. Trans. Hill, 174):

Quomodo ergo *spiritus nondum erat datus quia Iesus nondum erat clarificatus* nisi quia illa datio uel donatio uel missio spiritus sancti habitura erat quandam proprietatem suam in ipso aduentu qualis antea numquam fuit?

[44] 4.29 (201. Trans. Hill, 175):

Nusquam enim legimus linguis quas non nouerant homines locutos ueniente in se spiritu sancto sicut tunc factum est cum oporteret eius aduentum signis sensibilibus demonstrari ut ostenderetur totum orbem terrarum atque omnes gentes in linguis uariis constitutas credituras in Christum per donum spiritus sancti.

[45] 13.5 (386); 13.14 (400); 13.26 (419).

been given to us (Rom 5.5). And he was given to us when Jesus was glorified in his resurrection.'[46]

Therefore, the role of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation through the Incarnation, Christ's sacrifice and the gift of the Holy Spirit by the risen Christ (the 'missions') are the revelations of the inner-life of God.[47] In other words, because salvation is really divine, the way God saves us is a revelation of his identity. At the same time, (i) because of the identity between revelation and reconciliation; (ii) because the Father is known precisely as he who cannot be seen or known (the invisible, the unknowable); and finally (iii) because the subjective aspect of knowledge of God is the work of the Holy Spirit: for all these reasons, God remains invisible, that is unknowable even in his self-revelation. In other words, knowledge of God is a grace from beginning to end.

Compared, therefore, with Karl Rahner's axiom 'the Trinity of the economy of salvation *is* the immanent Trinity and vice versa',[48] Augustine's Trinitarian theology does maintain that the economy of salvation allows us to know the inner-life of the Trinity, since the defining factor of missions is that they correspond to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit's inner-Trinitarian identity. However, Augustine does not identify the missions with the inner-Trinitarian identity of Son and Holy Spirit (i.e., in Rahnerian terms, the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity) to the point that Christ's humanity becomes revealer as such, i.e. that knowledge of God becomes something at our disposal. Because he holds a clear anhypostatic approach to the Incarnation (see Chapter 4), because faith only becomes operative through love and because the Holy Spirit is given in such a way that he gives himself as God (see Chapter 6 below), God the Trinity remains unknowable even in his self-revelation, which means that revelation remains a grace all the way through. *God's involvement in history is*

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[46] 13.14 (400. Trans. Hill, 354): 'Vt enim fides per dilectionem operetur, *caritas dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis*. Tunc est autem datus quando est Iesus resurrectione clarificatus.'

[47] In his detailed and cogently argued article, Studer (1997b) comes to the same conclusion: for the *De Trinitate* 'temporal economy manifests an eternal theology' (p. 35), 'the temporal economy of the Trinity symbolises an eternal theology' (p. 38). At times Augustine seems to oppose *scientia* and *sapientia*, knowledge of the temporal and knowledge of the eternal, as if they were two distinct ways of knowing (p. 33) and 'in doing so, he seems to posit a large distance between economy and theology' (p. 34). 'However—[Studer declares]—we should not overlook the emphasis which Augustine places upon the unity of Christ' (pp. 34–37). He adds that Augustine 'reasons from the appearances of the Son and the Holy Spirit to their real distinction and even their mutual relationship' (p. 38). Our only reservation about Studer's argument concerns his view that 'the relationship between economy and theology appears much more clearly in Augustine's penumatology then it does in his Christology' (p. 39)—our argument in this book should have proved that this is equally the case for Christology as for pneumatology.

[48] Rahner (1966), 87.

always God's free decision to be involved, without him ever becoming dependent on history or his inner-Trinitarian identity ever needing history to become what it is.

IV. WISDOM AND THE IDENTITY BETWEEN REVEALER AND REVELATION

In our sequential account of the first seven books of the *De Trinitate*, we have seen that book 7 tries to answer the question of whether each person of the Trinity is God individually or the Trinity is God as a whole.[49] The outcome of the argument is that each person is God and that the three together are the one God. Yet within the unity of God there is a 'direction' ('God from God'). This whole point is elaborated through the discussion of the way the attribute of wisdom (*sapientia*) must be predicated of God. In virtue of God's simplicity, everything we say about him as substance is true of any of his attributes, included that of wisdom. This means that each person is wisdom and yet the three together are one wisdom, but with a 'direction' (i.e. the Son is 'wisdom from wisdom').[50]

However, Augustine is aware that Scripture never ascribes wisdom to the Father. This he acknowledges when he says that 'the scriptures almost nowhere say anything about wisdom except to show it as either begotten or made by God'.[51] He is aware that in Scripture wisdom is born and that it refers to the action of the Son, through whom everything was created.[52] He did not simply remember this point once he had established on a purely theoretical ground that wisdom must be equally predicated of the three persons of the Trinity. He already had copiously illustrated this point in the exegetical analysis of the first four books of the *De Trinitate*, where wisdom was consistently identified with the Son.[53] It was already clear that, like the Word of the beginning of John's Gospel, wisdom is that through which everything was created.[54] On what grounds, therefore, has Augustine established that wisdom must be attributed to the Father as well as to the Son? How does this move relate to the scriptural material from which he was so consciously trying to argue?

[49] 6.6 (234 f.) quoted in 7.1 (244).   [50] 7.1–3 (244–250).
[51] 7.4 (251 f. Trans. Hill, 222): 'in scripturis nusquam fere de sapientia quidquam dicitur nisi ut ostendatur a deo genita uel creata'.
[52] 7.4 (251. Trans. Hill, 222): 'Genita [sapientia] scilicet per quam facta sunt omnia.'
[53] 2.14 (99). The whole of the second book of the *De Trinitate* tends to interpret the Old Testament references to wisdom as applying to the Son, cf. 2.25 (113 f.) and 2.28 (118).
[54] 2.14 (99); 2.28 (118); 3.15 (142 f.).

The real presupposition behind the attribution of wisdom to the Father as well as to the Son is, of course, the same necessary identity between the form/content of revelation and the revealer we have highlighted in his account of missions. This is declared in the second half of a sentence already quoted in part, which we give now in its entirety:

The question then arises, why do the scriptures almost nowhere say anything about wisdom except to show it as either begotten or made by God? Begotten, that is to say, when it means the wisdom *through* whom *all things were made* (Jn 1.3); created or made as it is in men, when they turn to the wisdom which is not created or made but begotten, and are enlightened; then something is brought about in them which is called their wisdom.[55]

Wisdom here designates not only that through which everything was created (wisdom begotten), but also something which becomes ours in the act through which we are converted to the wisdom which is the Son and enlightened by him (wisdom made by God). Our enlightenment or conversion is then described as follows:

For the Father utters her [wisdom] to be his Word,…and she [this same wisdom or word] by enlightening us utters to us whatever needs to be uttered to men about herself and about the Father.[56]

For the purpose of clarity we call 'repetition' the act through which we are made wise described in this sentence, a 'repetition' in the strongest and deepest possible sense of the word. Let us notice the parallelism of 'utters' (*dicit*): (i) just as the Father utters his wisdom and this is what constitutes the Son as Word; (ii) so the Son/Word utters to us 'about himself and about the Father' and in this act we are enlightened.

Augustine had already determined the right connection between the Son's denomination as Word and the way in which the divine attribute of wisdom must be ascribed to him: 'let us take it as being the same, when it is called Word, as if it were called "born wisdom" '.[57] The Son is Word as he is 'born wisdom' (*nata sapientia*) or 'wisdom from wisdom' and it is precisely this

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[55] 7.4 (251. Trans. Hill, 222):

Cur ergo in scripturis nusquam fere de sapientia quidquam dicitur nisi ut ostendatur a deo genita uel creata? Genita scilicet per quam facta sunt omnia; creata uero uel facta sicut in hominibus cum ad eam quae non creata et facta sed genita est conuertuntur et inlustrantur; in ipsis enim fit aliquid quod uocetur eorum sapientia.

[56] Ibid.:

Pater enim eam [sapientiam] dicit ut uerbum eius sit,…et inluminando, [*this same* sapientia/uerbum] dicit nobis et de se et de patre quod dicendum est hominibus.

[57] 7.3 (250. Trans. Hill, 221): 'id accipiamus cum dicitur uerbum sapientia ac si dicatur "nata sapientia" '.

feature of his very being which grounds his revelatory and salvific enlightening role towards us: 'the Word . . . shows the Father as he is, because it is itself just like that, being exactly what the Father is insofar as it is wisdom and being'.[58] The Son of God reveals that which the Father is in himself (or 'susbtantially', *ad se*) i.e. the wisdom and the being (*essentia*) of the Father, because of his consubstantiality with the Father according to wisdom and being (*secundum sapientiam et essentiam*). If we reverse this statement from our viewpoint, the act through which we are made wise (that is the act through which we are converted and enlightened) somehow is a 'repetition' of the relation between Father and Son and happens through the Son precisely because he is the Father's word.

This point is so crucial in Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine, that he restates it again under the viewpoint of light, which makes it even clearer. Precisely because the Son is 'light from light' 'fountain of life' (*fons uitae*) he can become the 'the light which enlightens all men' (*lumen quod illuminat omnes homines*). Again from our viewpoint this means that our enlightenment (*illuminatio*) depends on what the Son is as light from light, i.e. on his inner-Trinitarian relation to the Father.[59]

The presupposition for this link between the identity of the Son and his role in revelation and reconciliation can be found in the doctrine of missions examined above. In the passage from the seventh book on which we are focusing our investigation, there are two explicit references to this issue. The Son, 'wisdom from wisdom', makes us wise by enlightening us, because 'for us he became wisdom coming from God' (*factus est nobis sapientia a deo*) through a temporal dispensation in time in which Augustine identifies two moments: (i) the time of the Incarnation: 'at a certain moment of time he too, *the Word, was made flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1.14)'[60] and (ii) the time of our conversion: 'we turn to him in time, that is at a particular moment of time, in order to abide with him forever'[61] and 'by pressing on imitate him who abides motionless, we follow him who stands still, and by walking in him we move toward him, because for us he became a road or way in time by his humility, while being for us an eternal abode by his divinity'.[62]

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[58] 7.4 (251. Trans. Hill, 222, modified): 'uerbum dei . . . ita ostendit patrem sicuti est pater, quia et ipsum ita est, et hoc est quod pater secundum quod sapientia est et essentia'.

[59] 7.4 (252).

[60] 7.4 (252. Trans. Hill, 223): 'ex quodam tempore uerbum caro factum est et habitauit in nobis'.

[61] Ibid.: 'temporaliter nos ad illum conuertimur, id est ex aliquo tempore, ut cum illo maneamus in aeternum'.

[62] 7.5 (253. Trans. Hill, 223): 'Nos autem nitentes imitamur manentem et sequimur stantem et in ipso ambulantes tendimus ad ipsum quia factus est nobis uia temporalis per humilitatem quae mansio nobis aeterna est per diuinitatem.'

The echo between these passages and the definition of missions given in the fourth book is unmistakeable, where we have seen that 'to be sent' means 'to be known', which requires our conversion to and reconciliation with the Father, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. The whole thrust of the fourth book was precisely to establish that the missions do not imply the inferiority of the Son—and the Holy Spirit—who is sent, vis-à-vis the Father who sends, precisely because they correspond to the inner-Trinitarian identity of the divine persons. The Son becomes for us 'wisdom coming from God' (*sapientia a deo*) because in the Trinity he is 'wisdom from God' (*sapientia de deo*) or 'wisdom from wisdom' (*sapientia de sapientia*). This is yet another way of restating that the act through which, in time, the Son becomes our way to eternity and happiness corresponds to his eternal being.

V. THE RULE 'GOD FROM GOD'

Everything we have said so far concerning the doctrine of missions and more generally the Trinitarian shape of Augustine's doctrine of revelation and reconciliation is the presupposition of the key exegetical and doctrinal move he makes in the second book of the *De Trinitate*. In this book, he surprises his reader by criticizing the rule for the interpretation of the passages of Scripture apparently implying the inferiority of the Son he had formulated in his first book. In the first book, he had applied the classical interpretation which consisted in attributing all the passages denoting inferiority with regard to the Father to the humanity of Christ, and attributing all those which present Christ as equal to the Father to his divinity. At the outset of the second book, however, he acknowledges that some passages do not fit into this traditional twofold classification. Some texts of the New Testament, although unambiguously referring to Christ in his divinity, suggest some sort of 'subordination' with regard to the Father:

There are, however, some statements in the divine utterances of such a kind that it is uncertain which rule should be applied to them; should it be the one by which we take the Son as less than the Father in the created nature he took on, or the one by which we take him as equal to the Father, while still deriving from him his being God from God, light from light? We do, after all, call the Son 'God from God', but the Father we simply call 'God', not 'from God'.[63]

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[63] 2.2 (81 f. Trans. Hill, 98):

Sunt quaedam in diuinis eloquiis ita posita ut ambiguum sit ad quam potius regulam referantur, utrum ad eam qua intelligimus minorem filium in assumpta creatura, an ad eam qua

These scriptural passages do not insinuate inferiority, nor subordination, but rather a 'direction', so to speak: the Son is equal to the Father and yet he is 'from the Father', he is God, but 'God from God'. Augustine does not offer any scriptural justification for this rule, but from everything we have seen so far, it is evident that this hermeneutical principle is grounded in the doctrine of missions (even though, sequentially, in the treatise, the issue of missions is examined after the rule 'God from God'). The application of this doctrinal principle to the exegesis of some passages of the New Testament offers various illuminating insights into the transition from the economy of salvation to the inner-life of the Trinity. This is the case, in particular, of the passage from the Gospel of John where Jesus says: '*My teaching is not mine but his who sent me.*' This passage, Augustine explains 'can be understood by the form-of-a-servant rule, which is how we treated it in the previous book; and also by the form-of-God rule, of his being equal to the Father and yet from the Father'.[64] Then he adds:

For just as in this form the Son is not one thing and his life another, but the Son simply is his life; so also the Son is not one thing and his teaching another, but the Son simply is his teaching. Therefore, just as *He gave the Son life* (Jn 5.26) means nothing else than 'He begot the Son who is his life'; so also, when it says 'He gave the Son teaching', it can well mean 'He begot the Son who is teaching'. And thus *My teaching is not mine but his who sent me* (Jn 7.6) may be reduced to 'I am not from myself but from him who sent me'.[65]

The key claim of this interpretation of John 7:16 is that the Son is teaching (*doctrina*) as he is Son, which means that he reveals the Father because he is the Son and 'to be Son' means to be equal to God (the Father) and yet 'God from God'. Revelation is bound up with the inner-life of the Trinity in a typically Johannine fashion. The form/content of revelation and the identity of the revealer cannot be dissociated. That which is revealed and the way it is

intellegimus non quidem minorem esse filium sed aequalem patri, tamen ab illo hunc esse deum de deo, lumen de lumine. Filium quippe dicimus 'deum de deo'; patrem autem 'deum' tantum, non 'de deo'

Cf. also 1.26 (65 f.), where Augustine comments on John 12:47 and even though he has not yet formulated his rule 'God from God', he already applies it to the explanation of this passage.

[64] 2.4 (84. Trans. Hill, 99): 'et ex forma serui potest accipi sicut iam in libro superiore tractauimus, et ex forma dei in qua sic aequalis est patri ut tamen de patre sit'.

[65] 2.4 (84 f. Trans. Hill, 100):

In dei quippe forma sicut non est aliud filius, aliud uita eius, sed ipsa uita filius est; ita non est aliud filius, aliud doctrina eius, sed ipsa doctrina filius est. Ac per hoc sicut id quod dictum est: *Dedit filio uitam*, non aliud intellegitur quam: 'Genuit filium qui est uita,' sic etiam cum dicitur: 'Dedit filio doctrinam,' bene intellegitur: 'Genuit filium qui est doctrina'; ut quod dictum est: *Mea doctrina non est mea sed eius qui me misit*, sic intellegatur ac si dictum sit: 'Ego non sum a me ipso sed ab illo qui me misit'.

revealed are not different from what happens in the inner-life of the Trinity. If God really makes himself known, the way he does so corresponds to what he is.

That we are in the presence of a consistent theological framework appears even more conspicuously when Augustine applies it to the Holy Spirit as well. He sets two texts from the Gospel of John side by side: '*My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me*'[66] and another passage where Jesus says about the Holy Spirit: '*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*'[67] Both passages could be interpreted in a subordinationist way with regard to revelation: the former denotes inferiority of the Son to the Father and the latter inferiority of the Holy Spirit both with regard to the Father and to the Son. However, the Son is 'teaching' as he is Son; he reveals the Father not because he is inferior to him, but precisely because he is equal to the Father and yet from the Father, he is God and yet 'God from God'. Identically, the way the Holy Spirit is involved in the revelatory work of the Son depends on his inner-Trinitarian relation to the Father and the Son. If Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will speak—i.e. reveal—from what is his, this means that the Holy Spirit comes from the Father and the Son, even though the Son himself receives this 'ability' to give the Holy Spirit from the Father. The difference between the Son and the Holy Spirit is expressed through the Johannine terminology of 'procession':

And so we are left to understand that the Holy Spirit has of the Father's just like the Son. How does he? In the ways we mentioned above: *When the advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear testimony about me* (Jn 15.26). So it is as proceeding from the Father that he is said not to speak from himself.[68]

This passage is exactly parallel to the quotation given above concerning the way in which the Son is revelation: the Son is 'teaching' as he is Son;[69] for the Holy Spirit, 'not to speak of himself' coincides with his procession from

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[66] John 7:16.   [67] John 16:13–15.
[68] 2.5 (86. Trans. Hill, 100):

restat ut intelligatur etiam spiritus sanctus de patris habere sicut et filius. Quomodo nisi secundum id quod supra diximus: *Cum autem uenerit paracletus quem ego mittam uobis a patre, spiritum ueritatis qui a patre procedit, ille testimonium perhibebit de me*? Procedendo itaque a patre dicitur *non loqui a semetipso*.

[69] 2.4 (84 f.). The same idea is expressed in the fact that his teaching from the Father *natiuitas ostenditur*, i.e. it shows that he is from the Father, 2.3 (84).

the Father through the Son, 'it is as proceeding from the Father that he is said *not to speak from himself*' ('Procedendo itaque a patre dicitur *non loqui a semetipso*').[70] The revelatory role of the Holy Spirit with relation to the Son and the Father corresponds to his inner-Trinitarian identity and to his procession from the Father and the Son, as we shall see shortly in our chapter on pneumatology.[71]

VI. CONCLUSION

The examination of Augustine's doctrine of revelation does not leave any doubt as to where the roots of his doctrine of the inner-life of the Trinity have to be looked for. The assertion that these roots are in Scripture is correct, but insufficient. The transition from Scripture to the doctrine of the inner-identity of the Trinity needs an intermediary link represented by soteriology and the doctrine of revelation or, more fundamentally, by divine action.

In revelation we are in the presence of God's act of self-manifestation. With soteriology, we look at the way God's self-manifestation actually saves us. Scripture reveals the characteristics of God's act of salvific self-manifestation, which Augustine envisages from the viewpoint of the divine attributes of invisibility and immutability (also attested in Scripture).[72] The Trinitarian shape of the doctrine of revelation follows from these attributes which require that *only from his own side* can the invisible and immutable God make himself known: since God is invisible, that is unknowable, no one can know him unless he reveals himself through Christ in the Holy Spirit; since God is immutable, the act through which he comes towards us is always a grace, is always free, is always the consequence of his name of *misericordia*.[73]

In the same way, the unity, equality, and inseparability of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the ground of the uncompromisingly divine character

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[70] 2.5 (86. Trans. Hill, 100). Although not explicitly stated here, the *filioque* is implied.

[71] For a confirmation of our views, see Bailleux (1975), 554 f.: having summarized the 'rule God from God', he draws the following conclusion: 'De son Père le Christ tient son origine éternelle, son existence et son essence, il tient aussi de lui sa mission temporelle, sa présence économique de Dieu avec nous.' As a result, he concludes, the Father is the principle and the goal of the economy of salvation (p. 555). See also Bourassa (1977), 700–713, especially 710: 'Ainsi l'ordre des missions est l'ordre des processions. . . . Les missions des personnes divines sont identiques aux processions, aux personnes elles-mêmes et à leurs propriétés ou relations personnelles. C'est là affirmer clairement l'identité entre la Trinité en elle-même et la Trinité de l'économie.'

[72] Cf. 2.14 (98 f.), quoting Wisd. 7:27 for immutability and 1 Tim. 1:17 f. and 6.15 f. for invisibility. See also 2.9 (92); 2.25 (114); 3.21 (150).

[73] Cf. *s*. 6.5 (CCL 41, 64). See p. 56 f.

of revelation and reconciliation. The invisible Father does not cease to be invisibile and unknowable or, to say the same thing, he does not cease to be the Lord in the act through which he makes himself known. This lordship in revelation explains why *the revelatory role of the Son is not a function of his inferiority, nor yet of his difference from the Father, but precisely of his unity, inseparability and equality with him*: he is revelation—or 'teaching'—as he is Son, i.e. 'God from God'. What shields Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine from any theistic understanding of divine attributes—invisibility, immutability, simplicity, unity, equality, inseparability—is that these are postulated not on the basis of an abstract notion of divinity, but on the basis of the very nature of revelation and reconciliation. Augustine does not start from a unitary notion of divine nature characterized by these attributes and then tries to see how it can be understood in a Trinitarian way. On the contrary, he starts from the properly speaking *divine* character of Christ's work of revelation and reconciliation through the Holy Spirit: God (the Father) can *only* be known and loved through God (the Son and the Holy Spirit) because he is invisible, unknowable, and immutable; the Father can *really* be known and loved through the Son and the Holy Spirit because the Three are inseparably and equally one God.

6

The Holy Spirit and the Inner-Life
of the Trinity

Our previous chapters have shown the extent to which reconciliation and revelation are the foundations of Augustine's doctrine of the inner-life of the Trinity. Augustine's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is going to provide us with a further confirmation of this finding, especially if we pay attention to the links between Augustine's pneumatology and his Christology and soteriology. These links are not at their most apparent in the sections of the *De Trinitate* in which the questions of the divinity, the property, and the origin of the Holy Spirit are treated *ex professo.*[1] The real doctrinal foundations of the divinity, the property, and the origin of the Holy Spirit are laid out in the very sections of the *De Trinitate* that we have analysed so far, where Augustine sets out the dynamic of salvation. Therefore, the best introduction to the topic of this chapter will be a survey of the section of this book devoted to Christology and soteriology with a focus on the points of intersection with pneumatology outlined there.

I. CHRISTOLOGY AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Covetousness (*cupiditas*), we have seen, is Augustine's main name for human sinfulness. He stresses in particular its disintegrating effects for the individual moral agent, for his relation with God and for his relation with his neighbour.[2] Christ alone is 'the one' (*unum*) who can heal the scattering effects of sinfulness. A sentence from the fourth book we have quoted in full already, sees the unity of Christ's identity and of the salvation he has realized as the most fitting remedy for the results of covetousness: through love and faith we adhere to 'the one' Christ, the Mediator through whom we are reconciled

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[1] 1.13 (42 ff.); 1.24–25 (62–65); 2.5 (85 f.); 2.7–8 (87–90); 4.29 (199 ff.); 5.12–17 (218–227); 6.7 (235 f.); 6.11–12 (241 ff.); 7.5–6 (252 ff.); 15.27–39 (501–517); 15.46–48 (525–530).
[2] 4.11 f. (175 ff.).

with God, and are able to cling to the One, enjoy the One and remain for ever one.[3]

The three key features of Augustine's Christology—hypostatic union, mediatory role, and sacrifice—are unfolded in such a way as to highlight precisely this saving unity of reconciliation. To start with, hypostatic union. The unity of the Son with human nature in the Incarnation is such that Christ's humility is the very humility of God;[4] in virtue of this unique kind of union, in Christ we have some temporal realities—Christ's humanity, his deeds, his words—which have no existence or meaning other that that which is given to them by their existence in the Son of God. As a result, knowledge of these temporal realities (science), becomes a way to knowledge of God (wisdom). Through these temporal realities, objects of faith, God *can* make himself known. The first and fundamental remedy to the epistemological impasse caused by sin is the special kind of unity between the Son of God and human nature realized in the Incarnation. Then, with regard to Christ's mediatorial role and his sacrifice, we have seen that the Incarnation is not simply the union of divine and human nature, but the act through which the Son of God unites human nature to himself and leads it to participate in his personal unity *of will* with the Father. We reach here an aspect of Augustine's Christology and soteriology which has a decisive bearing on his doctrine of the Holy Spirit and of the inner-life of the Trinity. We have analysed the daring passage from the fourth book where Augustine argues that just as the Father and the Son are 'one' not only through the equality of substance, but in virtue of their unity of will, so the unity of Christians with each other is a unity of love (*dilectio*) and not simply a unity of nature.[5] The significance of this move should not be underestimated. The Trinitarian ground of his Christology and soteriology is the union *of will* between the Father and the Son. Provisionally, we can render this point as follows: just as the Father and the Son are united through love-Holy Spirit, so Christians are reconciled—become 'one'—with the Father through the love of Christ's sacrifice (let us remember that love is the essence of sacrifice) and become one with each other through the same love poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us at Christ's resurrection.

Against this background, we become immediately aware of the inseparability between Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine, his Christology and his soteriology on the one hand and his pneumatology on the other.

Christ's mediatory and reconciliatory role consists in the act through which the Son extends his personal unity of love with the Father to human nature

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[3] 4.11 (176): 'per mediatorem deo reconciliati, haereamus uni, fruamur uno, permaneamus unum'.

[4] 13.22 (412 f.).   [5] 4.12 (177 f.).

through the Holy Spirit. The simple, so to speak, unity between divine and human natures in the Incarnation is only one side of the salvation realized by Christ, just as the assertion of the ontological unity of divine persons is not enough to account for the unity of the Trinity, but needs to be complemented with the affirmation of a unity of will, of *dilectio*, between the Father and the Son. Only through Christ's sacrifice, the personal unity of love between the Father and the Son existing from all eternity in the inner-life of the Trinity brings to the full accomplishment the unity of love of Christ with the Father in the economy of salvation, his 'love of God carried as far as contempt of self',[6] his obedience '*unto death, even death on a cross*' (Phil. 2:8). This love corresponds to the justice of Christ through which we have been saved. The very nature of the unity between the Father and the Son, consisting in their mutual eternal love, the Holy Spirit, dictates a Christological and soteriological translation which cannot confine itself to the ontological unity of natures in the Incarnation, but has to be carried through historically in the life of Christ and sealed on the cross. This dynamic approach is required by Augustine's fundamental scriptural basis for this whole topic, namely Philippians 2.

Our examination of the pair of sacrament and example has shown how Augustine spells out the subjective aspect of soteriology. Christ's sacrifice is sacrament in the sense that it is the 'effective sign' of that which the whole redeemed community (*redempta ciuitas*) becomes in the present side of the eschatology: a sacrifice acceptable to God, in virtue of the same love enacted in Christ's sacrifice, which reconciles human nature to the Father. At the same time, Christ's sacrifice is the 'example', that is to say the 'effective sign' of our 'completed' union with God in the other side of the eschatology, in which happiness will be granted to us in the contemplation of the Father resulting from the union of love with him.

Love (*dilectio*), therefore, is the key defining feature of each of these three facets of soteriology: love unites the Son to the Father eternally in the inner-life of the Trinity; through the love enacted in Christ's Incarnation and especially in his sacrifice, the union of love between the Son and the Father becomes Christ's union with the Father and, through him, ours. Thus, the whole treatment of Christology and soteriology is already pregnant with the doctrine of the identity, the property, and the origin of the Holy Spirit. The first illustration of this claim can be found in a passage of the seventh book:

Man ought to follow no one but God in his search for happiness, and yet he was unable to perceive God; so by following God made man, he would at one and the same time follow one he could perceive and the one he ought to follow. Let us love him and cling

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[6]   *ciu. Dei* 14.28 (CCL 48, 451. Trans. Bettenson, 593) 'amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui'.

to him with the charity that *has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been give to us.*[7]

It is through the charity poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that we adhere to Christ and that the soteriological and inseparably epistemological benefits of the Incarnation become, so to speak, operative for us. The cause and effect of our inability to know God lies in our will and especially in its disorderly relation to temporal realities: 'we were weighed down by the accumulated dirt of our sins, which we had collected by our love of temporal things'.[8] Hence the necessity of the Incarnation in which some 'useful temporal things' (*utilia temporalia*) are given to our faith for the knowledge of God. However, even faith in these 'useful temporal things' does not lead to knowledge of God unless this same faith 'works through love'. It is only as object of faith through love that Christ's humanity and his deeds allow us to see the Father. This is what Augustine means when he talks of the necessity of the conversion from the 'covetousness for science' (*cupiditas scientiae*) to the 'charity for wisdom' (*caritas sapientiae*).[9]

We start to catch a glimpse, here, of the theological foundation of one of the key ideas which runs throughout the whole of the *De Trinitate*, namely the inseparability between knowledge and love. This inseparability stems from the unity between the saving work of Christ and the role of the Holy Spirit in it. This, on its turn, reflects the inner-Trinitarian relations of the Holy Spirit with the Son and the Father.

We have seen that, when Augustine determines the property of the gift (*datio*) or mission of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, i.e. that which corresponds to his role and identity in the inner-life of the Trinity, he declares that the Holy Spirit constitutes us believers in Christ, i.e. he creates in us that faith which works through love (*fides per dilectionem*), through which we adhere to Christ.[10] This is restated even more incisively in another passage: 'In order that faith might work through love, *the charity of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us* (Rom 5.5). And he was given to us when Jesus was glorified in his resurrection.'[11] In the

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[7] 7.5 (253. Trans. Hill, 223):

Quia enim homo ad beatitudinem sequi non debebat nisi deum et sentire non poterat deum, sequendo deum hominem factum sequeretur simul et quem sentire poterat et quem sequi debebat. Amemus ergo eum et inhaereamus illi caritate diffusa in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis.

[8] 4.24 (191. Trans. Hill, 169): 'nos pergrauabant temporalium rerum amore contractae'.
[9] 4.12 (177) and 12.16 (370).   [10] 4.29 (201).
[11] 13.14 (400. Trans. Hill, 354): 'Vt enim fides per dilectionem operetur, *caritas dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis*. Tunc est autem datus quando est Iesus resurrectione clarificatus.'

chapter on Christology we have seen that 'faith' corresponds to science and that, thanks to Christ who is both our science and our wisdom, the content of the knowledge given by faith—i.e. science—is exactly the same as the content of the vision or contemplation of the life to come—i.e. wisdom; only the modality is different. With pneumatology, we find that the knowledge given by faith only becomes real knowledge of God through love, i.e. in the Holy Spirit. This is why knowledge and love are inseparable. We know God in Christ only if we love him through the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the objective reconciliation with the Father realized in Christ's sacrifice becomes ours only through the love poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, precisely because love is what unites the Son to the Father from all eternity and love is that which enables Christ's sacrifice to reconcile humanity to the Father.

The transition between the economy of salvation and the inner-life of the Trinity has to be located precisely at this junction. To the equation between reconciliation and revelation we have established in our chapter on Christology, we have to add the equation of (i) the form and content of revelation and reconciliation with (ii) the identity of the revealer and saviour, already outlined in Christology and in the doctrine of revelation, but fully described only when the work of Christ is seen in its inseparability with that of the Holy Spirit.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE UNITY OF THE TRINITY

We saw earlier that the assertion of the ontological unity of the divine persons is not enough to account for the unity of the Trinity, but needs to be complemented with the affirmation of a unity of will, of love, between the Father and the Son. This is required by the nature of salvation. Salvation can be encompassed under the heading of unification (*unum*) because this unity coincides with love.

Among the scriptural bases of Augustine's pneumatology, it is worth noticing his use of Ephesians 4:3 in the sixth book of the *De Trinitate*. Ephesians 4 is often quoted in Augustine's treatment of the Holy Spirit: '*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*'[12] Paul declares that the unity

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[12] Eph. 4.1–6. The whole passage reads:

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

of Christians with each other is the result of the gift of the Holy Spirit given by the risen Christ after his ascension.[13] Unity therefore, identified with love, can be seen as the property of the Holy Spirit in this crucial passage from the sixth book which quotes Ephesians 4:3:

It is clear that he [the Holy Spirit] is not one of the two [Father and Son], since he is that by which the two are joined each to the other, by which the begotten is loved by the one who begets him and in turn loves the begetter. Thus *they keep unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4.3) not in virtue of participation but of their own very being, not by gift of some superior but by their own gift.[14]

Through the Holy Spirit the Father and the Son are united to each other; through the Holy Spirit the Father (*gignens*) loves the Son (*genitus*) and the Son loves the Father, thus fulfilling their unity 'in virtue of their own being' (*essentia sua*—*essentia* is Augustine's word for *substantia*), i.e. in virtue of what they are. This means that unity of love in the Holy Spirit provides the *content* of the metaphysical notion of unity of essence or consubstantiality:

So the Holy Spirit is something common to Father and Son, whatever it is, or is their very commonness or communion, consubstantial and coeternal. Call this friendship, if it helps, but a better word for it is charity. And this too is substance because God is substance, and *God is charity* (1 Jn 4.8, 16), as it is written.[15]

The combination of ontological vocabulary with terms evoking unity of will such as communion and charity and even that of friendship—put forward rather tentatively—should not be overlooked. In books 5 to 7, where Augustine tries to come to terms with the notion of consubstantiality developed for the sake of the polemic against 'Arianism' during the Trinitarian controversy, he often betrays his uneasiness with it, because of the limitations of such abstract tools. Unfortunately, the 'Arian' controversy had cast a suspicion over the language of unity of will for the persons of the Trinity: unity of will had

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[13] Eph. 4:7–9, quoted in 15.34 (509 ff. Trans. Hill, 423): '*But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?)*'.

[14] 6.7 (235. Trans. Hill, 209):

manifestum est quod non aliquis duorum est quo uterque coniungitur, quo genitus a gignente diligatur generatoremque suum diligat, sintque non participatione sed essentia sua neque dono superioris alicuius sed suo proprio *seruantes unitatem spiritus in uinculo pacis*.

[15] 6.7 (235. Trans. Hill, 209 f.):

Spiritus ergo sanctus commune aliquid est patris et filii, quidquid illud est, aut ipsa communio consubstantialis et coaeterna; quae si amicitia conuenienter dici potest, dicatur, sed aptius dicitur caritas; et haec quoque substantia quia deus substantia et deus caritas sicut scriptum est.

been opposed to unity of nature and used as an expedient to deny the equality between the Father and the Son. An echo of this controversy can be found in book 15, right at the end of the discussion on the Holy Spirit. The 'Arian' argument—attributed to Eunomius—is that 'he is not the Son of the nature or substance or being of God but the Son of his will'.[16] Augustine replies, of course, by pointing out that this implies an anthropomorphic conception of will, which indeed in our case is mutable and somehow accidental to our substance. In God's case, Scripture testifies that '*the counsel of the Lord abides for ever* (Prv 19.21)... to make us understand (or at least believe) that just as God is eternal so is his counsel eternal, and therefore unchangeable just as he himself is'.[17] We must not fail to notice the identification between the metaphysical divine attribute of immutability and the biblical notion of God's faithfulness: as usual, Augustine's abstract terms (as for example here, that of 'immutability') have a theological content. The argument is sealed by a quotation of Gregory of Nazianzus arguing that nature and will cannot be opposed in God:

But now this heretic once cunningly asked whether God begot his Son willingly or unwillingly. If you answer 'Unwillingly', then the point he intended to make follows this unbeatable argument, namely that he is not Son by nature but by will. But someone gave him a very shrewd answer; he was wide awake enough to ask him in turn whether God the Father is willingly or unwillingly God. If he answered 'Unwillingly' the consequence would be an even more total divine unhappiness, which it would be the height of lunacy to believe about God; and if he said 'Willingly' he could be answered, 'Therefore he is God by will and not by nature'.[18]

Hence the extension to will of the rule of simplicity Augustine associates to consubstantiality:

To avoid saying that the only-begotten Word is the Son of the Father's counsel or will, some have said that this Word simply is the counsel or will of the Father. But I consider

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[16] 15.38 (515. Trans. Hill, 425): 'non naturae uel substantiae siue essentiae dixit esse filium sed filium uoluntatis dei, accidentem scilicet deo'.

[17] 15.38 (515. Trans. Hill, 425): '*consilium autem* domini *manet in aeternum*,... ut intellegamus siue credamus sicut aeternum deum, ita aeternum eius esse consilium, ac per hoc immutabile sicut ipse est.'

[18] 15.38 (516. Trans. Hill, 425 f.):

Acute sane quidam respondit haeretico uersutissime interroganti utrum deus filium uolens an nolens genuerit, ut si diceretur, 'nolens,' absurdissima dei miseria sequeretur; si autem, 'uolens,' continuo quod intendebat uelut inuicta ratione concluderet non naturae esse filium sed uoluntatis. At ille uigilantissime uicissim quaesiuit ab eo utrum deus pater uolens an nolens sit deus, ut si responderet, 'nolens,' sequeretur illa miseria quam de deo credere magna insania est; si autem diceret, 'uolens,' responderetur ei: 'Ergo et ipse uoluntate sua deus est non natura'.

Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations* 29.6 (PG 36, 80 f.).

it better to call him counsel from counsel and will from will, just as he is substance from substance, wisdom from wisdom; or we shall find ourselves in the absurdity we have often refuted of saying that the Son makes the Father wise or willing, if the Father does not have counsel or will in his own substance.[19]

It is vital to understand this slightly puzzling passage correctly. Simplicity does not mean that talk of will, wisdom or of any other attribute becomes meaningless when applied to God, since 'to be' and 'to be something' are identical in him.[20] It does not mean that when we talk about his wisdom we are not saying anything different than when we talk about his will. Rather, it means that God is substance as he is wisdom or is wisdom as he is substance; he is substance as he is love or he is love as he is substance. With regard to the line of investigation we are following in this paragraph, it amounts to saying that unity of the Trinity *is a substantial unity as a unity of love.*

Love defines what each person is *ad se*, i.e. 'substantially':

For the charity of the Father in his inexpressibly simple nature is nothing but his very nature and substance, as we have often said already and are not tired of often repeating. And thus 'the Son of his charity' signifies none other than the one who is born of his substance.[21]

At the same time, love belongs properly to the Holy Spirit: 'If any person of the Trinity is to be distinctively called the will of God, this name like charity fits the Holy Spirit more than the others. What else after all is charity but the will?'[22] Set side by side with the conclusion of the passage from book 6 we were analysing above, these sentences give us a deeper insight into Augustine's understanding of the inner-life of the Trinity:

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[19]   15.38 (515. Trans. Hill, 425):

Quidam ne filium consilii uel uoluntatis dei dicerent unigenitum uerbum, ipsum consilium seu uoluntatem patris idem uerbum esse dixerunt. Sed melius quantum existimo dicitur consilium de consilio et uoluntas de uoluntate sicut substantia de substantia, sapientia de sapientia, ne absurditate illa quam iam refellimus filius patrem dicatur facere sapientem uel uolentem si non habet pater in substantia sua consilium uel uoluntatem.

[20]   This view is expressed by O'Leary (1981), 372.
[21]   15.37 (514. Trans. Hill, 425):

Caritas quippe patris quae in natura eius est ineffabiliter simplici nihil est aliud quam eius ipsa natura atque substantia ut saepe iam diximus et saepe iterare non piget. Ac per hoc filius caritatis eius nullus est alius quam qui de substantia eius est genitus.

[22]   15.38 (516. Trans. Hill, 426): 'uoluntas dei si et proprie dicenda est aliqua in trinitate persona, magis hoc nomen spiritui sancto competit sicut caritas. Nam quid est aliud caritas quam uoluntas?'

And therefore there are not more than three; one loving him who is from him, and one loving him from whom he is, and love itself. If this is not anything, how is it that *God is love* (1 Jn 4.8, 16). If it is not substance, how is it that God is substance?[23]

Just like any other attribute, love must be understood in a Trinitarian way and so confirms that Augustine conceives the substantial unity of the Trinity not primarily in terms of unity of divine nature, but as a unity of love. Father and Son are united in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the 'supreme charity conjoining Father and Son to each other and subjoining us to them, and it would seem suitable to say so, since it is written *God is love* (1 Jn 4.8, 16)'.[24] The verbs 'conjoin' (*con-iungere*) and 'subjoin' (*sub-iungere*), in this sentence, suggest another facet of the property of the Holy Spirit Augustine infers from his role in the economy of salvation. His uniting role includes the idea or order (*ordo*), of causing everything to be at its proper place. To this aspect we now turn.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE 'ORDER' OF THE TRINITY

At the end of the sixth book of the *De Trinitate*, in his attempt to bring some clarity to the issue of the properties of the three persons of the Trinity, Augustine resorts to the authority of Hilary of Poitiers. As a matter of fact, he betrays some difficulties in the understanding of what Hilary really meant.[25] In the end, he interprets Hilary in the light of his own Trinitarian theology, particularly with regard to the Holy Spirit. He describes the relation between the Father and the Son as an embrace which entails full enjoyment, charity, joy. This, he explains, must be the meaning of the name Hilary gives to the Holy Spirit, i.e. *usus*, which can be translated into English as 'enjoyment of a property belonging to another'—cf. *ususfructus*—or, applied to persons, 'familiarity, intimacy'. In the relation between the Father and the Son, the

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[23] 6.7 (236. Trans. Hill, 210):

Et ideo non amplius quam tria sunt: unus diligens eum qui de illo est, et unus diligens eum de quo est, et ipsa dilectio. Quae si nihil est, quomodo *deus dilectio est*? Si non est substantia, quomodo deus substantia est?

[24] 7.6 (254. Trans. Hill, 224): 'summa caritas utrumque [the Father and the Son] coniungens nosque subiungens, quod ideo non indigne dicitur quia scriptum est: *Deus caritas est*'.

[25] 6.11 (241. Trans. Hill, 213): 'I have examined as best I could the hidden meaning of these words' ('horum uerborum...abditam scrutatus intellegentiam quantum ualeo'). Augustine's quotation of Hilary is inaccurate, cf. Doignon (1981), 237. Moreover, Hilary does not refer to the uniting role of the Holy Spirit in Trinitarian inner-life, but to the gift of enjoyment (*usus in munere*) which the Holy Spirit grants to us, ibid., 238 f.

Holy Spirit is that through which they enjoy each other, he is somehow their reciprocal familiarity—he is their love, delight, happiness, beatitude. At the same time, he is the sweetness of the Father and the Son and he 'pervades all creatures according to their capacity with its vast generosity and fruitfulness, that they might all keep their right order and rest in their right places'.[26] Through the action of the Holy Spirit, creation 'seeks or maintains some order, like the weights or proper places of bodies, and the loves or pleasures of souls'.[27]

The association between order and weight outlined here is a familiar theme in Augustine's early works, which is discussed in the section of this book devoted to the theme of the image of God. Augustine infers the attribution of the image of weight to the Holy Spirit from the book of Wisdom: '*thou hast arranged all things by measure and number and weight*'.[28] As we shall see, weight is not only that through which things tend to go downwards, but that through which they tend towards their intended location, thereby setting all things in their right order. The weight of fire, for example, is upwards. Therefore, by establishing a parallel between weight and love or delight, the passage of the end of the book 6 quoted above can be interpreted as follows: that through which everything tends to the place where it will find rest or happiness is a kind of attraction, a sort of love. Irresistibly we are reminded of the suggestive aphorism: 'My weight is my love'.[29] The meaning of this aphorism will become clearer if we call to mind Augustine's criticism of the Stoic ethical model of indifference or neutrality we encountered earlier. Augustine's main reproach to it is the absence of love, which we can translate now into absence of 'weight'. If being happy consists in not wanting nor fearing anything, but only in trying to be equally prepared to welcome whatever might happen, this means that we have to be neutral with regard to happiness itself and neither wish nor shun it. But how can a way of life be considered happy if it is not desired, if it is not the object of love? And how can it be reached if it is not wished nor desired, if no 'weight' draws us towards it? In short, absence of love makes ethical life unintelligible.[30]

Thus, our fundamental weight is constituted by our longing for rest and happiness, which can only be found in God himself. This weight is attributed to the Holy Spirit because, by uniting us to Christ through the faith which works through love, he re-establishes the right order in our relation with God

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[26] 6.11 (242).
[27] 6.12 (242. Trans. Hill, 213): 'ordinem aliquem petit aut tenet, sicut sunt pondera uel conlocationes corporum atque amores aut delectationes animarum'.
[28] Wisd. 11:21: '*omnia mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti*'.
[29] *conf.* 13.10 (CCL 27, 246. Trans. Chadwick, 278): 'Pondus meum, amor meus'.
[30] 13.11 (397).

(cf. the term *con-iungere* and *sub-iungere* mentioned above). He 'subjoins' us to the Father through the reconciliatory work of Christ in the same way as he 'conjoins' Father and Son. Just as the order resulting from salvation is determined by love, so love also presides over the inner-Trinitarian order between the divine persons. Through the weight of the Holy Spirit, i.e. love, Father and Son find their delight, their beatitude in one another.

IV. THE IDENTITY AND THE PROPERTY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Towards the end of the fifteenth book of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine embarks upon a more comprehensive and sustained account of the divinity, property, and origin of the Holy Spirit, which presupposes or reworks the occasional references to the Holy Spirit in the earlier books we have analysed so far. In particular, he feels the need to establish more firmly the scriptural foundation of the identification between love (*dilectio*) and the Holy Spirit, despite the fact that virtually everything he had said in the previous books concerning the Holy Spirit, presupposed this identification already.

As a matter of fact, a closer look at the passages where Augustine links the Holy Spirit with charity, reveals that Augustine *constantly nuances his assertions concerning the identification between the two*.[31] He suggests this through the use of 'whether . . . whether': 'For whether he is the unity of both the others or their holiness or their charity, whether he is their unity because their charity, and their charity because their holiness';[32] the attribution of charity to the Holy Spirit is *aptius*, 'more fitting';[33] the 'whether . . . whether' appears again in the seventh book: 'as for the Holy Spirit, whether he is supreme charity . . . or whether the being of the of the Holy Spirit should be properly and distinctly indicated by some other name'.[34] How should we interpret this caution? The main explanation for it is not the lack of clarity of Scripture on this matter but that, even though love is a property of the Holy Spirit in particular, it constitutes the life of the Trinity as a whole and belongs to the Father and the Son as well. In an understanding of the Trinity where consubstantiality basically means unity of love, the way in which love can be attributed to the

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[31] Cf. Cavallera (1930a), 384, and (1931), 6.

[32] 6.7 (235. Trans. Hill, 209): 'Siue enim sit unitas amborum siue sanctitas siue caritas, siue ideo unitas quia caritas et ideo caritas, quia sanctitas'.

[33] 6.7 (235).

[34] 7.6 (254. Trans. Hill, 224): 'Spiritus quoque sanctus siue sit summa caritas . . . siue alio modo essentia spiritus sancti singillatim ac proprie nominanda est'.

Holy Spirit in particular must be carefully established. For this, Augustine goes back to his main source of inspiration for this topic, namely John's First Epistle. In the fourth chapter of this epistle, he finds the crucial declaration concerning the association of love with the Holy Spirit:

> And so he said, *In this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit* (1 John 4.13). So it is the Holy Spirit of which he has given us that makes us abide in God and him in us. But this is precisely what love does. He then is the gift of God who is love. Finally, after repeating this a little later and saying, *Love is God*, he immediately added, *and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him* [1 John 4.16], about which he had said above, *In this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit* [1 John 4.13].[35]

Everything we have seen above[36] concerning the role of love and of the Holy Spirit under the heading of unity, comes together here in the assertion that God dwells in us and we in God. *John's First Epistle ascribes this mutual indwelling identically to love and to the Holy Spirit, thus implying that love is indeed the property of the Holy Spirit* and allowing Augustine to conclude: 'So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbour when he has been given to him, and he himself is love.'[37] And 'So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him the charity of God is poured out in our hearts, and through it the whole Trinity dwells in us.'[38]

The notion of the Holy Spirit as gift (*donum*) is unfolded from this basis.[39] A fair appreciation of the real theological momentum of the notion of gift for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit depends on the right grasp of the way it is introduced into pneumatology. A misleading way of looking at the identification of the Holy Spirit with gift consists in starting from the polemical stage of the exposition of the mystery of the Trinity, where Augustine tries to determine how the Holy Spirit is a relation (*ad aliquid*) as compared with the relation

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[35]   15.31 (506. Trans. Hill, 420 f.):

In hoc, inquit, *cognoscimus quia in ipso manemus et ipse in nobis quia de spiritu suo dedit nobis.* Sanctus itaque spiritus de quo dedit nobis facit nos in deo manere et ipsum in nobis. Hoc autem facit dilectio. Ipse est igitur deus dilectio. Denique paulo post cum hoc ipsum repetisset atque dixisset: *Deus dilectio est*, continuo subiecit: *Et qui manet in dilectione in deo manet, et deus in eo manet*, unde supra dixerat: *In hoc cognoscimus quia in ipso manemus et ipse in nobis quia de spiritu suo dedit nobis.*

[36]   Cf. the paragraph on 'Christology and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit'.

[37]   15.31 (506): 'Deus igitur spiritus sanctus qui procedit ex deo cum datus fuerit homini accendit eum in dilectionem dei et proximi, et ipse dilectio est.'

[38]   15.32 (508): 'Dilectio igitur quae ex deo est et deus est proprie spiritus sanctus est per quem diffunditur in cordibus nostris dei caritas per quam nos tota inhabitet trinitas.'

[39]   For an exhaustive survey of the identification of the Holy Spirit with *donum* in Augustine's works, see Cavallera (1930a), 367–370.

between the Father and the Son. In this context, the designation 'gift' would recommend itself because it can be construed relatively. Gift therefore would have been resorted to first of all for the purpose of Augustine's conceptual options and only then fleshed out through an array of more or less obvious scriptural quotations.

The way the Holy Spirit as gift emerges in the section we are examining disproves this interpretation. In John's First Epistle, Augustine singles out the fundamental assertion that love is God and that it comes from God, it is *ex deo*.[40] Augustine notices that 'dilectio ex deo est', comes *from* God. The outcome of his lengthy treatment of the issue of the sending of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in books 1 to 4 is that everything which 'comes from God' for our salvation is God's own very presence through the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore this applies to the case of love as well: 'The Father alone is God in such a way that he is not from God, and thus the love which is God in such a way that it is from God must either be the Son or the Holy Spirit.'[41] Of course, love is the property of the Holy Spirit. The fact that it is 'from God', however, denotes somethings even more important: 'Man has no capacity to love God except from God. That is why he [John] says a little later, *Let us love because he first loved us* [1 John 4.19]. The Apostle Paul also says, *The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us* [Rom 5.5].'[42] On the basis of the Christology and the soteriology of Augustine we have already examined, this assertion hardly needs any additional comment. Here, however, a new aspect of the issue comes to the fore which acquires a special prominence in the context of the Pelagian controversy:

Nothing is more excellent than this gift of God. This alone is what distinguishes between the sons of the eternal kingdom and the sons of eternal perdition. Other endowments too are given through the Spirit, but without charity they are of no use. Unless therefore the Holy Spirit is imparted to someone to make him a lover of God and neighbour, he cannot transfer from the left hand to the right. . . . This is the reason why it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the gift of God. And this gift, surely, is distinctively to be understood as being the charity

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[40] 1 John 4:7–8 in 15.31 (506). The slight twist on the johannine text consisting in the inversion of the declaration 'God is love' into 'love is God', impossible in the original Greek text, does not play a determining role in Augustine's argument and therefore will not concern us here, also because it is only alluded to in 15.27 (502): 'Neque enim dicturi sumus non propterea deum dictam esse caritatem quod ipsa caritas sit ulla substantia quae dei digna sit nomine.' Cf. Dideberg (1975), 142.

[41] 15.31 (506): 'Pater enim solus ita deus est ut non sit ex deo, ac per hoc dilectio quae ita deus est ut ex deo sit aut filius est aut spiritus sanctus.'

[42] 15.31 (506 f. Trans. Hill, 421): 'Non enim habet homo unde deum diligat nisi ex deo. Propter quod paulo post dicit: *Nos diligamus quia ipse prior dilexit nos*. Apostolus quoque Paulus: *Dilectio*, inquit, *dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis*.'

which brings us through to God, without which no other gift of God at all can bring us through to God.[43]

'Gift of God' means here the gift which only God can give, and since love also is the condition *sine qua non* for the union with God, without it we are not saved. *The fact that charity-Holy Spirit is a gift from God means that we are saved by grace*; it means that salvation is truly divine, that only God's very self-giving can save us.[44] Even faith does not benefit us without love, as he is never tired of repeating through a sentence drawn from Galatians: '*faith which works through love*' (*fides quae per dilectionem operatur*).[45] In his review of the scriptural places where the Holy Spirit is called gift, the book of the Acts of the Apostles occupies a special place, where the Holy Spirit is the gift par excellence because he is given to sinners without any merit on their part and who did not even ask for it.[46] At the same time, he is a gift because he is given to those who through it—and through it alone—love God, 'And there is a lot more scriptural evidence which all conspires to prove that the Holy Spirit is the gift of God, in that he is given to those who love God through him.'[47]

However, Augustine adds a crucial qualification to the appellation gift of the Holy Spirit. If he is called in this way for the reasons we have explained so far, this name—just like any other name applied to God, including 'father' and 'son'—should not take in the determination of the identity of the Holy Spirit. Its use must be rigorously regulated by Scripture and the dynamic of salvation, bearing in mind that the Holy Spirit is God:

the gift of the Holy Spirit is nothing but the Holy Spirit. So he is the gift of God insofar as he is given to those he is given to. But in himself he is God even if he is not given to anyone, because he was God, co-eternal with the Father and the Son, even before he was given to anyone. Nor is he less than they because they give and he is given. He is given as God's gift in such a way that as God he also gives himself.[48]

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[43] 15.32 (507 f. Trans. Hill, 421):

Nullum est isto dei dono excellentius. Solum est quod diuidit inter filios regni aeterni et filios perditionis aeternae. Dantur et alia per spiritum munera, sed sine caritate nihil prosunt. Nisi ergo tantum impertiatur cuique spiritus sanctus ut eum dei et proximi faciat amatorem, a sinistra non transfertur ad dextram. . . . Quocirca rectissime spiritus sanctus, cum sit deus, uocatur etiam donum dei. Quod donum proprie quid nisi caritas intellegenda est quae perducit ad deum et sine qua quodlibet aliud dei donum non perducit ad deum?

[44] Cf. 5.12 (219), where the definition of the Holy Spirit as *donum* is supported by Rom. 8:9: '*Qui spiritum Christi non habet hic non est eius*'.

[45] 15.32 (507) quoting Gal. 5:6.   [46] Cf. the quotation from Acts 2:38 in 15.35 (512 f.).

[47] 15.35 (512. Trans. Hill, 424): 'Et multa alia sunt testimonia scripturarum quae concorditer attestantur donum dei esse spiritum sanctum in quantum datur eis qui per eum diligunt deum.'

[48] 15.36 (513. Trans. Hill, 424):

donum spiritus sancti nihil aliud est quam spiritus sanctus. In tantum ergo donum dei est in quantum datur eis quibus datur. Apud se autem deus est etsi nemini detur quia deus erat patri et filio coaeternus antequam cuiquam daretur. Nec quia illi dant, ipse datur, ideo minor est illis. Ita enim datur sicut dei donum ut etiam se ipsum det sicut deus.

The Holy Spirit is given in such a way that he gives himself as God, just as the Son was given over by the Father in such a way that he gave himself over, because of the unity of will of the three persons.[49] In the case of the Holy Spirit, the notion of gift acquires a crucial connotation: not only is the Holy Spirit given, but also he is freely given, he freely gives himself and he remains free in his self-gift. If freedom is one of the defining features of a gift, the Holy Spirit fulfils this condition in the highest conceivable degree: 'You can scarcely say he is not his own master, the one of whom it is said, *The Spirit breathes where he will* (Jn 3.8), and in the text of the apostle's we have quoted above, *All these things does one and the same Spirit achieve, distributing them severally to each as he wills* (1 Cor 12.11).'[50] This implies, of course, that gift means presence of the giver, i.e. of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Son truly became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14), so the Holy Spirit truly comes to dwell in us and through him we dwell in God.

V. THE INNER-TRINITARIAN ORIGIN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The time has come to see how the issue of the *filioque*[51] comes into Augustine's notion of inner-Trinitarian life and of the role of the Holy Spirit in it. At the beginning of the section on the Holy Spirit in the fifteenth book, Augustine sums up his findings up to that moment as follows:

According to the holy scriptures this Holy Spirit is not just the Father's alone nor the Son's alone, but the Spirit of them both, and thus he suggests to us the common charity by which the Father and the Son love each other.[52]

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[49] Cf. 2.9 (90), quoting Rom. 8:32 and Gal. 2:20.

[50] 15.36 (513. Trans. Hill, 424): 'Non enim dici potest non esse suae potestatis de quo dictum est: *Spiritus ubi uult spirat*, et apud apostolum quod iam supra commemoraui: *Omnia autem haec operatur unus atque idem spiritus diuidens propria unicuique prout uult*.'

[51] Cf. 1.25 (64 f.); 2.5–7 (85–89); 4.29 (199 ff.); 5.15 (222 ff.); 15.29 (503 f.); 15.45–48 (523–530).

[52] 15.27 (501. Trans. Hill, 418):

Qui spiritus sanctus secundum scripturas sanctas nec patris est solius nec filii solius sed amborum, et ideo communem qua inuicem se diligunt pater et filius nobis insinuat caritatem.

See also 4.29 (199. Trans. Hill, 174), where the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father is also a consequence of the fact that he belongs to both the Father and the Son: 'Nor, by the way, can we say that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son as well; it is not without point that the same Spirit is called the Spirit of the Father and of the Son' ('Nec possumus dicere quod spiritus sanctus et a filio non procedat; neque enim frustra idem spiritus et patris et filii spiritus dicitur').

Scripture presents the Holy Spirit as belonging to the Father and to the Son, as being the Spirit *of* the Father and *of* the Son; thus, it teaches us that the Holy Spirit is the common charity through which Father and Son love each other.[53] *To the question of how crucial is the doctrine of the filioque to Augustine's Trinitarian theology, the answer is: just as crucial as the understanding of inner-Trinitarian life as life of love.* We have seen that, for him, the substantial unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is indeed a unity of love.[54] In the treatment of the Holy Spirit in book 15, the idea that God is substance as he is love[55] is considered as something firmly established which does not need any supplementary proof. The *filioque* is simply another way of stating the same truth: Trinitarian life is a life of love. Through the Holy Spirit, identified with love, the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father in return: 'there are not more than three: one loving him who is from him, and one loving him from whom he is, and love itself',[56] and 'if the charity by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father inexpressibly shows forth the communion of them both, what more suitable than he who is the common Spirit of them both should be distinctively called charity?'[57] Love comes from the Father to the Son and backwards from the Son to the Father, i.e. it proceeds from both, even though it has its source from the Father *principaliter*, that is 'chiefly', 'mainly', but also 'originally', 'from the beginning'.[58] Therefore Augustine declares that:

It is not without point that in this triad only the Son is called the Word of God, and only the Holy Spirit is called the gift of God, and only the Father is called the one from whom the Word is born and from whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds. I added 'principally' because we have found that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son. But this too was given the Son by the Father (not given to him when he already existed and did not yet have it), but whatever the Father gave to his only-begotten Word he

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[53] *Insinuat* here does not simply mean 'suggest', but has the connotation of 'introducing into something else', hence 'explain', 'teach', cf. Augustine *s*. 341.3 (PL 39, 1494) 'alium modum insinuandi Christum'; cf. also *conf*. 8.3 (CCL 27, 114); 12.28 (CCL 27, 230).

[54] Cf. 6.7 (235).

[55] Cf. the fact that the rule of consubstantiality is restated just after the paragraph quoted above, in n. 52, 15.28 (502 f.). There it becomes evident that when Augustine argued that the whole is substance and each person is substance, he had not said all. This notion of consubstantiality only makes sense when substance is replaced by *dilectio*: the Holy Spirit is *dilectio* precisely because each person is love and loves, although in a different way.

[56] 6.7 (236. Trans. Hill, 210): 'tria sunt: unus diligens eum qui de illo est, et unus diligens eum de quo est, et ipsa dilectio'.

[57] 15.37 (513. Trans. Hill, 424): 'si caritas qua pater diligit filium et patrem diligit filius ineffabiliter communionem demonstrat amborum, quid conuenientius quam ut ille proprie dicatur caritas qui spiritus est communis ambobus?'

[58] Blaise A., *Dictionnaire Latin–Français des auteurs chrétiens*, Turnhout (1954), 663.

gave by begetting him. He so begot him then that their common gift would proceed from him too, and the Holy Spirit would be the Spirit of them both.[59]

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father 'principally' as the common gift of the Father and the Son. Everything the Father gives to the Son is given in the act of generation. Therefore, in the very act which constitutes him as the Son, the Son receives from the Father the gift of the Holy Spirit as their common gift, i.e. as that which can be received and given, that which proceeds from the Father and from the Son in return. Of course, the use of the notions of 'procession' and 'generation' leads to a very abstract description of this mystery. Only when inner-Trinitarian life is seen under its proper light, i.e. as life of love, and the Holy Spirit is seen in his property of love, do these very abstract explanations reveal their real theological meaning.

Thus, the passage just quoted is followed by a reminder that God the Trinity is substance as he is charity and that the Holy Spirit is called charity properly: 'What is meant is that while in that supremely simple nature substance is not one thing and charity another, but substance is charity and charity is substance, whether in the Father or in the Son or in the Holy Spirit, yet all the same the Holy Spirit is distinctively named charity.'[60]

If Augustine professes the doctrine of the *filioque*, therefore, it is because, as he says himself in this passage, this is the result of his findings: 'we have found that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son'.[61] This refers of course to some scriptural passages which indeed talk about the sending of the Holy Spirit by the risen Christ. It is evident that, for Augustine, the fact that the risen Christ gives the Holy Spirit to us is a demonstration of the *filioque*: 'And I cannot see what else he intended to signify when he breathed and said *Receive the Holy Spirit* (Jn 20.22). Not that the physical breath that came from his body and was physically felt was the substance of the Holy Spirit; but it was a convenient symbolic demonstration that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father.'[62] Other Scriptural passages declare that the

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[59] 15.29 (503 f. Trans. Hill, 419):

Non frustra in hac trinitate non dicitur uerbum dei nisi filius, nec donum dei nisi spiritus sanctus, nec de quo genitum est uerbum et de quo procedit principaliter spiritus sanctus nisi deus pater. Ideo autem addidi, principaliter, quia et de filio spiritus sanctus procedere reperitur. Sed hoc quoque illi pater dedit (non iam exsistenti et nondum habenti), sed quidquid unigenito uerbo dedit gignendo dedit. Sic ergo eum genuit ut etiam de illo donum commune procederet et spiritus sanctus spiritus esset amborum.

[60] 15.29 (504. Trans. Hill, 419): 'Vt scilicet in illa simplici summaque natura non sit aliud substantia et aliud caritas, sed substantia ipsa sit caritas et caritas ipsa substantia siue in patre siue in filio siue in spiritu sancto, et tamen proprie spiritus sanctus caritas nuncupetur.'

[61] 15.29 (503. Trans. Hill, 419): 'et de filio spiritus sanctus procedere reperitur'.

[62] 4.29 (199 f. Trans. Hill, 174): 'Nec uideo quid aliud significare uoluerit cum sufflans ait: *Accipite spiritum sanctum*. Neque enim flatus ille corporeus cum sensu corporaliter tangendi

Holy Spirit is sent by the Son and by the Father: 'the Son himself says of him *whom I shall send you from the Father* (Jn 15.26), and in another place *whom the Father will send in my name* (Jn 14.26)' or that he proceeds or 'is breathed' by both Father and Son: 'He is proved to proceed from each of them, because the Son himself says *he proceeds from the Father* (Jn 15.26); and then after rising from the dead and appearing to the disciples, *he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit* (Jn 20.22), in order to show that the Spirit too is the virtues which went out of him, as we read in the gospel, and healed them all.'[63]

Of course, Scripture needs to be interpreted and we know well that Eastern theologians usually have refused to infer the doctrine of the *filioque* from these statements concerning the sending or the 'breathing' of the Holy Spirit for our salvation by the risen Christ. On what basis, therefore, does Augustine feel entitled to establish this link?

The answer is provided by the identification between the *form and content* of revelation and the *identity* of the revealer developed through the theology of missions and which constitutes the foundation of Augustine's Trinitarian theology. We have seen in particular how, in the course of the second book, during the discussion on the interpretation of scriptural texts which seem to denote a subordinationist notion of the role and the identity of Son and Holy Spirit, Augustine focuses on John 16:13–15. Just as the Son could be seen as subordinate to the Father because of the sentence: '*My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me*' so the Holy Spirit could be seen as subordinate to the Son because it is said of him that '*He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears*', and '*Because he will receive of mine and will tell it to you*'. Augustine's exegesis of the former text is—as we have seen—that the Son is revelation as he is Son and God from God, which means that revelation is not a function of his inferiority from the Father, but of his unity and equality with him. In the same way, argues Augustine, if the Holy Spirit reveals 'from the Son'—according to the latter text—this could be only taken as meaning that 'the Holy Spirit is born of Christ as he himself is of the Father'.[64] The principle of the identification between the *form* of revelation and the *identity* of the revealer would require this. Of course, Jesus, in the same sentence, makes clear

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procedens ex corpore substantia spiritus sancti fuit sed demonstratio per congruam significa-tionem non tantum a patre sed et a filio procedere spiritum sanctum.'

[63] 15.45 (525. Trans. Hill, 430 f.): 'de quo item dicit ipse filius: *Quem ego mitto uobis a patre*, et alio loco: *Quem mittet pater in nomine meo*. De utroque autem procedere sic docetur quia ipse filius ait: *De patre procedit* et cum resurrexisset a mortuis et apparuisset discipulis suis, insufflauit et ait: *Accipite spiritum sanctum* ut eum etiam de se procedere ostenderet, et ipsa est uirtus quae de illo exibat sicut legitur in euangelio, et sanabat omnes.'

[64] 2.5 (85. Trans. Hill, 100): 'ita natus de Christo spiritus sanctus quemadmodum ille de patre'.

that if the Holy Spirit '*will receive of mine*', it is because '*All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine*'. Thus Augustine can state 'and so we are left to understand that the Holy Spirit has of the Father's just like the Son'.[65] A conclusion which paradoxically is not that of the *filioque*, but of the '*patreque*'!

This is confirmed by the declaration that 'So it is as *proceeding* from the Father that he is said *not to speak from himself*' and '*He will not speak from himself, but whatever he hears he will speak* (Jn 16.13). This is said in virtue of his proceeding from the Father'.[66] The sending of the Holy Spirit, we have seen, entails knowledge and revelation of both the Son and the Holy Spirit.[67] The Holy Spirit was present and active in the history of salvation and in that of Jesus in particular well before he was sent at Pentecost. Why then was he said to have been sent only then? Because the difference between mission and any other action of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation is that *the form of the mission and the role the Holy Spirit plays in it corresponds to his identity in the highest possible degree, owing to the divine nature of salvation*.[68] This is why, then, scriptural passages concerning the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Son can be so confidently interpreted as revelatory of the inner-life of the Trinity and that the *filioque* is so self-evident to a consciously biblical thinker as Augustine.[69]

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[65] 2.5 (86. Trans. Hill, 100): 'restat ut intellegatur etiam spiritus sanctus de patris habere sicut et filius'.

[66] 2.5 (86. Trans. Hill, 100): ' "Procedendo" itaque a patre dicitur "*non loqui a semetipso*" ' and '*Non enim loquetur a semetipso, sed quaecumque audiet loquetur*; secundum hoc enim dictum est quod de patre procedit.'

[67] 4.29 (199 ff.).   [68] Ibid.

[69] Heron (1971) rightly warns against a possible misunderstanding of Augustine's doctrine of the *filioque* when it is 'wedded to the traditional Western understanding of the unity of God as being guaranteed by a shared [and underlying or previous] *ousia* or *substantia*' (p. 165) (he takes Anselm as the representative of the 'Western' approach (p. 153 f.)). Not only does Heron deny that this view can be traced back to Augustine, but he claims that the latter's 'whole approach to the question is relational' (p. 164), and for that reason it 'points the way to a fresher and more dynamic understanding of the matter which would be a valuable corrective to both East and West. . . . If Augustine's picture is adopted, there is no difficulty in seeing the Spirit as being the expression of the relationship between the Father and the Son, without them making him the ground of that relation—for that ground is the Fatherhood of the Father and the Sonship of the Son. But if this approach is combined with one which sees the unity of God in terms of an underlying *ousia* or *substantia*, it is very hard to give the Spirit, as the *uinculum caritatis*, any identity of his own without identifying him with that underlying divinity' (p. 165). For Heron, the *principaliter* means that 'the Son and his relationship with the Father are "from the Father", so that even in so far as he is "from the Son", the Spirit is "from the Father" ' (p. 166). Thus he concludes that on the one hand 'the procession of the Spirit from the Father is not separable from the relation between the Father and the Son; [and, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit] does not proceed from the Son in the same way as from the Father' (p. 165 f.).

VI. THE FATHER, ORIGIN OF THE INNER-LIFE OF THE TRINITY

Of course, Augustine above all maintains the 'monarchy' of the Father, even though he does not use this vocabulary. The designation of the Father as 'origin' (*principium*) of the life of the Trinity is not a marginal aspect of his Trinitarian theology because it flows from the same theological presuppositions which preside over the determination of the identity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Several times, it is stated that the Father is the origin of both the Son and the Holy Spirit: 'Elsewhere too, when he said *whom the Father will send*, he added *in my name* (Jn 14.26). He did not however says "whom the Father will send from me" as he had said *whom I will send from the Father* (Jn 15.26), and thereby he indicated that the source of all godhead, or if you prefer it, of all deity, is the Father. So the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is traced back, on both counts, to him of whom the Son is born.'[70] On one occasion, Augustine declares that, with respect to the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son are not two principles, but one unique principle: 'If therefore what is given has him it is given by as its origin, because it did not receive its proceeding from him from anywhere else, we must confess that the Father and the Son are the origin of the Holy Spirit, not two origins, but . . . with reference to the Holy Spirit they are one origin.'[71] We should avoid, however, inferring too much from this declaration since it must be read in dependence on the assertion that it is indeed from the Father that the Holy Spirit 'principally proceeds'.[72]

The relation between the Father and the Son in the procession of the Holy Spirit is explained in a more nuanced way in another passage. Reading into the Johannine declaration '*For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself*'[73] a description of inner-Trinitarian life, Augustine applies to the procession of the Holy Spirit what the passages says about life: 'just as the Father has it in himself that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him, so he gave to the Son that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him too'.[74] Everything the Father has, he gives to the Son, except what defines him in

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[70] 4.29 (200. Trans. Hill, 174): 'Quia etiam cum dixisset: *Quem mittet pater*, addidit *in nomine meo*, non tamen dixit, "Quem mittet pater a me," quemadmodum dixit, *Quem ego mittam uobis a patre*, uidelicet ostendens quod totius diuinitatis uel si melius dicitur deitatis principium pater est. Qui ergo ex patre procedit et filio ad eum refertur a quo natus est filius.'

[71] 5.15 (223. Trans. Hill, 199): 'Si ergo et quod datur principium habet eum a quo datur quia non aliunde accepit illud quod ab ipso procedit, fatendum est patrem et filium principium esse spiritus sancti, non duo principia, sed . . . sic relatiue ad spiritum sanctum unum principium.'

[72] 15.29 (503. Trans. Hill, 419): 'procedit principaliter'.   [73] John 5:26

[74] 15.47 (528. Trans. Hill, 432): 'sicut habet pater in semetipso ut et de illo procedat spiritus sanctus sic dedisse filio ut de illo procedat idem spiritus sanctus'; cf. also 15.48 (529 f.).

relation to the Son, namely the fact of being Father. Therefore, the Son also receives from the Father that the the Holy Spirit should proceed from him as well: 'to say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father means that he also proceeds from the Son, and this is something which the Son has from the Father. If the Son has everything that he has from the Father, he clearly has from the Father that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him.'[75] Once again, however, only when, from the abstract categories of generation, procession etc. we go back to the real 'substance' of divine life, i.e. love, these assertions acquire their proper theological intelligibility.

Then, just as with the Son and the Holy Spirit, the theological foundation of the identification of the property of the Father with *principium* depends on the theology of missions. In the discussion on missions, we have highlighted the repeated assertion that, whereas Scripture talks about the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit, 'the Father alone is nowhere said to have been sent'.[76] The Father indeed manifests himself in the New Testament for example at the baptism and the transfiguration. However, we have seen that Scripture only talks about missions for the Incarnation and for the sending of the Holy Spirit by the risen and glorified Son at Pentecost precisely because only then the *form* and the *content* of their manifestation (or 'revelation') are the expression of their inner-Trinitarian identity.[77] According to this principle, if the Father is never said to have been sent, this must reveal something of his inner-Trinitarian identity, i.e. his property.

The first aspect of the Father's identity revealed through the theology of missions is, as we have seen already, his invisibility or unknowability. The proper Trinitarian construal of the divine attribute of invisibility consists in attributing it properly to the Father, as it is implied in a passage we have encountered already:

So it is that the invisible Father, together with the jointly invisible Son, is said to have sent this Son by making him visible. If the Son has been made visible in such a way that he ceased to be invisible with the Father, that is if the substance of the invisibile Word, undergoing change and transition, had been turned into the visible creature, then we would have had to think of the Son simply as sent by the Father, and not also as sending with the Father.[78]

[75] 15.47 (528. Trans. Hill, 432): 'ita dictum spiritum sanctum de patre procedere ut intellegatur quod etiam procedit de filio, de patre esse filio. Si enim quidquid habet de patre habet filius, de patre habet utique ut et de illo procedat spiritus sanctus.'

[76] 2.8 (89); 2.22 (109); 4.28 (199. Trans. Hill, 174): 'pater solus nusquam legitur missus'.

[77] Cf. 3.3 (128 ff.) and 2.12 (96 f.).

[78] 2.9 (92. Trans. Hill, 103):

Quapropter pater inuisibilis una cum filio secum inuisibili eundem filium uisibilem faciendo misisse eum dictus est; qui si eo modo uisibilis fieret ut cum patre inuisibilis esse desisteret, id est si substantia inuisibilis uerbi in creaturam uisibilem mutata et transiens uerteretur, ita missus a patre intellegeretur filius ut tantum missus non etiam cum patre mittens inueniretur.

Invisibility belongs properly to the Father and it belongs to the Son insofar as he is God from God or, to use the expression of this passage, insofar as he is 'together with' (*una cum*) the Father. Sending the Son, the Father makes him visible in such a way that the former does not cease to remain invisible 'together with' him. We have sufficiently dwelt on this paradox of theological epistemology. The result of this paradox is that, even though he is not sent, the Father is indeed known as 'Father', i.e. as the one who is not sent, the one who is invisible, the one who is unknowable: 'but when the Father is known by someone in time he is not said to have been sent. For he has not got anyone else to be from or to proceed from. Wisdom says, *I went forth from the mouth of the Most High* (Sir 24.5), and of the Holy Spirit he says *He proceeds from the Father* (Jn 15.26), but the Father is from no one.'[79] Knowledge of the unknowable Father is precisely the aim of the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The property of the Father is to be the *origin* of divine life and the *goal* of the revelatory and reconciliatory work of the Son and the Holy Spirit. His property is the invisibility or unknowability: he is the source of God's decision to make himself known and to overcome the impossibility of knowing him from our side through the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit.[80]

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[79] 4.28 (199. Trans. Hill, 174): 'pater cum ex tempore a quoquam cognoscitur, non dicitur missus; non enim habet de quo sit aut ex quo procedat. Sapientia quippe dicit: *Ego ex ore altissimi prodiui*, et de spiritu sancto: *A patre procedit*; pater uero a nullo.'

[80] In this chapter on the Father, we cannot omit to mention a peculiar passage in book 5: 'The Trinity cannot be called Father, except perhaps metaphorically with reference to creation because of the adoption of sons. The text *Hear, O Israel: the Lord your God is one Lord* (Dt 6.4) is not to be understood as excluding the Son or excluding the Holy Spirit, and this one Lord we rightly call our Father as well because he regenerates us by his grace' (5.12 (219): 'non sic dici potest trinitas pater nisi forte translate ad creaturam propter adoptionem filiorum. Quod enim scriptum est: *Audi, Israhel: dominus deus tuus dominus unus est*, non utique excepto filio aut excepto spiritu sancto oportet intellegi, quem unum dominum deum nostrum recte dicimus etiam patrem nostrum per gratiam suam nos regenerantem'). Should we infer from this text that Christians, that is those who become sons by adoption, have their model in God the Trinity and not in the person of the Son?, cf. Bailleux (1972), 190. Or, with regards to the Father, does this mean that he is not *personally* the origin of our salvation and our eternal goal? This issue is examined in Chapter 11 of this book on the image of God, since it is related to the supposed opposition existing between the patristic tradition which sees in us the image of the Son (for example Ireneaus) and Augustine's option to see in us an image of the Trinity.

7

Trinity and Ontology

The section of the *De Trinitate* represented by books 5 to 7 is often considered the place where Augustine sets out the systematic account of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity which governs his interpretation of Scripture, his Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, and doctrine of revelation and provides the formal criteria for the elaboration of analogies of the Trinitarian mystery.[1] It will have become evident by now how thoroughly misleading such an approach to Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity would be. To begin with, the systematic and foundational character often attributed to this section by commentators does not correspond with Augustine's own account of its real nature given at the beginning of book 8:

All this has been said, and if it has been repeated rather often in various ways, this only means that we become all the more familiar with it. But we must put some limits to repetition, and beseech God as devoutly and earnestly as we can to open our undestandings and temper our fondness for controversy, so that our minds may be able to perceive the essence or being of truth without any mass, without any changeableness.[2]

The aim and the scope of books 5 to 7 is summed up under the heading of 'controversy' or 'polemics' (*contentio*). It is in our best interest to follow Augustine's lead and analyse this section from the viewpoint he suggests.

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[1] Hill (1991), 54. Cf. also Crouse (1985), 508, who argues that in books 5 to 7 Augustine only indirectly focus on terminology and logical categories necessary for the formulation of the mystery of the Trinity. In reality, 'as the mind examines its own categories, the primary forms of its own understanding in relation to the concept of the Trinity', it is examining its own activity and its thinking about God. The result of this examination is the 'discovery of the mind as the image of the Trinity' at the end of the seventh book. Thus, the aim of books 5 to 7 would be the same as that of books 8 to 14, with the difference that the former follow a 'rational, or one might say, "verbal" method' so that 'reason in relation to faith [brings] the mind to the recognition of itself as image of the Trinity', whereas the latter follow a 'spiritual method according to which mind is to be illuminated by its illuminating source … to grasp in inward vision the Trinitarian Principle of its own conscious life'.

[2] 8.1 (268. Trans. Hill, 241):

Dicta sunt haec, et si saepius uersando repetantur, familiarius quidem innotescunt; sed et modus aliquis adhibendus est deoque supplicandum deuotissima pietate ut intellectum aperiat et studium contentionis absumat quo possit mente cerni essentia ueritatis sine ulla mole, sine ulla mutabilitate.

I. ONTOLOGICAL CATEGORIES AND
TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

'There is at least no doubt that God is substance, or perhaps a better word would be being; at any rate what the Greeks call *ousia*.'[3] The ontological category of substance (οὐσία) became accepted in Trinitarian theology through the controversy of the fourth century and was enshrined in the formula which has summed up orthodox faith ever since: 'μίαν οὐσίαν τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις, which in Latin is one being, three substances'.[4] Enquiry into the Trinitarian meaning of substance should never lose sight of the controversy in which this term was introduced and in which its necessity for the confession of the right faith was established and agreed upon—not without tremendous unpheavals—through the Church's authorized deliberation. This should prevent theologians from ascribing an autonomous referential content—determined on the basis of the philosophy of their time, or choice—to the Trinitarian use of substance and of any other ontological category in theology, and shape their doctrine accordingly.

In this respect, Augustine's discussion of substance betrays his clear awareness of both its necessity in Trinitarian theology and its polemical origin. Three explicit quotations from unidentified 'Arians' open the discussion on this issue. Their content can be summed up as follows: whatever is predicated of God is predicated according to the substance, since no accidents can be attributed to him;[5] with regard to that which can be predicated of the Father and the Son, we must distinguish what is predicated 'with reference to something else' (*ad aliquid*) and what is predicated 'with reference to itself' (*ad se*). Everything which is predicated *ad se* refers to the substance.[6]

The introduction of these distinctions under the form of explicit quotations of 'Arian' authors is worth noticing. Before book 5, if Augustine had indeed made abundant use of the word 'substance', he had not felt any need to bring in the distinction between substance and accidents, nor that existing between what is predicated absolutely (*ad se*) and what is predicated relatively (*ad aliquid*) to refine his Trinitarian doctrine. As a matter of fact, 'Arians' themselves did not introduce these distinctions in Trinitarian theology to refine this

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[3] 5.3 (207. Trans. Hill, 190): '[Deus] est tamen sine dubitatione substantia uel si melius hoc appellatur essentia, quam graeci οὐσίαν uocant.'

[4] 5.10 (217. Trans. Hill, 196): 'μίαν οὐσίαν τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις, quod est latine, unam essentiam tres substantias'. We have seen how the first half of book 5 discusses the use of οὐσία (5.1–9 (206–216)) and the second half that of ὑπόστασις or *persona* (5.10–17 (216–227)). This Trinitarian formula seems then to disappear, but in reality it remains very much in the background of the discussion and comes again to the surface in the middle of book 7 to be discussed until the end of the book. (7.7–12 (255–267)).

[5] 5.4 (208 f.).   [6] 5.7 (211 f.).

doctrine, but to deny it! As such, they are taken on by Augustine in books 5 to 7: *not as better tools of inquiry into the mystery of the Trinity, but as tools which, having been used to deny the mystery of the Trinity, had to be criticized and, where possible, rescued.* In other words, we can legitimately wonder to what extent Augustine would have ventured into this discussion, had not the polemical anti-'Arian' context forced him to do so.[7]

This is not to say that ontology is not necessary for the proper articulation of Trinitarian theology. Augustine, for example in Sermon 6, which we met earlier on, combines God's 'name of being' with his 'name of compassion (*misericordia*)' to assert that 'while God is indeed unchangeable, he has done everything out of mercy'.[8] The ontological assertion that God is by nature immutable is necessary to appreciate the extent to which his involvement in mutable realities is indeed an act of *misericordia*, that is of 'condescension', of 'compassion' and ultimately of 'love'. In other words, ontological categories such as immutability and its corollaries of incorporeality and simplicity[9] are synonyms for God's love and a way of restating the truth that grace indeed is free.

Having said that, it is one thing to acknowledge the necessity, in theology, of a minimal and non-descriptive use of ontology, often fostered by a polemical context; it is quite another thing to attribute to philosophical ontology the critical role of solving issues raised by Scripture. With regard, therefore, to the logical and ontological categories resorted to in books 5 to 7 of the *De Trinitate*, we shall assume that had not the 'Arians' introduced these distinctions in the Trinitarian controversy, Augustine would not have felt the need to dwell on them to the same extent. 'Arians' too, of course, did not rely on philosophical or logical presuppositions of this kind for their confession of the divinity of the Father and of the inferiority of the Son. Whether their concern was a soteriological or a doxological one or simply narrow-minded faithfulness to third-century subordinationism, they were already committed to the inferiority of the Son to the Father and resorted to these ontological categories for polemical purposes. Therefore, Augustine's aim is to deprive them of the possibility of using these logical and ontological distinctions for the purpose of denying the full divinity of the Son. At the same time, he is aware that the wrong kind of counter-argument can endanger the integrity of Trinitarian doctrine. For this reason, counter-arguments have to be rigorously regulated by soteriology and strictly confined to the polemical context in which they arose.

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[7] Cf. Madec (2000), 63 f.

[8] *s*. 6.5 (CCL 41, 64. Trans. Hill, III/1, 228 f.): 'quomodo deus est incommutabilis, fecit omnia per misericordiam'.

[9] cf. *ciu. Dei* 8.6 (CCL 47, 221 ff.).

First of all, therefore, we need to examine the use made by 'Arians' of these ontological categories and Augustine's views on this point.

The 'Arian' argument is quite simple. Even granted the fact that Father and Son are relative terms (*ad aliquid*) implying each other and therefore denoting unity, if there is anything which can be said substantially (*ad se*) of the Father which cannot be said substantially of the Son, then Father and Son cannot be said 'of the same substance' or consubstantial. Now, the Father alone is unbegotten (*ingenitus*). On the contrary, the Son is begotten (*genitus*). These two opposite attributes are not relative to each other and therefore define that which Father and Son are with reference to themselves (*ad se*) in a different way. Therefore Father and Son are not consubstantial.[10]

Straight away, Augustine's polemical stance is betrayed by the *ad hominem* answer which inaugurates his counter-argument. If the presupposition of the 'Arians' that whatever is predicated of God is predicated according to the substance is true, this has to be applied to the two texts of the New Testament which attribute unity and equality to the Father and to the Son, namely '*I and the Father are are one*' and 'He thought it no robbery to be equal to God'.[11] Then, he cannot but agree on the impossibility of predicating any accident of God, because of his immutability.[12] However, on the very basis of the distinctions introduced by the 'Arians' between relative and substantial predication (distinction *ad aliquid—ad se*), he argues that, even though, in the case of mutable or contingent beings, relation is an accident, in God's case it loses its 'accidental' character, so to speak: 'Some things are said with reference to something else (*ad aliquid*), like Father with reference to Son and Son with reference to Father; and this is not said modification-wise (*accidens*), because the one is always Father and the other always Son.'[13] In other terms, Augustine shows that philosophical categories break when they are applied to the mystery of God. In God, something which is indeed predicated relatively—i.e. to be Father and to be Son—and which should be an accident, in fact cannot be predicated 'modification-wise (*accidens*), because what is signified by calling them Father and Son belongs to them eternally and unchangeably'.[14]

Having determined two modes of attribution which can be used when talking of God, however improperly from a philosophical viewpoint, it becomes easy for him to refute the second of the 'Arian' claims. Whenever anything

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[10] 5.4 (208 f.) and 5.7 (211 f.).   [11] John 10:30 and Phil. 2:6 quoted in 5.4 (208 f.).

[12] 5.5 (209 f.) and 5.8 (212 ff.).

[13] 5.6 (210. Trans. Hill, 192): 'Dicitur enim "ad aliquid" sicut pater ad filium et filius ad patrem, quod non est accidens quia et ille semper pater et ille semper filius.'

[14] 5.6 (210 f. Trans. Hill, 192): 'secundum accidens, quia et quod dicitur pater et quod dicitur filius aeternum atque incommutabile est eis'.

is predicated of God, we must start by determining whether it is predicated substantially or relatively. If something is predicated substantially, it refers to what the Father and the Son have in common, namely what makes them equal and one. If it is predicated relatively, it applies to what distinguishes them as eternally Father and eternally Son, eternally related to each other and therefore eternally one. The term 'unbegotten', in this case, applies to what is common to Father and Son, i.e. the fact that they are God, and therefore applies to both. The term 'begotten', is simply a synonym for 'son' and therefore is predicated relatively; its equivalent, in the case of the Father, is not 'unbegotten', but 'begetter' (*genitor*).[15]

The conclusion of the argument explains how, within the polemical use of these ontological categories, the issue of the unity and of the equality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit needs to be formulated. With regard to each divine person, we must begin by determining what is predicated substantially and what relatively. Everything predicated relatively denotes distinction, whereas everything predicated substantially denotes unity and identity. Thus the Father can be called God relatively, and so can the Son and the Holy Spirit. The result, however, is not the confession of three gods, but of one God: 'So whatever God is called with reference to self is both said three times over about each of the persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and at the same time is said in the singular and not the plural about the Trinity.'[16]

The drawbacks of improper use of ontological categories become even more apparent when they can be detected in the writings of the very people who try to uphold orthodox Trinitarian faith against 'Arianism'. In books 6 and 7, Augustine deals with the exegesis of a passage from 1 Corinthians, where Christ is called the wisdom and the power of God.[17] Since the Son is the power and the wisdom of God—i.e. of the Father—and since the Father cannot ever have existed without his wisdom and his power, the Son must be coeternal with the Father.[18] An attentive examination of this argument, however, immediately ascertains that the coeternity of the Son is stated at the expense of the integrity of the Father. If the Son is the wisdom of the Father, this means that the Father is not himself wise.[19] In virtue of God's simplicity—i.e. of the identity, in him, of attributes and essence—what is said with regard to the attributes of wisdom applies to essence, i.e. to divinity, as well: the Son becomes the divinity of the Father and the Father is no more God in himself. Some people might argue that this is indeed how the

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[15] 5.7 (211).

[16] 5.9 (216. Trans. Hill, 195): 'Quidquid ergo ad se ipsum dicitur deus et de singulis personis ter dicitur patre et filio et spiritu sancto, et simul de ipsa trinitate non pluraliter sed singulariter dicitur.'

[17] 1 Cor. 1:24, quoted in 6.1 (228) and *passim*.   [18] 6.2 (229).   [19] 6.2 (229).

consubstantiality between the Father and the Son should be understood. In other terms, consubstantiality should be understood relatively: the Son is the deity of the Father. The Father is not God without the Son.[20]

Even though this way of approaching the issue of consubstantiality seems plausible for the purpose of polemics, Augustine finds that it endangers fundamental principles dictated by Christology and soteriology, above all the 'rule God from God' we met above. Let us remember that this rule was formulated on the basis of the theology of missions, that is of soteriology and of the doctrine of revelation. The Son reveals the Father and he reconciles us with the Father because he comes *from the* Father, because he is the image of the Father, equal to the Father. Therefore, everything the Son is, comes from the Father. The Son becomes for us 'wisdom coming from God' (*sapientia a deo*) because he is 'wisdom from wisdom' (*sapientia de sapientia*), just as he is God from God.[21] Apart from being Father and being Son, everything which is said substantially of the former must be said substantially of the latter as well, while preserving the relation of origin of the Son from the Father. The result is that an understanding of consubstantiality rooted in soteriology cannot support the argument that the unity between Father and Son is a function of the relativity of the Father to the Son, which would indeed be the case if the Son were the wisdom of the Father.

It is also worth noticing that the discussion of substance at the beginning of each of these three books only concerns the relation of the Father and the Son. Of course, Augustine extends the principle of consubstantiality to the Holy Spirit as well in the fifth book,[22] but he significantly omits to do so at the end of the discussion on substance in the sixth and in the seventh books. This does not mean that he is not prepared to acknowledge the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit as well, or his equality with the Son and the Father. *Rather, it confirms the fact that Augustine is not driven here by a systematic ambition, but is only answering some objections*. If anything, the way he deals with these categories might rather be interpreted as *a reluctance to apply them in a systematic way*.[23] The similarities in the structure of each of these books corroborates this view.

In the sixth book, after the discussion on equality and consubstantiality between the Father and the Son summarized above, Augustine devotes a paragraph to the Holy Spirit.[24] The change of perspective is unexpected and revealing. The inadequacy of the vocabulary of substance and of the

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[20] 7.2 (245–249).   [21] Cf. 7.4 (251), 6.2 (229) and 6.6 (234).   [22] 5.9 (216).
[23] *Pace* O'Leary (1981) who argues that Augustine postulates the evidence of the applicability of substance to the understanding of the Trinity to the point of allowing the notion of substance to cast its own logic onto an autonomous portrait of God, in rivalry with revelation (p. 369).
[24] The section on consubstantiality goes from 6.1 to 6.6 (228–235); Holy Spirit in 6.7 (235 f.).

distinction between what is said absolutely and relatively appears more vividly as soon as the issue of the property of the Holy Spirit comes to the fore. Augustine becomes hesitant, the vocabulary more tentative and, above all, the issue is approached from a different perspective altogether, namely in terms of will and love. In the seventh book, again the discussion of consubstantiality does not mention the Holy Spirit at all.[25] It is followed by a discussion which can be placed under the heading of the doctrine of revelation, parallel to that on missions, and only then, towards the end, the Holy Spirit is again brought into the discussion again in a remarkable way. First of all, the 'either … either' (*siue … siue*) which inaugurates this passage is typical of Augustine's modest way of discussing the Holy Spirit. He is aware of the fact that scriptural material on the Holy Spirit resists attempts to reach a too clear-cut definition of his property and even more so it resists systematic approaches based on ontological categories. His argument here is that the only thing we are sure of about the Holy Spirit is his divinity:

And that the Holy Spirit is God scripture cries aloud in the person of the apostle, who says *Do you not know that you are God's temple* and he adds straightaway *and the spirit of God dwells in you* (1 Cor 3.16)? But it is God who dwells in his temple. The Spirit of God does not live in the temple of God as a minister; he makes this quite clear in another text: *Do you not know that the temple of the Holy Spirit in you is your bodies? You have him from God, and so you are not your own. For you have been bought with a great price. So glorify God in your body* (1 Cor 6.19).[26]

If he is God, the Holy Spirit is light and wisdom just like the Father and the Son, and he is one God, one light, one wisdom, one being with the Father and the Son. Instead of being given an explanation, we are confronted with a further straining of the logical and ontological categories introduced by the 'Arians'. Their use, already problematic in the case of the relation between the Father and the Son, becomes virtually meaningless for the Holy Spirit. Augustine does not explain how these categories can work, nor does he claim that this can or should be done. He simply restates the paradox entailed by revelation: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God. Each of them is God and yet there only is one God. Son and Holy Spirit come from the Father as their origin and the way they differ from each other is presented more as a fact than really explained by Scripture.

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[25] 7.1–3 (244–250).
[26] 7.6 (254. Trans. Hill, 224):

Deum autem esse spiritum sanctum scriptura clamat apud apostolum qui dicit: *Nescitis quia templum dei estis*? Statimque subiecit: *et spiritus dei habitat in uobis. Deus* enim *habitat in templo suo*. Non enim tamquam minister habitat spiritus dei in templo dei cum alio loco euidentius dicat: *Nescitis quia corpora uestra templum in uobis est spiritus sancti quem habetis a deo et non estis uestri? Empti enim estis pretio magno. Glorificate ergo deum in corpore uestro.*

II. CRITICISM OF SUBSTANCE AND PERSON

The most sustained and severe criticism of the indiscriminate application of ontological categories to the mystery of the Trinity is conducted at the end of the seventh book.[27] Augustine goes back to the Trinitarian formula of 'one essence, three substances or persons' (*una essentia, tres substantiae—personae*) or 'one substance, three persons' (*una substantia, tres personae*) and endeavours to assess the suitability of each or these terms—essence, substance, person—to express the relation between 'what is one' and 'what is three' in God.

It is well known that the Latin word *substantia* is etymologically the exact equivalent of the Greek ὑπόστασις, i.e. the word used to designate 'that which is three' in God. However, it had also been used to translate the Greek word οὐσία, i.e. the word designating 'that which is one' in God. To designate 'that which is one' in God, Augustine prefers to translate the Greek οὐσία with *essentia*, rather than *substantia*, for a very simple reason. A substance is that which *sub-sistit*, i.e. 'keeps its ground in being', 'carries on existing as it was' even when accidental aspects of a mutable being change or disappear: a man *sub-sistit* even when his hair turns grey or falls out altogether. Therefore, properly speaking, substance is predicated of mutable beings or of beings which are not simple; its role is to designate the essence of a being insofar as it remains the same through all changes.[28] This is why Augustine prefers the word essence, which is the exact Latin translation for οὐσία.[29] He likes to relate it to the name of God given to Moses: 'He alone truly is, because he is unchanging, and he gave this as his name to his servant Moses when he said *I am who I am* and *You will say to them*: *He who is sent me to you* (Ex 3.14).'[30] In the end, however, provided that one is aware of the disadvantages of the word substance, he is not against its use and he himself treats substance and essence as synonyms most of the time: 'But in any case, whether he is called being, which he is called properly, or substance which he is called improperly, either word is predicated with reference to self, not by way of relationship with reference to something else. So for God to be is the same as to subsist, and therefore if the Trinity is one being, it is also one substance.'[31]

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[27] 7.7–12 (255–267).   [28] 7.10 (260 f.).   [29] Cf. Cross (2003), 476 n. 29.
[30] 7.10 (261. Trans. Hill, 228): 'Est enim uere solus quia incommutabilis est, idque suum nomen famulo suo Moysi enuntiauit cum ait: *Ego sum qui sum*, et: *Dices ad eos: Qui est misit me ad uos*.'
[31] Ibid.: 'Sed tamen siue essentia dicatur quod proprie dicitur, siue substantia quod abusiue, utrumque ad se dicitur, non relatiue ad aliquid. Vnde hoc est deo esse quod subsistere, et ideo si una essentia trinitas, una etiam substantia.'

With regard to the use of the terms ὑπόστασις or person to designate 'what is three' in God, the reservations are greater. Augustine's stance on this matter is well known: 'So we say three persons, not in order to say that precisely, but in order not to be reduced to silence';[32] 'it has been agreed to say it like that, simply in order to be able to say something when asked "Three what?" ';[33] only 'as required by the necessities of argument, in order to have a name to answer the question "Three what?" with, and so to say three substances or persons'.[34] For 'person' more than for any other ontological category, we see the extent to which Augustine's criticism draws its principles from Scripture. He reviews very carefully the way Scripture talks about unity and plurality in God. Sometimes Scripture stresses the paradox of the mystery of divine life by combining the singular and the plural, as in the case of the 'one' and the 'we are' of Augustine's main Trinitarian texts: '*I and the Father are one.*'[35] Sometimes Scripture only uses the plural, either openly, as in declarations such as '*We will come to him and make our home with him*',[36] or in disguise, as in the texts from Genesis: '*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*'[37] Crucially, whenever Scripture resorts to the plural openly, it uses or implies relative names, like Father and Son. What Scripture never does is to use one common name—like person or ὑπόστασις—to designate 'what is three' in God.[38]

The absence in Scripture of any category to encompass 'that which is three' in God is the main reason of Augustine's criticism of the notion of person. The main limitation of this notion is that, unlike the names 'father' and 'son', it is not a relative name, i.e. it cannot be predicated relatively, *ad aliquid*. When applied to the Father, it does not imply his unity and relation with the Son. This criticism of the notion of person is valid irrespectively of the definition of the term one is working with. The notion of person proves inadequate in Trinitarian theology not positively, i.e. on the basis of a given definition of this term, but negatively, that is for the simple fact that it is not a relative term and that any non-relative way of designating 'what is three' in God is not warranted by Scripture.[39] Moreover, on the basis of what he had determined

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[32] 5.10 (217. Trans. Hill, 196): 'Dictum est tamen tres personae non ut illud diceretur sed ne taceretur.'

[33] 7.7 (255. Trans. Hill, 224): 'ita dici ut diceretur aliquid cum quaereretur quid tria sint'.

[34] 7.12 (267. Trans. Hill, 232): 'propter disputandi necessitatem . . . ut uno nomine respondeatur cum quaeritur quid tria, et dicere tres substantias siue personas'.

[35] John 10:30: '*Ego et pater unum sumus.*'

[36] John 14:23: '*Veniemus ad eum et habitabimus apud eum.*'

[37] Gen. 1:26: '*Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.*'

[38] 7.12 (266). Cf. also 7.8 (258).

[39] 7.11 (261–265). These considerations, combined with Augustine's treatment of the Holy Spirit, lead us to think he would have endorsed Rahner's view that 'the unbridgeable difference

concerning the two different modes of predication applicable to God, anything which cannot be predicated relatively can only be predicated substantially, just as in the case of 'God', or 'essence', or 'wisdom' or any other attribute. This means that whatever is predicated of any of the persons absolutely (*ad se*), in virtue of the unity of divinity in God—of, if we prefer, of his unity of essence— must be predicated absolutely of the other divine persons and singularly of the whole Trinity. Therefore, if the term person is predicated absolutely of the Father, this means that in God we have three persons and that God is one person, which is not orthodox:

So the only reason, it seems, why we do not call these three together one person, as we call them one being and one God, but say three persons while we never say threee Gods or three beings, is that we want to keep at least one word for signifying what we mean by Trinity, so that we are not simply reduced to silence when we are asked three what, after we have confessed that there are three.[40]

The difficulties caused by the use of ontological categories increase exponentially when we face the inevitable question of the relation between 'what is one' and 'what is three' in the Trinity. Augustine examines this question on the basis of the relation between genus, species and individual, and considers the following possibilities:[41] (i) person designates the species with relation to the genus which is the essence (just as the horse is a species of the genus animal); (ii) person designates an individual, just as in the case of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then, he turns to the one essence of God and tests out the following possibilities: (i) essence is a genus-word; (ii) essence is a species-word; (iii) essence designates the one nature common to different individuals. In the examination of this possibility, he considers the case of a material analogy: is the relation between 'what is three' and 'what is one' in God similar to the relation between the matter of gold and three statues made out of it?

It would be tedious to report the detail of the complex discussion of these possibilities here. Its predictable outcome is that none of these distinctions

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between the way each divine person is a person ... is so great that only the loosest of analogies allows us to apply the same notion of person to all three', Rahner (1966), 91.

[40] 7.11 (262. Trans. Hill, 228):

Cur ergo non haec tria simul unam personam dicimus sicut unam essentiam et unum deum, sed dicimus tres personas, cum tres deos aut tres essentias non dicamus, nisi quia uolumus uel unum aliquod uocabulum seruire huic significationi qua intellegitur trinitas ne omnino taceremus interrogati quid tres, cum tres esse fateremur?

[41] 7.11 (263–265).

can work when applied to the triunity of God.[42] The main cause of the failure of these ontological categories is that God's unity of essence is not simply 'generic', nor even 'specific', but *numerical*: God is numerically one. Therefore, the application of the categories genus and species to the relation between essence and persons cannot work: in God's case, it could only be rendered as 'one genus and three species', which goes against the proper use of the categories genus and species. In fact, in the application of the distinction genus and species to the example of the distinction between the genus 'animal' and the species 'horse', when we have three horses, we have three animals (and not one animal).[43] In the same way, three individuals—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—are three men, not one man. As for the category of 'nature', Augustine easily pins down its materialistic implications which make it the least adequate solution of all.

To sum up the reasons of the inadequacy of these ontological categories with respect to the mystery of the Trinity, the two main obstacles are the numerical unity of God's essence and the unsuitability of resorting to anything other than relational names to designate 'what is three' in him, for two main reasons: first of all because this is not warranted by the usage of Scripture and secondly because everything which is not predicated relatively in God, can only be predicated essentially, thereby having to be identified with essence and considered numerically one.

[42] In his otherwise excellent analysis of Augustine's argument in books 5 to 7, Cross (2007) comes to a surprising conclusion concerning the material analogy mentioned above (7.11 (264 f.)), i.e. the option which envisages the relation between 'what is three' and 'what is one' in God as being similar to the relation between the matter of gold and three statues made out of it. Cross (2007) reckons that Augustine's denial of this option does not mean that 'the analogy to matter is unsound *tout court*; we should not see Augustine as rejecting the model, merely as providing strong restrictions on its applicability' (p. 227) and later he declares that 'there is no evidence that he believes the answer to be unsuccessful' (p. 229). We would argue that the context of this section of book 7 makes it difficult to agree with Cross's view. What drives Augustine's argument here is not the search for a viable analogy of the articulation between 'what is three' and 'what is one' in God, but the virtually aprioristic determination to prove the inadequacy of logical and ontological categories with respect to the mystery of the Trinity, as our argument in this chapter endeavours to prove.

[43] According to Cross (2007) this does not mean that Augustine differs from Gregory of Nyssa's positive verdict on the analogy to a species in his *Ad Ablabium* (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, ed. F. Müller, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958, III/1 p. 40 line 15 to p. 42 line 12). Where Augustine argues against this analogy on the basis that 'seeing the essence as a genus or species would make it impossible to resist the inference from three persons to three gods', Gregory of Nyssa accepts the analogy on the basis of the opposite philosophical understanding of species nouns: 'Since the analogy is good (for Gregory of Nyssa), it must follow that our understanding of species nouns in general—as count nouns—is mistaken. Gregory makes the metaphysical point in the strongest possible terms: "There are many who have shared in the nature [of man] . . . but man in them all is one" ' (p. 231). The passage from Gregory comes from *Ad Ablabium* (op. cit.), p. 40 line 17 ff. This point is compellingly argued in Cross (2002b), 282 ff.; Cross (2002a and 2003).

III. AN ONTOLOGICAL BENT IN AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY?

The time has come to collect the various analytic strands of this section on consubstantiality and try to acquire a synthetic view of Augustine's position on this topic. The main finding of our analysis of books 5 to 7 of the *De Trinitate* is that they do not aim to provide a systematic account of the doctrine of the Trinity with the help of ontological categories. This finding is at variance with the view commonly expressed by many commentators, who argue that Augustine is at the origin of the speculative shift of Trinitarian theology which has become—they say—the characteristic of the Western doctrine of the Trinity ever since. In this version, he started from a formal account of Trinitarian faith a step removed from the economy of salvation, he replaced the soteriological roots of Trinitarian doctrine with ontological categories and tried to elaborate a systematic account of inner-Trinitarian life from these categories.[44]

Indeed, the formula of faith Augustine places at the beginning of his argument in the first book might confirm this version:

The purpose of all the Catholic commentators I have been able to read on the divine books of both testaments, who have written before me on the Trinity which God is, has been to teach that according to the scriptures Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity, and therefore there are not three gods, but one God.[45]

The faith of the Church in the Trinity is summed up in the ontological categories of unity of substance, equality, inseparability, and the Trinity as a whole is called God. Inseparability in particular, seems to become the governing notion for the articulation between the inner-life of the Trinity and the economy of salvation.[46] Even though the Incarnation can only be attributed to

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[44] Rahner (1966), 84 ff.; Lossky (1957), 54–61, especially 57, where he quotes Régnon (1892–1898), I, 433. The defence of Augustine against these generalizations is brilliantly undertaken by Cross (2002a, 2002b, and 2003). Cf. also Halleux (1986).

[45] 1.7 (34 f. Trans. Hill, 69):

Omnes quos legere potui qui ante me scripserunt de trinitate quae deus est, diuinorum librorum ueterum et nouorum catholici tractatores, hoc intenderunt secundum scripturas docere, quod pater et filius et spiritus sanctus unius substantiae inseparabili aequalitate diuinam insinuent unitatem, ideoque non sint tres dii sed unus.

[46] According to Corbin (1997), 93, the consequence of inseparability is that 'disparaît toute différence entre les Trois. Il ne se distinguent pas, en effet, par leur relation au temps, mais "oeuvrent inséparablement", usent de signes, d'effets créés par leur essence une ... le Christ devient le simple *signe* et non *le signe et la réalité* de Dieu toujours plus haut'. This criticism, however, does not take the Christology of the *De Trinitate* into account nor the difference between theophanies and missions. Even Studer (1997b) thinks that in his treatment of inseparability, 'Augustine is

the Son, the tongues of fire only to the Holy Spirit and the voice from heaven only to the Father, since the Three are inseparable, they must act inseparably as well, 'just as Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably'.[47] Inseparability is a real leitmotiv of most of the *De Trinitate*. Because Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of one substance, the Trinity acts inseparably,[48] and it is not infrequent to find in the treatise expressions such as: 'the Trinity together produced both the Father's voice and the Son's flesh and the Holy Spirit's dove, though each of these single things has reference to a single person'.[49] The inseparability is such that when one person is named, the others are implied.[50] This is the necessary counterpart of the equality of the divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal but consubstantial and therefore they can only act inseparably.[51]

This would be the background against which Augustine refines his understanding of consubstantiality in books 5 to 7 and reaches the following conclusion: God's essence or substance is numerically one; at the same time, each

reasoning from theology to economy, from his monotheistic conviction to a unitarian interpretation of the biblical narrative' (p. 36). Augustine's biblical interpretation of the Old Testament is hardly 'unitarian'. He does not deny the attribution of specific actions to specific persons of the Trinity in the theophanies of the Old Testament—he only argues that the identification of which person was at work in these theophanies can be determined only retrospectively and tentatively in the light of the missions of the New Testament, because only through the missions do we have the full revelation of the Trinity. In the same article, Studer himself declares that Augustine 'is convinced that, strictly speaking, the Trinity was not revealed except by the pascal mystery' (p. 46).

[47] 1.7 (36. Trans. Hill, 70): 'quamuis pater et filius et spiritus sanctus sicut inseparabiles sunt, ita inseparabiliter operentur'.

[48] 1.24 f. (62–65).

[49] 4.30 (203. Trans. Hill, 175 f.): 'trinitas simul operata est et uocem patris et carnem filii et columbam spiritus sancti cum ad personas singulas haec singula referantur'.

[50] 1.17 (52).

[51] For a fine interpretation of the inseparability of the Trinity and divine simplicity in relation with Nicene Trinitarianism in Augustine, see Ayres (2000b) and especially the more recent Ayres (2004): 'The grammar of God's simplicity . . . does not serve to make God a unitary essence. . . . Rather, that grammar serves to enhance the explanatory power of a fully Nicene Trinitarianism' (p. 382). The treatment of inseparability in *ep.* 11 (AD 389, CSEL 34/1, 25–28); *f. et symb.* (AD 393, CSEL 41, 3–32); *s.* 52 (*c.*AD 410, PL 38, 354–364); the *De Trinitate*; and *ciu. Dei* 11.10 (CCL 47, 330 ff.) not only allows Ayres (2004) to refute the charge of the alleged priority of divine essence over against the distinction of persons, but to reach the opposite conclusion: 'for Augustine, the best way we can articulate what we mean by the unity of God and the irreducibility of the persons is by attention to the grammar of divine simplicity rather than the grammar of materiality' (p. 375). 'We do not find the unity by focusing on something different from the persons: it is on focusing on the persons' possession of wisdom and existence "in themselves" that draws us to recognize their unity. The triune communion *is* a consubstantial and eternal unity—but there *is* nothing but the persons' (p. 380). Cf. in particular Ayres's quotation of *ep.* 120.3.17 (CSEL 34/2, 719): 'Restat itaque, ut ita credamus unius esse substantiae Trinitatem, ut ipsa essentia non aliud sit quam ipsa Trinitas' ('the Trinity is of one substance and [the] essence is nothing else than the Trinity itself').

divine person is equally God; therefore, God's essence can be predicated of each person individually and, at the same time, of the whole Trinity singularly. The fact that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God does not result in three gods, but in the one God.[52]

This way of approaching consubstantiality would be based on the absolute equality between the divine persons, described through relative predication: the very name Father entails relation to the Son and vice versa, and the name *donum*, 'gift', for the Holy Spirit displays his relation to both the Father and the Son. Some commentators have even attributed to Augustine a notion of 'opposite relation' fundamentally different from the traditional 'relation of origin' of the Eastern Fathers of the Church. Thus, for example, the necessity of the *filioque* is attributed to a relational model where the difference between the persons is determined not by their origin, but by opposition, so that the Father alone relates and is not related, the Son both relates and is related, the Holy Spirit alone is related but does not actively relate. In other terms, without the *filioque* there would be no way of establishing a formal distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Son (since without the *filioque*, the Son also would be related but not actively relating).[53]

This reconstruction of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity from a purely ontological viewpoint, would also have to include the crucial role played by the attributes of immutabiliy and invisibility. Their place in Augustine's Trinitarian theology would be the sign of the governing function attributed to ontological categories over scriptural material in the elaboration of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity. For example, does he not deny in principle the possibility of self-manifestation of God in the theophanies of the Old Testament on the basis of the divine attribute of invisibility? Does he not resort, in the first book, to a strict distribution of scriptural material concerning the Son to his human nature on one side and to his divine nature on the other, on the basis of a theistic notion of God's immutability?

We do not need to go further in the description of this version of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity. On the basis of what has been argued in this

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[52] 6.9 (238).
[53] Brown (1985), 282. Another critical, though careful, approach to Augustine's dealings with the categories of relation and substance in books 5 to 7 of the *De Trinitate* is attempted by Falque (1995), in the light of the Heideggerian project to break theology (and philosophy) free from onto-theology. Although aware of the polemical nature of these books (pp. 89 and 106), Falque considers that they are paradigmatic of Augustine's inability to resist to the growing power of a 'substantial ontology' (p. 107). Falque acknowledges that the *De Trinitate* is a watershed in the history of theology, in that it overcomes the deadlock of Aristotelian metaphysics by denying the accidental character of the category of relation when applied to the persons of the Trinity. However, the potential of this innovation—in reality already anticipated by Gregory of Nazianzus and Didymus the Blind, cf. Chevalier (1940)—is compromised by his refusal to give to the substance a relative status when applied to the Trinity (p. 104 f.), thus leaving Trinitarian theology ensnared in 'onto-theology' for centuries to come (p. 102).

book up to this point, the flaws of this portrayal of the *De Trinitate* are easily detected. Above all, this approach fails to perceive that the use of ontological categories in the *De Trinitate* is not dictated by speculative or systematic goals, but belongs to a delimited polemical context and cannot easily (or safely) be extrapolated from it. Even granted the legitimacy of the systematic association of these categories with a view to establishing the understanding of the immanent Trinity they presuppose, this still needs to undergo a critical verification. This critical verification has to set this portrayal of the immanent Trinity allegedly indebted to philosophical ontology, against the doctrine of the inner-life of the Trinity presupposed by Augustine's Christology, soteriology and doctrine of the Holy Spirit and see whether they really coincide or not.[54] To this verification we now turn, which will also give us the opportunity to recapitulate our findings concerning Augustine's real understanding of the inner-life of the Trinity.

IV. AUGUSTINE'S REAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE INNER-LIFE OF THE TRINITY

Far from being a theistic divine attribute imported into Trinitarian theology, the inseparability of the Father and the Son is based on revelation. The main scriptural texts Augustine refers to are taken from John's Gospel: '*Whatever the Father does the Son also does*' and '*As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will*.'[55] However, he also notices that Scripture ascribes the same actions sometimes to the Father and sometimes to the Son:

how the Father can have sanctified the Son if he sanctified himself? Both are affirmed by one and the same Lord: *Do you say of him*, he asks, *whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, that he is blaspheming, because I said I am God's son* (Jn 10.36)? And elsewhere he says *For them do I sanctify myself* (Jn 17.19). Again I ask him how the Father can have delivered him up if he delivered up himself. The apostle Paul says

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[54] Lancaster (1996) makes out a good case for what she calls Augustine's 'relational essence of the triune God' (p. 123) against Lacugna's and Rahner's view that in the *De Trinitate* essence precedes relation. 'The persons—she declares—which are defined by their relations, are nothing other than what the substance is. . . . Just as for God it is the same thing to be as to be wise, for God, it is the same thing to be and to be triune' (p. 138). Although in agreement with her, we are nonetheless persuaded that a far more effective way of tackling Lacugna' and Rahner's view is one which she seems to overlook in her argument, namely the analysis of the doctrine of the inner-life of the Trinity presupposed by Augustine's Christology, soteriology, and doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

[55] John 5:19: '*Quaecumque enim pater facit, haec eadem et filius facit similiter*' and John 5:21: '*Sicut pater suscitat mortuos et uiuificat, sic et filius quos uult uiuificat*', quoted in 1.11 (40).

both: *Who did not spare his own Son*, he says, *but delivered him up for us all* (Rm 8.32); and elsewhere he says of the saviour *who loved me and delivered himself up for me* (Gal. 2.20). I trust our friend will answer me, if he has a just appreciation of these matters, that Father and Son have but one will and are indivisible in their working.[56]

In the same way, using Old Testament vocabulary, he asks 'is there anywhere he [the Father] could be without his Word and his Widsom, who *stretches mightly from end to end, and disposes all things properly* (Wis 8.1)? Not for that matter could he be anywhere without his Spirit. If God is everywhere, his Spirit is everywhere too.'[57] From Scripture he also draws a key factor we have constantly highlighted in our account of his soteriology and of his doctrine of revelation: *inseparability—and, for that matter, equality—does not mean inter-changeability*. Augustine adopts the Pauline way of articulating divine action:

Take another saying of the same apostle: *For us there is one God the Father from whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things, and we though him* (1 Cor 8.6). Who can doubt that by *all things* he means all that is created, like John in *All things were made through him* (Jn 1.3)? So I ask whom does he mean in another place with the words, *Since from him and through him and in him are all things, to him be glory for ever and ever* (Rom 11.36). If he means Father and Son and Holy Spirit, attributing a phrase apiece to each person—*from him*, from the Father; *through him*, through the Son; *in him*, in the Holy Spirit—then it is clear that Father and Son and Holy Spirit is what the one God is, since he concludes in the singular, *to him be glory for ever and ever*.[58]

Divine action has to be attributed inseparably to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but not as if it was carried out through the distribution of tasks to three

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[56] 2.9 (90. Trans. Hill, 102 f.):

quomodo eum pater sanctificauit si se ipse sanctificauit? Vtrumque enim idem dominus ait: *Quem pater*, inquit, *sanctificauit et misit in hunc mundum, uos dicitis quia blasphemat quoniam dixi: Filius dei sum*; alio autem loco ait: *Et pro eis sanctifico me ipsum*. Item quaero quomodo eum pater tradidit si ipse se tradidit. Vtrumque enim dicit apostolus Paulus: *Qui filio*, inquit, *proprio non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit eum*. Alibi autem de ipso saluatore ait: *Qui me dilexit et tradidit se ipsum pro me*. Credo respondebit si haec probe sapit quia una uoluntas est patris et filii et inseparabilis operatio.

[57] 2.7 (88. Trans. Hill, 102): 'ubi esse potuit [pater] sine uerbo suo et sine sapientia sua quae *pertendit a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit omnia suauiter*? Sed neque sine spiritu suo usquam esse potuit. Itaque si ubique est deus, ubique est etiam spiritus eius.'

[58] 1.12 (41. Trans. Hill, 72):

Item dicit idem apostolus: Nobis unus deus pater ex quo omnia, et nos in ipso; et unus dominus Iesus Christus per quem omnia, et nos per ipsum. Quis dubitet eum omnia 'quae creata sunt' dicere, sicut Iohannes: Omnia per ipsum facta sunt? Quaero itaque de quo dicit alio loco: Quoniam ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia; ipsi gloria in saecula saeculorum. Si enim de patre et filio et spiritu sancto ut singulis personis singula tribuantur, ex ipso, ex patre; per ipsum, per filium; in ipso, in spiritu sancto; manifestum quod pater et filius et spiritus sanctus unus deus est quando singulariter intulit: Ipsi gloria in saecula saeculorum.

equal sources of action. *In reality, the unique divine action has its source in the Father and is performed through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.* It is worth noticing that after this assertion, Augustine declares that Paul uses 'God as a proper name for the Father',[59] thus correcting the appellation 'God the Trinity' (*deus trinitas*) and inviting a more cautious evaluation of this association between God and Trinity which some commentators might find infelicitous.[60] On this basis, Augustine establishes the Trinitarian form of the divine attribute of inseparability which we have mentioned already, but which needs to be briefly called to mind again here. Passages like '*As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will*'[61] cannot be interpreted as meaning that the Father actually performs the actions which are attributed to the Son. On the contrary:

So the reason for these statements can only be that the life of the Son is unchanging like the Father's, and yet is from the Father; and that the work of Father and Son is indivisible, and yet the Son's working is from the Father just as he himself is from the Father; and the way in which the Son sees the Father is simply by being the Son. For him, being from the Father, that is being born of the Father, is not something different from seeing the Father; nor is seeing him working something different from his working equally; and the reason he does not work of himself is that he does not (so to put it) be of himself; and the reason he does what he sees the Father doing is that he is from the Father. He does not do other things *likewise*, like a painter copying pictures he has seen painted by someone else; nor does he do *the same* things differently, like the body forming letters which the mind has thought; but *Whatever the Father does*, he says, *the same the Son also does likewise* (John 5.19). *The same*, he said and also, *likewise*; thus showing that the working of the Father and of the Son is equal and indivisible, and yet the Son's working comes from the Father. That is why the Son cannot do anything of himself except what he sees the Father doing.[62]

[59] 1.12 (42. Trans. Hill, 73), 'deum proprie patrem appellans', commenting on Phil. 2:6.
[60] Corbin (1997), 101. Of course, Augustine's association between God and Trinity should be evaluated in the background of Augustine's liturgical practice manifested in his sermons: there, he directs the Eucharistic prayer to the Father or concludes his sermons saying 'Conuersi ad dominum deum patrem omnipotentem' etc. Cf. Studer (1997b), 47.
[61] John 5:21 quoted in 1.11 (40).
[62] 2.3 (83 f. Trans. Hill, 99):

Restat ergo ut haec ideo dicta sint quia incommutabilis est uita filii sicut patris, et tamen de patre est; et inseparabilis est operatio patris et filii, sed tamen ita operari filio de illo est de quo ipse est, id est de patre; et ita uidet filius patrem ut quo eum uidet hoc ipso sit filius. Non enim aliud illi est esse de patre, id est nasci de patre, quam uidere patrem, aut aliud uidere operantem quam pariter operari; sed ideo non a se quia non est a se, et ideo quod uiderit patrem quia de patre est. Neque enim alia similiter, sicut pictor alias tabulas pingit quemadmodum alias ab alio pictas uidit; nec eadem dissimiliter, sicut corpus easdem litteras exprimit quas animus cogitauit; sed: *Quaecumque*, inquit, *pater facit, haec eadem et filius facit similiter*. Et haec eadem dixit et similiter, ac per hoc inseparabilis et par operatio est patri et filio, sed a patre est filio. Ideo *non potest filius a se facere quidquam nisi quod uiderit patrem facientem.*

In other terms, inseparability follows the rule 'God from God' we have
examined at length, which has to be traced back to the theology of the sending
of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and, further back, to the Trinitarian nature
of reconciliation and revelation.

With regard to the Trinitarian form of reconciliation, let us remember the
nature of the mediatory role of the Son: introducing us into his unity of love
with the Father. We are not reconciled through the union with an indistinct
divinity, but we are reconciled with the Father through union with the Son
in the love-Holy Spirit. In the same way, the knowledge of God we have
through faith is the result of Christ's mediatory role and its fulfilment and
term will be the contemplation of God *the Father* in the life-to-come. This
point is crucial: *the goal and the end of the knowledge of God is the Father.*[63] In
other words, it is not as if the Trinity were the object of salvific knowledge
in an undifferentiated way. Knowledge of the Trinity means that *God can
only be known in a Trinitarian way*, i.e. under the form of knowledge *of* the
Father *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit. Thanks to our union to the Son
through love, we are introduced into the Son's own love and knowledge of the
Father.

The same thing applies to the doctrine of revelation and calls for a clari-
fication. We have seen above that even though the Incarnation can only be
attributed to the Son, the tongues of fire only to the Holy Spirit and the voice
from heaven only to the Father, since the Three are inseparable, they must act
inseparably as well. Indeed, Augustine attributes to the tongues of fire and to
the voice heard from heaven at Baptism and Transfiguration only the role of
'signs' of the Holy Spirit and of the Father. Does this mean that the immanent
inseparability and the unity of substance between the three persons is such
that the differentiation in their manifestation of their respective role in the
economy is only 'apparent'? In this case, Augustine's view would be that the
properties manifested by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the economy are only
provisional; they would depend on the necessity of spatio/temporal revela-
tion, but in fact they would not correspond to the inner-life of the Trinity,
where the unity of substance requires a unity of action understood as *indif-
ferentiated* and *interchangeable*. In a word, Augustine would be a modalist in
disguise.

However, such a version fails to take into account the defining role played
by the doctrines of Incarnation and of revelation. Christ's human nature, his
words and his deeds are not simply the *signs* of a purely economic action of
the Son which, in the inner-life of the Trinity, would be indistinguishable from
Trinitarian action considered as a whole. In virtue of the clear doctrine of

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[63] Cf. for example 1.16 (49); 18 (54); 21 (57 f.).

hypostatic union operative in Augustine's understanding of the Incarnation, we have constantly pointed out that Christ's human nature, his words and his deeds are the manifestation of the Son to such an extent that they have no meaning nor existence other than that which is given to them by their existence in the Son of God. In Christ, Augustine talks about 'humility of God' and of 'God crucified'[64] properly, not figuratively. If the action of the Father and of the Holy Spirit is signified through created means as in the case of the tongues of fire and the voice heard from heaven, this does not mean that they do not really reveal themselves, but simply that revelation of the Trinity does not mean revelation *of* the Father *and of* the Son *and of* the Holy Spirit, but revelation *of the* invisible Father, *in the* Son who has made himself visible in the flesh *through the* charity poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.[65]

This leads us to the issue of the unity of the Trinity and of consubstantiality. Augustine does not consider the term 'consubstantial' (*consubstantialis*) self-referential or self-explanatory, as though it enshrined the solution of the paradox we face in Scripture or could lead the theologian further into the understanding of the mystery of the Trinity than Christology, soteriology, and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. With regard to the relation between the Father and the Son, the content of this term is the equivalent of two fundamental scriptural quotations, namely '*I and the Father are are one*'[66] and '*He thought it no robbery to be equal to God*':[67] 'There are then some statements of scripture

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[64] Cf. 4.4 (164) and 1.28 (69).

[65] For an analysis of the issue of inseparability in relation to divine action in creation, divine gouvernement and illumination see Bailleux (1971b), especially p. 189 and pp. 194 f. The author argues that even though the *De Trinitate* can talk of creation as being the work of a single principle, one Lord, one God, and even 'one nature' (14.16 (443)), Augustine constantly aims at differentiating divine action in creation attributing it to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When Scripture says '*From him and through him and in him are all things*' (Rom. 11:36), Augustine explains that it must be understood as follows: '*From him*, from the Father; *through him*, though the Son; *in him*, in the Holy Spirit' (1.12 (41)). In creation, of course, the detailed 'distribution' of this divine action to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can only be established retrospectively, in the light of the New Testament, and tentatively, in a way similar to that of Augustine with divine action in the theophanies of the Old Testament. As we shall see, the role played by the Word is easier to determine than that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. Again this does not mean that 'appropriations' only have a loose relation to the inner Trinitarian identity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. On the contrary, this means that only in the 'missions' of the New Testament do we have the full *revelation* of the inner Trinitarian identity of each person, even though they had acted according to this identity all along in creation and in the governemnt of the world. Cf. our analysis of Augustine's doctrine of creation in Chapter 11 of this book.

[66] John 10:30. This is Augustine's favourite scriptural passage to refute both Sabellians and 'Arians': *sumus* expressing the plurality of persons against Sabellians and *unum* the identity of nature against the 'Arians', cf. *Jo. eu. tr.* 36.9 (CCL 36, 329 f.); 37.6 (CCL 36, 334 f.); 71.2 (CCL 36, 505 f.). See 'La réfutation simultanée du Sabellianisme et de l'Arianisme par Io. 10.30', in Berrouard (1988), 471 f.

[67] Phil. 2:6.

about the Father and the Son which indicate their unity and equality of substance, like *I and the Father are one* (John 10.30) and *Since he was in the form of God he thought it no robbery to be equal to God* (Phil 2.6), and any other such.'[68] Then, consubstantiality is applied to the Holy Spirit as well, but in such a way that this appears more the result of an 'extension', than something which could be said entirely properly and meaningfully.[69]

More or less intentionally, it is especially through his doctrine of the Holy Spirit that Augustine betrays his real concerns, that is a 'knowledge' which does not aim at systematization, but coincides with the desire to enjoy (*frui*) the gift of divine life revealed through the mystery of the Trinity. Any account of the inner-life of the Trinity which yields to the temptation of systematization for its own sake, is doomed to fail under the strain put on it by the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. With all the due insistence on his equality to the Father and the Son, his very name of 'holy' and 'spirit', points to the peculiarity of his identity and of his property. The attempt to highlight his relational nature through his qualification 'gift', however legitimate, also helps only up to a certain point. We have seen that Augustine acknowledges that whereas a gift is an object of exchange between two persons, the Holy Spirit is himself God and gives himself as God.[70]

Above all, it is the identification between the Holy Spirit and love (*dilectio*) required by Scripture—in the light of soteriology and of the doctrine of revelation—which leads further into his mysterious nature and into the understanding of the inner-life of the Trinity, while challenging any attempt to find a common category to designate 'what is three' in God and explaining Augustine's extreme reluctance to resort to the category of person in Trinitarian theology. We have seen that John's First Epistle ascribes the indwelling of Father and Son in us identically to love and to the Holy Spirit, thus implying that love is indeed the property of the Holy Spirit.[71] We have also seen that Augustine unfolds his notion of the Holy Spirit as gift, *donum*, from this basis. Gift is a synonym for love. Thus, love does not have anything to do with the alleged explanatory role of an ontological category, but draws its epistemological unique role from its wholly theological nature. This wholly theological nature of love is a function of the divine nature of our salvation: Christ saved us by reconciling us to the Father, i.e. introducing us into the union of love which belongs to the relation between the Son and the Father from all eternity and which *is* the Holy Spirit. Christ's reconciliation becomes ours through the love poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given

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[68] 2.3 (82. Trans. Hill, 98): 'Quaedam itaque ita ponuntur in scripturis de patre et filio ut indicent unitatem aequalitatemque substantiae, sicuti est: *Ego et pater unum sumus*, et: *Cum in forma dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse aequalis deo*, et quaecumque talia sunt.' Cf. also 4.12 (177); 5.4 (208); 6.3 (229 ff.); and 7.12 (265 ff.).
[69] Cf. 7.6 (254).   [70] 15.36 (512 f.).   [71] 15.31 f. (505–508).

to us. To be saved corresponds to the indwelling of the Father and the Son in us, made possible by love, which, with regard to the life of the immanent Trinity, can only be expressed as follows: in the Son, we take part to the mutual indwelling between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

We have seen the crucial passage from the book 4 where Augustine highlights the soteriological centrality of the unity of will between the Father and the Son over the unity of substance:

This is what he means when he says *That they may be one as we are one* (John 17.22)—that just as Father and Son are one not only by equality of substance but also by identity of will, so these men, for whom the Son is mediator with God, might be one not only by being of the same nature, but also by being bound in the fellowship of the same love.[72]

When Augustine is forced to think along the lines set out by the Trinitarian controversy of the century before his own, i.e. polemically, he is quite capable of confining himself to language of substance and essence, despite a reluctance betrayed virtually on every page of the sections of the *De Trinitate* devoted to this approach. When, however, he has to establish the Trinitarian ground of his Christology and soteriology, what matters to him most is the union *of will* between the Father and the Son: just as the Father and the Son are united through love-Holy Spirit, so Christians are reconciled—become one—with the Father through the love of Christ's sacrifice—let us remember that love is the essence of sacrifice—and become one with each other through the same love poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us at Christ's resurrection.

Just in the same way, we must remember that, in the sixth book, once Augustine has led his discussion of the consubstantiality between the Father to a neat conclusion, as he turns to the Holy Spirit, his tone suddenly changes and leaves behind the abstract consideration of God's essence to spell out the inner-life of the Trinity in terms of love:

And therefore there are not more than three: one loving him who is from him, and one loving him from whom he is, and love itself. If this is not anything, how is it that *God is love* (1 Jn 4.8, 16)? If it is not substance, how is it that God is substance?[73]

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[72] 4.12 (177 f. Trans. Hill, 161)

Ad hoc enim ualet quod ait: *Vt sint unum sicut et nos unum sumus*, ut quemadmodum pater et filius non tantum aequalitate substantiae sed etiam uoluntate unum sunt, ita et hi inter quos et deum mediator est filius non tantum per id quod eiusdem naturae sunt sed etiam per eandem dilectionis societatem unum sint.

[73] 6.7 (236. Trans. Hill, 209):

Et ideo non amplius quam tria sunt: unus diligens eum qui de illo est, et unus diligens eum de quo est, et ipsa dilectio. Quae si nihil est, quomodo *deus dilectio est*? Si non est substantia, quomodo deus substantia est?

All this leads us to the conclusion that Augustine sees the substantial unity of the Trinity as a unity of love. Metaphysical categories like those of unity, consubstantialiy, equality, inseparability, and simplicity are not explanations of the inner-life of the Trinity, they are not the solution or the answer to the question 'Who is God?'. They are not descriptive. Rather, they are a reformulation of the question 'Who *this* God revealed by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit is?'; they are a way of stating more precisely where exactly the paradox of revelation concerning the mystery of the Trinity lies.[74] To say that God's unity is 'substantial' and oppose it to a unity of love is a fallacious move. The unity of the Trinity is consubstantial as unity of love. The Father and the Son are united in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is 'the supreme charity conjoining Father and Son to each other and subjoining us to them, and it would seem a suitable name since it is written *God is love* (1 John 4.8, 16)'.[75]

Finally, we must say a word on the alleged notion of 'opposite relation' fundamentally different from the traditional 'relation of origin' of the Eastern Fathers of the Church, usually attributed to Augustine. The main contention of this section of our book is that the root of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity is in the theology of missions formulated in books 2 to 4 and restated with regard to wisdom in book 7. According to this theology of missions, the Father is the 'principle' (*principium*) of the inner-life of the Trinity because he is never said to have been sent but only sends. The Son is 'God from (*de*) God' because he is Son as he is sent and, in the same way, the Holy Spirit is 'God from (*a, ex*) God' because he is sent by the Father and by the risen Christ, and his role in the economy is to lead us to adhere to Christ through love and thus reach union with the Father. This is why he is sent from the Father

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[74] Cf. Mackinnon (1972), 290.

[75] 7.6 (254. Trans. Hill, 224): 'summa caritas utrumque [the Father and the Son] coniungens nosque subiungens, quod ideo non indigne dicitur quia scriptum est: *Deus caritas est*'. In three texts of *Jo. eu. tr.* (14.9 (CCL 36, 147 f.); 18.4 (CCL 36, 181 f.) and 39.5 (CCL 36, 347 f.)) this idea is stated on the basis of Acts 4:32; cf. in particular 39.5 (CCL 36, 347 f.):

Adtendite ergo, fratres, et hinc agnoscite mysterium Trinitatis, quomodo dicamus: Et Pater est, et Filius est, et Spiritus sanctus est, et tamen unus deus est. Ecce illi tot millia erant, et cor unum erat; ecce tot millia erant, et una anima erat. Sed ubi? In deo. Quanto magis ipse deus? Numquid erro in uerbo, quando dico duos homines duas animas, aut tres homines tres animas, aut multos homines multas animas? Recte utique dico. Accedant ad deum, una anima est omnium. Si accedentes ad deum, multae animae per caritatem una anima est, et multa corda unum cor; quid agit ipse fons caritatis in Patre et Filio? Nonne ibi magis Trinitas unus est deus? Inde enim nobis caritas uenit, de ipso Spiritu sancto, sicut dicit Apostolus: *caritas dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis*. Si ergo *caritas dei diffusa in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis*, multas animas facit unam animam, et multa corda facit unum cor; quanto magis Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, deus unus, lumen unum, unumque principium?

Cf. 'L'unité des premiers chrétiens de Jérusalem est une image de l'unité de la Trinité', in Berrouard (1988), 480–483.

'principally' (*principaliter*), but from the Son as well, since he is the common spirit, the unity, the love of the Father and the Son. Are we in the presence of anything other than a straightforward model of inner-Trinitarian life based on relations of origin? Whatever we might think of the *filioque* doctrine, it is highly misleading to deduce Augustine's understanding of inner-Trinitarian relations from the identification of the Holy Spirit with gift in books 5 to 7. In this section, indeed, Augustine can give the impression of trying to determine how the Holy Spirit is 'relative' (*ad aliquid*) by comparison with the relation between the Father and the Son. However, only by isolating the treatment of the Holy Spirit in this section from what it is said about him in these same books and then throughout the rest of the treatise, is it possible to uphold a notion of relation which departs from the traditional view that the Father is indeed the 'principle' (*principium*) of divine life and that the difference between the Son and the Holy Spirit is determined by their different relation to this same origin.

8

Love and Knowledge of God

As we approach the second half of the *De Trinitate*, for the purpose of clarity, we could start with a summary of its structure and content as we did for books 1 to 7. Instead, we prefer to espouse Augustine's pedagogy and dwell on the elaborate prelude he composed for this new section to unveil at last the heart of his enterprise. The object of book 8 can be summarized as follows: the utterly unique nature and character of the object of knowledge, God the Trinity, imposes not only greater logical or theological rigour and subtlety than any other object of inquiry, but more crucially a *conversion* of the knowing subject. Paradoxically, the knowing subject, in the case of God the Trinity, is confronted by an 'object' who is in fact a 'subject' whose freedom Augustine had spelled out through his treatment of divine attributes, especially invisibility and immutability, and his doctrine of revelation. What does the process of knowledge become as a result, both with regard to God himself (book 8) and to any other object of knowledge (from book 9 onwards)? Through a careful analysis of the often surprising complexity and density of the argument of book 8, we shall appreciate better the peculiarity of Augustine's way of doing theology, as far removed as it is possible to be from the neutral and detached tone one might normally associate with a 'treatise'.

I. LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS TRUTH

Book 8 starts with an attempt to formulate the issue of knowledge of God with the help of metaphysical categories.[1] After a short summary of the content of the books 5 to 7, concerning the distinction between what can be said relatively and what can be said absolutely with regard to God, Augustine declares that he wants to bring the polemical attitude (*contentio*) of the first seven books to an end and concentrate on his real interest: 'perceive the essence of truth'.[2] Compared with the theological approach to knowledge of God we have

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[1] 8.1–5 (268–274).
[2] Cf. 8.1 (268. Trans. Hill, 241): 'mente cernere essentiam ueritatis'.

highlighted in our sections on the Christology and the pneumatology of the *De Trinitate*, this way of expressing the same issue in the general metaphysical terms of 'quest for the essence of truth' is rather surprising. However, our description of God's attributes of immutability, invisibility, equality and insep- arability has shown that even when Augustine uses metaphysical categories, he does not lose sight of their distinctive Trinitarian meaning. This also applies to this beginning of book 8, in which he seems to adopt a purely metaphysical viewpoint to argue that God can be known as truth only insofar as he is also approached as the highest good, i.e. that knowledge of the highest reality involves the inseparability of intelligence and will, knowledge and love.

The way the topic is introduced is, it must be acknowledged, rather con- voluted. Augustine sums up the result of the polemics of books 5 to 7 in the principle that, in the Trinity, two or three persons are not greater than each one of them. This is the truth about God. God is an intelligible, immutable, and especially a simple reality which cannot be grasped by our 'flesh-bound habit' (*consuetudo carnalis*), nor by our soul (*animus*) which, though intelligible, is neither immutable nor simple.[3] If, on the one hand, man can perceive the truths (*uera*) of creation to a certain extent, truth on the other hand, is beyond his grasp: 'he cannot gaze upon the truth itself which they were created by'.[4] Hence Augustine's injunction: 'do not ask what truth is'.[5] This is a way of restating the principle of God's unknowability which, however, does not mean that we cannot know God, but that God can be known only from his own side and in his own terms, as we have seen in the doctrine of revelation. The same thing is restated here, although in apparently more abstract terms, through the succession of a double rhetorical 'Come, see if you can' (*Ecce uide si potes*):

(i) 'Come, see if you can, . . . God is truth. For it is written that *God is light* (1 John 1.5) not such as these eyes see, but such as the mind sees when it hears "He is truth" '.[6] Familiarity with Augustine's thought easily detects here his theory of illumination, which plays a major role in the *De Trinitate*. *God is truth as he is light, in the sense that he is at the very root of our ability to know*, he is the light in which we perceive everything and we judge the truthfulness of everything. The main implication of this point is that God is not a truth which can be an object of our knowledge in the same way as any other truth.

[3] 8.2 f. (269 f.).
[4] 8.2 (269. Trans. Hill, 242): 'ueritatem autem ipsam qua creata sunt non potest intueri'.
[5] 8.3 (271. Trans. Hill, 243): 'noli quaerere quid sit ueritas'.
[6] Ibid.: 'Ecce uide si potes, . . . deus ueritas est. Hoc enim scriptum est: *Quoniam deus lux est*, non quomodo isti oculi uident, sed quomodo uidet cor cum audit, ueritas est.'

(ii) Such an 'object' requires a kind knowledge of its own: in the passage just quoted, the place where God's light is perceived in the heart. The theme of love (*amor*) is introduced in this context through the second rhetorical 'Come, see if you can': 'Once more come, see if you can. You certainly love what is good.'[7] From this point onwards, Augustine establishes the inseparability between vision and love (*amor*). *God is truth as he is the highest good, which means that he can be known or seen only insofar as he is loved*: 'This is how we should love God, not this or that good but good itself, and we should seek the good of the soul, not the good it can hover over in judgment but the good it can cleave to in love, and what is this but God?'[8]

This last sentence implies that the right way of approaching God is not a proud, self-deluding 'neutral' approach: 'hover over in judgment' (*superuolitare iudicando*). God is approached only through love and love for the highest good necessarily entails adhesion to this good, that is an effort to become good in our turn. This can only result from an act of will (*actio uoluntatis*) and a conversion: 'Where is it to turn to in order to become a good soul but to the good, when this is what it loves and reaches for and obtains?'[9] This is what Augustine meant by saying that God can be seen or known 'not such as these eyes see, but such as the heart sees when it hears "He is truth" '.[10]

i. Ontological goodness of soul and conversion of will

Reference to God as good echoes Augustine's anti-Manichaean line of thought and enables him to restate the ontological goodness of creation, to explain evil as the act of choosing a lesser good instead of good itself—i.e. that which is

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[7] Ibid.: 'Ecce iterum uide si potes. Non amas certe nisi bonum.'

[8] 8.4 (272. Trans. Hill, 244): 'Sic amandus est deus, non hoc et illud bonum, sed ipsum bonum; quaerendum enim bonum animae, non cui superuolitet iudicando, sed cui haereat amando, et quid hoc nisi deus?'

[9] 8.4 (273. Trans. Hill, 244): 'Quo se autem conuertit ut fiat bonus animus nisi ad bonum, cum hoc amat et appetit et adipiscitur?'

[10] 8.3 (271) 'non quomodo isti oculi uident, sed quomodo uidet cor cum audit, ueritas est'. This passage (8.3 f. (271 f.)) throws light on the interpretation of Augustine's 'mysticism'. Just as distorted love (*cupiditas*) prevents the soul from staying into the initial fleeting perception of truth (8.3), so the complementary way of love—inaugurated through the double *Ecce uide si potes*—leads to a stable vision of the Truth through charity: 'You see the Trinity if you see charity' (8.12 (287)). In *De Trinitate* we find the same pattern cogently laid out by Kenney (2005) to reassess Augustine's mysticism in the *Confessions*: 'All experiences of transcendence must give way to the supreme Christian act of confession, the recognition of the soul's need for the mediation of Christ' (p. 11). In Kenney's wake, we could say that in this passage of the *De Trinitate*, the fleeting experience of transcendence gives way to love.

the cause of the goodness of all that exists—and finally to introduce the role of love (*amor*). Then, Augustine suggests here a difference and a correlation between the ontological goodness of soul (*animus*), that is of existence as such, and the ethical goodness acquired through conversion of will. This announces the theological development of the theme of the image of God of books 12 to 14, which is the red line running through the second half of the *De Trinitate*.[11] Our soul is good both because of the art (*ars*) by which it was made, i.e. the truth and goodness of God, and because it entails a God-given dynamism towards the highest good and towards becoming good in our turn through conversion (which always means *being* converted): this is the image of God in us. Therefore:

> The good the soul turns to in order to be good is the good from which it gets its being soul at all. This is when the will accords with nature to perfect the soul in good, when the will turns in love (*diligere*) toward that good by which the soul is what it does not forfeit being, even if the will turns away again.[12]

The slip of the tongue consisting in the use of the verb *diligere* in this sentence must not go unnoticed. Augustine, of course, is not always consistent in the use of his vocabulary and, in the analysis of his thought, terms should never be taken in isolation from the constantly expanding meaning he imaginatively breathes into them. However, within single works or sections of his major works, it is often possible to discern theological connotations to some of his choices in the use or shifts of vocabulary. In the *De Trinitate* this is certainly the case whenever the word *dilectio* is introduced: it will become increasingly clear that it is the term Augustine tends to favour when he talks about divine love.[13] Therefore, the introduction of *dilectio* at this

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[11] Augustine likes to anticipate important themes in a hidden way. It is remarkable that the theme of the image of God is treated just at the end of the seventh book (7.12 (265 ff.)) and at the beginning of the ninth book (9.2 (294)), but that it does not occur explicitly in the eighth book, even though it underlies the passages we are analysing.

[12] 8.5 (274. Trans. Hill, 245):

Ad hoc se igitur animus conuertit ut bonus sit a quo habet ut animus sit. Tunc ergo uoluntas naturae congruit ut perficiatur in bono animus cum illud bonum diligitur conuersione uoluntatis unde est et illud quod non amittitur nec auersione uoluntatis.

[13] Concerning the difference of meaning between *caritas*, *dilectio*, and *amor*, the *De Trinitate* broadly falls into the clear summary given by O'Donovan (1980), 11: '*Dilectio* and *caritas* are words more suited than *amor* to express a love directed to worthy objects, a love which may be approved and encouraged. . . . The rule about *caritas* is consistently observed: there is no *caritas* of evil or wordly things, but only *cupiditas*. . . . Between *dilectio* and *amor*, however, Augustine shows no very clear resolve to distinguish.' A similar opinion is held by Gilson (1943), 177 n. 2. In the *De Trinitate, amor* is predominantly used to encompass all forms of love and acquires a more discriminating ethical connotation when combined with the couple *uti–frui*: 'Ergo aut cupiditate aut caritate, non quo non sit amanda creatura, sed si ad creatorem refertur ille amor, non iam cupiditas sed caritas erit. Tunc enim est cupiditas cum propter se amatur creatura. Tunc

stage of his argument in book 8 already announces the transition from this (apparent) philosophical formulation of the inseparability of knowledge and love to the openly theological stance adopted from the following paragraph onwards.

The treatment of the relation between knowledge and love of good realities (*bona*) and good itself ends with a quotation from the book of Acts Augustine is particularly fond of: 'This good then *is not situated far from anyone of us; for in it we live and move and are* (Act 17.27).'[14] In book 14 of the *De Trinitate*, commenting on this same sentence, Augustine describes the dynamic process of our relation of dependence on God through the distinction between being 'in him' (*in illo*) and being 'with him' (*cum illo*). To be 'in him' means to receive life, movement, and being from God, and refers not only to the body, but, in a more excellent way, to the mind created in God's image. To be 'with him' is the fulfilment of this relation: 'It is man's great misfortune not to be with him without whom he cannot be.' Needless to say, to be 'with him' is the result of knowing and loving God.[15] In book 8 too the quotation from Acts enshrining the 'in him' is immediately followed by the equivalent of the 'with him' (i.e. the fulfilment of our relation with God) through love (*dilectio*) and faith: 'But we also have to stand by and cling to this good in love, in order to enjoy the presence of him from whom we are, whose absence would mean that we could not even be. For since *we are still walking by faith and not by sight* (2 Cor 5.7) we do not yet see God, as the same apostle says *face to face* (1 Cor 13.12). Yet unless we love him even now, we shall never see him.'[16]

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non utentem adiuuat sed corrumpit fruentem' (9.13 (304)). Thus, it is extensively used in books 9 to 11 to describe the dynamics of self-love and knowledge. *Cupiditas* consistently designates the corrupted relation between *uti* and *frui*. *Dilectio*, on the contrary, despite occasional instances in which it simply is used as being synonymous with *amor* (for example 14.10 (435) and 15.41 (518)), tends to designate God's own love both in his inner-Trinitarian life and in his gift, which enable us to love 'out of' this same God-given love. Its use is predominant in book 8 and in the section of book 15 devoted to the Holy Spirit, 15.27–39 (501–517). The most significant quotations concerning the identification of inner-Trinitarian life with *dilectio* are 6.7 (235 f.) and 15.27 (501).

[14] 8.5 (274. Trans. Hill, 245): 'Hoc ergo bonum non longe positum est ab unoquoque nostrum: In illo enim uiuimus et mouemur et sumus.'

[15] 14.16 (444. Trans. Hill, 384): 'Magna itaque hominis miseria est cum illo non esse sine quo non potest esse.'

[16] 8.6 (274 f. Trans. Hill, 245 f.): 'Sed dilectione standum est ad illud et inhaerendum illi ut praesente perfruamur a quo sumus, quo absente nec esse possemus. *Cum enim per fidem adhuc ambulamus non per speciem, nondum* utique *uidemus* deum sicut idem ait *facie ad faciem.* Quem tamen nisi iam nunc diligamus, numquam uidebimus.' Again, the introduction of *dilectio* in this passage is worth noticing for the same reasons mentioned above.

ii. The role of love in faith and vision

Previous remarks concerning the priority of love start to reveal their significance here. In our relation with God we are called to love him without seeing him, through faith. Vision, it has already been noticed, is treated in this book and for the rest of the *De Trinitate* as the synonym of knowledge. Faith is a form of knowledge as well. This was one of the main findings of our section on Christology: Christ is our science (*scientia*) and our wisdom (*sapientia*), which means that faith in him—through the 'useful temporal things' (*utilia temporalia*) of the Incarnation—indeed is real knowledge of God (through the Holy Spirit, of course). Thus faith and vision have the same object and are both a real form of knowledge of God; the only difference between the two is in the modality of this knowledge, which, according to Paul's sentence, in faith is '*through a mirror in an enigma*' and in vision is '*face to face*'.[17]

   This is why Christian life consists in 'loving God through believing in him' (*credendo diligere*). Book 8 deals precisely with the paradox represented by the form of knowledge constituted by faith with regard to love. In faith we do not see God. Therefore, how is it possible to love what we do not see? Or, better, how is it that we discover ourselves enabled to be in a relation of love of God through faith even if we do not yet see him? The apparently 'merely metaphysical' approach of the beginning of book 8, therefore, unveils its full theological presuppositions. Vision, i.e. knowledge of God as truth, is eschatological. The way to this vision in this life is love, which goes hand in hand with that particular form of knowledge constituted by faith and is made possible by the mediation of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

iii. An outline of the argument of book 8

To sum up what we have established so far and make our way through the complex argument of the rest of book 8, let us start by listing its main steps:

   (i) the way towards the intended perception of 'the essence of truth'[18] is suggested through a double 'Come, see if you can': the first one invites us to acknowledge that *God is truth as he is light*, in the sense that he is at the very root of our ability to know; the second one that *God is truth as he is the highest good*, which means that he can be known or seen only insofar as he is loved, thus introducing what will become the

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[17] 1 Cor. 13:12 is often quoted by Augustine, see for example 15.14 (479 f.).
[18] 8.1 (269).

governing line of this book and indeed of the whole second half of the *De Trinitate*: love;[19]

(ii) the role of love (*amor*) in the process of knowledge is developed with reference to 'good realities' (*bona*) and good in itself (*ipsum bonum*). After a description of the way good realities and good in itself are known, the function of love is defined as that which enables us to adhere to the good known and to become good in our turn;[20]

(iii) this general principle is then tested in the case of things which are not known directly, but are objects of belief. The leading line, however, still is that of love, as it appears from the way the question is constantly stated: how do we 'love through believing' (*credendo diligimus*) that which we do not know nor see?[21]

(iv) the issue is narrowed further and applied to the Trinity very much in the same terms: 'How do we love through believing (*credendo diligimus*) God the Trinity whom we do not see?' (i.e. 'How do we love *God*?'). This is illustrated through the example, resumed a few paragraphs later, of the love for the Apostle Paul on the basis of belief in what Scripture says about him, and this example acts as bookends[22] for the real core of the argument, namely love (*dilectio*) for the Trinity;[23]

(v) finally, the book ends with yet another change of perspective which opens up to the following theme of the triadic form of love (*amor* again) and of its application to the life of our mind.[24]

We have examined so far points (i) and (ii). The remaining points shall be the object of the following paragraphs.

II. LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE OF OBJECTS OF BELIEF

Let us start, therefore, from the general question: 'How do we love through believing that which we do not know or see?' The way Augustine looks for an answer to this question becomes rather complex here and will need patient unravelling. Here are the different angles from which he unfolds the issue:

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[19] 8.3 (271) and 8.4 (271 ff.).   [20] 8.4–5 (271–274).   [21] 8.6–7 (274–277).

[22] The bookends are 8.9 (279–284) and 8.13 (289 f.), although the theme is already hinted at in 8.7 (275) and 8.8 (278).

[23] The core of the argument is set forth in the crucial paragraph of 8.8 (277 ff.) and then it is detailed in 8.10–12 (284–289).

[24] 8.14 (290 f.).

(i) he considers the case of generic belief in bodily objects we have never seen but are described to us (for example a town we have never visited);[25] (ii) he also looks at some objects of faith properly speaking;[26] (iii) finally, he concentrates on the example of our love for someone we do not see and we only know through belief, namely the Apostle Paul.[27]

In all these cases, even though the object of our love is not seen but only known through belief, we can love it because we are somehow able to represent it to ourselves through 'notions' (*notitiae*) which we have 'embedded (*infixa*) in us' or which we know 'in terms of the species and genera of things which are either connatural to us or gathered from our experience'.[28] These notions are not the actual object of faith, which as such is not seen nor known, but they play an instrumental role: through them we represent to ourselves that which we are called to believe. For example, in the case of the mystery of the Incarnation, we love what we are asked to believe because we know what a virgin is and what it is to be born. In the case of resurrection, we know what it is to die and to live.[29] However, the example which immediately prepares the issue of love for God the Trinity and which Augustine develops at great length is love for the Apostle Paul—love, that is, for someone *we do not see* and whose knowledge is *only based on belief*.

We have already noticed that there are two occurrences of this example in book 8 which act as bookends for the real core of the argument, that is love for the Trinity. However, as usual in Augustine, the parameters of this example are not exactly the same throughout and when he resumes it after the central passage on *dilectio*, it plays a slightly different role. Comparisons in Augustine have a fluid character which sometimes make attempts to summarize them analytically very difficult. The reason for this is very simple: examples for him are not simply illustrations of a point, nor do they aim at grasping an ineffable reality by assimilating it to objects within our grasp. On the contrary, they reflect the constant attitude our mind must adopt in the presence of realities which infinitely surpass it, that is a constant availability to redefine parameters

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[25] 8.9 (281).

[26] For example miracles, the resurrection, the Incarnation etc., 8.7 (276 f.).

[27] 8.9 (279–284) and 8.13 (289 f.), although the theme is already hinted at in 8.7 (275) and 8.8 (278).

[28] 8.7 (276 f. Trans. Hill, 247): 'secundum species et genera rerum uel natura insita uel experientia collecta'.

[29] 8.7 (277). Far from Augustine's mind, of course, is the intention of establishing an anthropological basis for the knowledge of the Incarnation or the resurrection. On the contrary, his point is precisely that if these realities are believed it is because they are not known and that the necessity to represent them to ourselves through a *similitudo* or a *comparatio* with things we already know (*notitiae*) only plays an instrumental role with a view to adhering to the real object of our faith.

in order to cling as closely as possible to those imposed by the object. Thus, in the first passage[30] love for the Apostle is used in general epistemological terms, whereas in the second passage[31] it becomes an example of theological love for the neighbour. This example is set out in the following terms: when we read a description of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, we are inflamed by love towards him, despite the fact that we do not know nor see him. This sums up the main issue: 'when we discover ourselves in the act of loving something we do not see on the basis of what we believe about it, what do we love and how is it that we love it at all?'

In the case of the Apostle, Augustine argues that we love him because we believe that he is a just mind (*animus iustus*). We love both these elements— to be mind and to be just—because we recognize them or become aware of the fact that somehow they are in us. We know what a mind (*animus*)[32] is because we ourselves also have a mind: 'What after all is so intimately known and so aware of its own existence as that by which things enter into our awareness, namely the mind?'[33] As for justice, we recognize it even if we are not just ourselves, not because we know it from outside, but because we discover it present (*praesens*) within us. This is explained according to Augustine's epistemological principle of knowledge of forms in truth itself (i.e. what is usually referred to as his theory of illumination, although this term is not used here and will require careful analysis further on). The outcome of the argument is phrased as follows: 'So then a man who is believed to be just is loved and appreciated according to that form and truth which the one who is loving perceives and understands in himself; but this form and truth cannot be loved and appreciated according to the standard of anything else.'[34]

We love a just man even if we are not yet just because we see the form of justice in truth itself. One of Augustine's crucial epistemological principles is suggested here which must be carefully understood: justice seen in truth itself is called a form (*forma*). It is not simply an idea or a knowledge which could be envisaged from a uniquely intellectual viewpoint. A form is something with an inherent teleological thrust: its dynamism is not simply fulfilled in the act

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[30] 8.9 (279–284).   [31] 8.13 (289 f.).

[32] The translation of *animus* into English is not easy, since it covers both the meaning of 'soul' and of 'mind'. It is 'the principle of life precisely as rational or spiritual', Hill (1991), 256 n. 6.

[33] 8.9 (279. Trans. Hill, 248): 'Quid enim tam intime scitur seque ipsum esse sentit quam id quo etiam cetera sentiuntur, id est ipse animus?'

[34] 8.9 (283. Trans. Hill, 251): 'Homo ergo qui creditur iustus ex ea forma et ueritate diligitur quam cernit et intellegit apud se ille qui diligit; ipsa uero forma et ueritas non est quomodo aliunde diligatur.'

of making itself known to us, but especially in the act of 'forming' (*formare*), us:

And how will they ever be able to be so but by cleaving to that same form which they behold, in order to be formed by it and become just minds, now no longer merely perceiving and saying that the mind is just which 'knowingly and deliberately in life and in conduct gives each man what is his own', but themselves now living justly and conducting themselves justly by giving each man what is his own, in order to *owe no man anything but to love one another* (Rom 13.8).[35]

This is why the starting point of Augustine's epistemology tends to be love. We discover ourselves within a movement of love or adhesion to a quality which has not yet 'formed' us, which does not yet belong to us, which we have not yet become and which we do not see.[36] When we enquire into the nature of this movement of love, we become aware of the fact that it rests upon something already present in us.[37] Knowledge is seen as intimately related to the process of love. We become aware of a form which we already love; we have discovered it already present in us; we increasingly know or see it insofar as its dynamism reaches its intended end, i.e. that of 'forming' us.

In the end the example of the Apostle has established the following points:

- love comes first, triggered in us by belief in what we hear about the Apostle we do not see;
- if we look into the nature of this love we discover that its object is a form already present in us;
- this form is known in truth itself;
- this form entails love because it is something which not only wants to be known, but also wants to form and transform us and does so through love.

All this however amounts to saying that we love and know the Apostle Paul in God and through God. God in fact is (i) the truth and the light in which we see the form of justice and (ii) he is the very love which enables us to adhere to the form of justice and to be formed by it so as to become just in our turn.[38]

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[35] 8.9 (283. Trans. Hill, 251):

Quod unde esse poterunt nisi inhaerendo eidem ipsi formae quam intuentur ut inde formentur et sint iusti animi, non tantum cernentes et dicentes iustum esse animum 'qui scientia atque ratione in uita ac moribus sua quique distribuit', sed etiam ut ipsi juste vivant justeque morati sint sua cuique distribuendo ut nemini quidquam debeant nisi ut inuicem diligant?

[36] Cf. 9.18 (309 f.).   [37] Cf. 10.1–4 (311–316).   [38] 8.13 (289 f.).

III. LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRINITY

From this basis, Augustine's reader is led into the core of the issue: knowledge of the Trinity. However, the very formulation of this issue needs to be shaped according to the particularity or rather the unicity of the object of knowledge. Augustine's question is not: 'How do we know the Trinity?'. On the contrary the question is: 'How then do we love by believing this Trinity which we do not know?'[39] The issue of knowledge of God is not dealt with as the condition upon which the possibility of relation with God would rest. On the contrary, the relation with God, or we might say 'from God', is the condition upon which the possibility of knowledge of God rests, and this relation is envisaged as being a reality already. Augustine's starting point is the fact that we actually discover ourselves in the act of loving God the Trinity through faith, that is to say even if we do not yet enjoy his vision.

The different ways in which Augustine formulates the epistemological questions in the same paragraph all confirm that he is looking for the object of our love: do we love the Trinity in whom we believe (*credendo diligere*) according to the same general and specific notions which explain our love for the Apostle Paul? Or again, do we love the Trinity in whom we believe, from a likeness of the Trinity (*ex parilitate rei*), as if there were many such trinities and we had experience of some of them and thus we could believe according to standard of likeness impressed in us or in terms of specific and generic notions that that Trinity is of the same sort? Indeed, when we say and believe that there is a Trinity, we know what a Trinity is, because we know what is 'to be three': but this is not what we love (*sed hoc non diligimus*). The climax of this carefully constructed and progressively emphasized stress on the radical difference between love for the 'God-whom-we-do-not-know-though-believing-in-him' and any other form of knowledge, is finally reached in the following statements:

Perhaps then what we love is not what any trinity is but the Trinity that God is. So what we love in the Trinity is what God is. But we have never seen or known another God, because God is one, he alone is God whom we love by believing, even though we have not yet seen him.[40]

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[39] 8.8 (278. Trans. Hill, 247, modified): 'Quomodo igitur eam trinitatem quam non nouimus credendo diligimus?' This question expresses the paradox of God's unknowability mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: we do not know him and yet we are in relation of love with him.

[40] 8.8 (278 f. Trans. Hill 247, modified):

An uero diligimus non quod omnis trinitas sed quod trinitas deus? Hoc ergo diligimus in trinitate, quod deus est. Sed deum nullum alium uidimus aut nouimus quia unus est deus, ille solus quem nondum uidimus et credendo diligimus.

No surprise if we cannot find any likeness, comparison or notion to explain why we love the Trinity. In fact, what we love in the Trinity is that he *is God* and we do not know any other god, because 'God is one' (*unus est deus*). *Unus* means here unique, unparalleled.[41] As a result, Augustine can resolutely narrow down the issue in these terms:

Thus it is that in this question we are occupied with about the Trinity and about knowing God, the only thing we really have to see is what true love is; well in fact, simply what love is.[42]

Dilectio is of course here to be understood in its full theological meaning. Therefore, on the basis of the example of the love for the Apostle which immediately prepares the issue of love for God the Trinity, Augustine's line of investigation can be reformulated as follows:

- we discover ourselves in the act of loving (*diligere*) the Trinity we do not see but in whom we believe;
- in the case of the Apostle, what we loved was the form of justice known in truth itself. In the case of God the Trinity this point undergoes two fundamental changes: (i) what we love in the Trinity is that he is God; (ii) this God is not a form we could know in us or next to (*apud*) us in truth itself because he himself is the truth and the light in which we see every form;
- the role of *dilectio* also fundamentally changes because, in the knowledge of God the Trinity, love is not simply that through which we adhere to what is known, but is *the very thing known*. Augustine can say that 'in this question we are occupied with about the Trinity and about knowing God, the only thing we really have to see is what true love is; well in fact, simply what love is,'[43] precisely because God is *dilectio* and because that which we love when we believe in the Trinity is *dilectio* itself.

Let us look into this argument in more detail.

First of all, Augustine identifies love and truth. Having stated that the issue of knowledge of God is identical to that of true love (*uera dilectio*), he corrects himself by declaring that it is an issue of *dilectio* as such. In fact, either love is true or it is not love at all, but becomes covetousness (*cupiditas*).[44] He is

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[41] Cf. 9.1 (292. Trans. Hill, 270): 'Trinitatem certe quaerimus, non quamlibet sed illam trinitatem quae deus est, uerusque ac summus et solus deus'.

[42] 8.10 (284. Trans. Hill, 251):

Quapropter non est praecipue uidendum in hac quaestione quae de trinitate nobis est et de cognoscendo deo nisi quid sit uera dilectio, immo uero quid sit dilectio.

[43] 8.10 (284). Latin text above.   [44] 8.10 (284).

not dealing any more with examples like that of the love for the Apostle which understandably might be seen as slightly artificial. Love is used here in its full theological meaning, carefully grounded on the inseparability Scripture establishes between love for God and love for neighbour. In the New Testament the precepts of love of God and love of neighbour are inseparable to the point that even when only one of the two is mentioned, the other is necessarily and systematically implied. Augustine's argument is based in particular on some passages from the Epistle of St John: '*God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*'[45] and '*beloved, let us love one another; for love (dilectio) is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God*'.[46] The content of these two sentences can be detailed as follows: God is love (*dilectio* or *caritas*); love is from God; the beloved (*dilectissimi*)—i.e. those who have been very much loved by God, those who participate in God's love—receive the injunction '*let us love one another*'. Then, John states as a matter of fact that '*he who loves is born of God and knows God*' and that '*he who abides in love abides in God*'. This could be understood in two ways. Either as meaning that *if* one loves he is born from God, knows God, and remains in God as a consequence. Or—and this is Augustine's understanding of this passage and indeed, we would argue, John's intended meaning——as implying that the very fact, and therefore *the act*, of loving *is* the manifestation and the consequence of being born from God, of knowing God, and of remaining in him. In Augustine's own words,

This connexion [i.e. that of the two passages from 1 John quoted above] shows clearly and sufficiently how this brotherly love—it is of course brotherly love that we love each other with—is proclaimed on the highest authority not only bo be from God but also simply to be God. When therefore we love our brother out of love, we love our brother out of God; and it is impossible that we should not love especially the love that we love our brother with. Thus we infer that those two commandements cannot exist without each other: because God is love the man who loves love certainly loves God; and the man who loves his brother must love love.[47]

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[45] 1 John 4:16.   [46] 1 John 4:7.

[47] 8.12 (288. Trans. Hill, 253 f.):

Ista contextio satis aperteque declarat eandem ipsam fraternam dilectionem (nam fraterna dilectio est qua diligimus inuicem) non solum ex deo sed etiam deum esse tanta auctoritate praedicari. Cum ergo de dilectione diligimus fratrem, de deo diligimus fratrem; nec fieri potest ut eandem dilectionem non praecipue diligamus qua fratrem diligimus. Vnde colligitur duo illa praecepta non posse sine inuicem. *Quoniam* quippe *deus dilectio est*, deum certe diligit qui diligit dilectionem; dilectionem autem necesse est diligat qui diligit fratrem.

Cf. in *Jo. eu. tr* 17.8 (CCL 36, 175): 'Dilige ergo proximum et intuere in te unde diligis proximum; ibi uidebis, ut poteris, deum.' This relation between the *dilectio* out of which we love our neighbour and the '*dilectio*–Holy Spirit–God' is not a straightforward identification, but has to be interpreted in the light of Augustine's doctrine of the Holy Spirit. *Dilectio* never becomes our possession because the Holy Spirit–*dilectio* is given in such a way that *he gives himself as*

We are thus prepared for the answer to the question which underlies the whole book: 'How is it that we discover ourselves enabled to love God the Trinity we do not see?' What do we know which triggers this love? Augustine's answer is that love for God and for the neighbour has no other reason than love itself, nor any other trigger than love itself, since God *is* love. And this love is God to the extent that the vocabulary of vision usually reserved to the eschatological aspect of knowledge applies to the act of love already now (which obviously is eschatological as well, insofar as what we expect is already given and present now).

Nobody is authorized to say that he does not know God: 'Let him love his brother, and love that love; after all, he knows the love he loves with better than the brother he loves.'[48] In the example of the Apostle, love for him was based on the form of justice present in us. In contrast, in the case of love for God and for the neighbour, what is present in us is not only the form of love to which we then have to adhere through love. Augustine states that: 'There now, he can already have God better known to him than his brother, certainly better known because more present, better known because more inward to him, better known because more sure.'[49] God who is love is known at the highest possible degree because he is the most interior thing,[50] he is the most present thing, he is the most certain thing by being the ground of any other certainty. God-*dilectio* is both the form we know, so to speak, and that through which this form trans*forms* and 'forms' (*informat*) us: 'Embrace love which is God, and embrace God with love.'[51] Augustine is aware of the counter-intuitive aspect of this explanation and restates it in all the possible ways so as to make it crystal clear. He anticipates a possible objection: 'Yes, I can see charity, and to the best of my ability grasp it with my mind, and I believe the scripture when it says that *God is charity and whoever abides in charity abides in God* (1 Jn 4.16). But when I see it, I don't see any trinity in it.' And then, in the most explicit way he states: 'O but you do see the Trinity if you see charity.'[52]

God. He remains the Lord in his self-gift. Discovery of our ability to love—*diligere*—entails the acknowledgment of our dependence on God. Gift means presence of the Giver. Hence the epistemological value of *dilectio* for the knowledge of God.

[48] 8.12 (286. Trans. Hill, 253): 'Diligat fratrem et diligat eandem dilectionem; magis enim nouit dilectionem qua diligit quam fratrem quem diligit.'

[49] Ibid.: 'Ecce iam potest notiorem deum habere quam fratrem, plane notiorem quia praesentiorem, notiorem quia interiorem, notiorem quia certiorem.'

[50] *conf.* 3.11 (CCL 27, 33. Trans. Chadwick, 43): 'Tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo.'

[51] 8.12 (286. Trans. Hill, 253): 'Amplectere dilectionem deum et dilectione amplectere deum.'

[52] 8.12 (287. Trans. Hill, 253): 'At enim caritatem uideo, et quantum possum eam mente conspicio, et credo scripturae dicenti: *Quoniam deus caritas est, et qui manet in caritate in deo*

In the case of God the Trinity, therefore, the epistemological issue is reformulated in an absolutely unique way. Since God is *dilectio*, the distinction between the object of our love and the act though which we love it does not apply any more. What we love in the Trinity is that he is God, i.e. that he is *dilectio*. And since *dilectio* either is *ex Deo* or is not *dilectio* at all, then we are no more in the condition of those who have to love something they do not yet possess on the basis of a belief which they deem true for whatever reason. On the contrary, we are in the situation of those who already know, already see, already love out of God's *dilectio*, i.e. *propter Deum*. And this is possible because the very act which enables us to love and therefore know God is the result of the economic enactment of the act through which God loves and knows himself, i.e. of the mystery of the Trinity. This is followed by yet again another formulation of the peculiar way—peculiar at least from our post-Enlightenment perspective—in which Augustine approaches the epistemological issue when the Trinity is concerned. He is not trying to establish the *possibility* of knowing God, but he is trying to give an account of the *reality* of our knowledge of God: 'I will help you if I can to see that you see it',[53] which does not mean 'I will show you how you can see God', but could be rendered as follows: 'I will help you to become aware of the fact that you actually already see God.'

IV. LOVE OF LOVE ITSELF

A final touch to this argument concerning the nature of *dilectio* must not go unnoticed. Augustine resorts to the example of the word. By its nature, a word always exists in the act of signifying something. In the same way, love is by definition always loving something. This can be linked to one of the most puzzling aspects of the treatment of love not only here in the *De Trinitate* but also in several other of Augustine's works: the inseparability of love for God and love for one's brother implies that, when we love our neighbour, we love love itself.[54]

On the basis of the identity between God and love, this simply means that we love our neighbour and God *propter deum*. *Propter deum* does not

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manet. Sed cum eam uideo non in ea uideo trinitatem. Immo uero uides trinitatem si caritatem uides.'

[53] 8.12 (287. Trans. Hill, 253): 'Sed commonebo si potero ut uidere te uideas.'
[54] 8.12 (286).

simply mean here 'because of', i.e. in obedience to the precept received by God or in order to please God or to be more deeply united with God. The assertion that we love God and our neighbour *propter deum* means that we love them 'out of God'. In fact, the charity poured by the Holy Spirit is our hearts is not simply a capital transferred into our bank account, so to speak, out of which we draw what we need each time we have to perform an act of love. On the contrary, our love for the neighbour constantly flows from the love of God, i.e. the love which is God, and consequently the love of love *who is* God.

On this basis it is possible to understand Augustine's conclusion: 'Faith therefore is a great help for knowing and loving God, not as though he were altogether unknown or altogether not loved without it, but for knowing him all the more clearly and loving him all the more firmly.'[55] Only by completely severing this sentence from everything which precedes it, could one understand it as meaning that faith is not the only way in which we know God and that it only improves a knowledge which would be available to us from other means, say philosophy or whatever.[56] In reality, the sentence sums up the elements Augustine has been discussing, intertwining, relating to each other: love (*dilectio*), faith, knowledge, or vision. Faith (or belief) is the starting point in each of the examples given throughout the book. Something needs to be the object of belief because it cannot be known nor seen directly. And yet, through faith we do love it even though we do not see it. Or, rather—and this is precisely the hinge of the argument—we love that towards which faith points, that which it signifies, even through we do not know nor see it. As a result, the question arises: how is it that we discover ourselves enabled to love something we do not see, but we believe? In the case of God the Trinity, however, the issue needs to be reformulated in a different way. Since God *is* love, the distinction between the object of our love and the act through which we love it does not apply any more. What we love in the Trinity is that he is God, i.e. that he is love. And since love either is from God (*ex deo*) or is not love at all, then we are no more in the condition of those who have to love something they do not yet possess on the basis of a belief which they deem true for whatever reason.

[55] 8.13 (290. Trans. Hill, 255): 'Valet ergo fides ad cognitionem et ad dilectionem dei, non tamquam omnino incogniti aut omnino non dilecti, sed quo cognoscatur manifestius et quo firmius diligatur.'

[56] Thus Sullivan (1963), 160 f. n. 97. On the contrary, Bailleux (1975), 547, reads the passage from 8.13 (290) just quoted like us, not in relation to knowledge of God acquired independently from faith (for example through Platonic philosophy), but in relation to the wisdom already somehow inaugurated in the science of faith. In his argument, however, not enough weight is given to the identification of science and wisdom, faith and truth in Christ.

On the contrary, we are in the situation of those who already know, already see, already love out of God's love, i.e. *propter deum*, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

V. THE THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE ARGUMENT OF BOOK 8

Of course, even though it never mentions the Holy Spirit or soteriology or Christology, book 8 presupposes the theological bases we have collected from the whole treatise in our previous chapters and begins to unfold their episte-mological implications. This task is then carried on in the second half of the *De Trinitate*, where Augustine focuses on the epistemological consequences of the priority of love in the process of knowledge highlighted in book 8 and puts them at the service of the renewal of the image of God through knowledge of God (*in agnitione Dei*). Therefore, to bring this analysis of book 8 to its conclusion, we need to make explicit its roots in the Christology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and the doctrine of revelation of the treatise and to see how it introduces the argument of the second half of the *De Trinitate*.

The best summary of book 8 is encapsulated in the following pregnant statement 'O but you do see the Trinity if you see charity.'[57] Christology and pneumatology are the proper context of this sentence: the 'vision of charity' refers to Christ's identity and salvific role. Christ's identity, deeds, words, and death on the cross are 'eloquent': they allow us 'to see' how much God loved us. They are the object of the science (*scientia*) of faith, which through Christ's Incarnation, mediation, and sacrifice is identical, even though still only through a mirror, to the wisdom (*sapientia*) of vision. Then, of course, the identity between 'seeing' the Trinity and 'seeing' charity also refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the very love (*dilectio*) of the Father and the Son.

Significantly, this love corresponding to the knowledge and vision of God the Trinity is presented not as a possibility, but from the viewpoint of its actuality, as something we can see because it already is at work in our lives, us who already have believed in Christ and have received the Holy Spirit. This is betrayed especially by the crucial question raised in book 8, namely 'How do we love through believing that which we do not see?' Such a puzzling way of framing the issue should not go unnoticed. To understand it, we are helped by the beginning of book 9, where we are given a new version of what Augustine

[57] 8.12 (287).

intended to do in the previous book and indeed of what constitutes the aim of the whole second half of the *De Trinitate*.[58] Through the association of a series of scriptural sentences deeply embedded in Augustine's own thought, the prologue of book 9 restates the proper scriptural and theological setting for the epistemological issue. Paradoxically, it is not a matter of us knowing God but of God knowing us: '*If anybody thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But anyone who loves God, this man is known by him* (1 Cor 8.2).'[59] When Augustine says in book 8 that 'thus it is that in this question we are occupied with about the Trinity and about knowing God, the only thing we really have to see is what true love is; well in fact, simply what love is',[60] and he ascertains the identity between being *in dilectione* and being 'in light' (*in lumine*),[61] he has in mind this unique kind of knowledge of God which Scripture defines as 'being known by God'.

This is echoed by the passive form of the verbs indicating God's action in book 14, where Augustine develops the theme of the image of God:[62] 'being known' is inseparably a 'being reminded, being converted and being reconciled', or as he says elsewhere, 'being enlightened'.[63] A positive 'turning away' (*auersio*) on our part needs to be overcome by God's action. Revelation coincides with reconciliation. The result of this divine action of revelation, conversion, and reconciliation is that we believe and we are enabled to love. We discover ourselves in the situation of those who love through believing and wonder how: 'How do we love through believing what we do not see?'[64]

In short, we are caught in a movement towards God, *ad ipsum*, as we shall see when exploring the image of God. On the basis of a sentence from Philippians,[65] Augustine defines this movement, this dynamism as a 'stretching out' (*extensio*):[66] 'Perfection in this life, he [Paul] is saying, is nothing but forgetting what lies behind and stretching out to what lies ahead intently.

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[58] Characteristically, at the beginning of almost every book of the *De Trinitate*, the transition to a new topic includes either a summary of the previous book or a slightly different rendering of its content. This often represents an invaluable help in detecting the deepest strands of Augustine's thought. Cf. 2.2 (81); 3.3 (128); 7.1 (244 f.); 8.1 (268 f.); 9.2 (294 f.); 10.1 (310 f.); 12.1 (356); 13.1 (381); 15.1 (460).

[59] 9.1 (292. Trans. Hill, 270): '*Si quis se putat aliquid scire, nondum scit quemadmodum scire oporteat. Quisquis autem diligit deum, hic cognitus est ab illo.*'

[60] 8.10 (284).   [61] 8.12 (288).

[62] See for example the *renouatur, reformatur, beatificatur* of 14.18 (446) and the *commemorari* of 14.21 (450) etc.

[63] Cf. 7.5 (253); 14.18 (446); and 14.21 (450).

[64] 8.8 (278).   [65] Phil. 3:13, cf. 9.1 (292).

[66] A word he had used already with regard to the image of God: 'De natura humanae mentis diximus quia et si tota contempletur ueritatem, imago dei est . . . Et . . . quantumcumque se extenderit in id quod aeternum est tanto magis inde formatur ad imaginem dei' (12.10 (364 f.)).

The safest intent, after all, until we finally get where we are intent on getting and where we are stretching out to, is that of the seeker.'[67] We find ourselves in the condition of those who do not master the object of their knowledge (and their love), who cannot treat it as a possession, as something at their disposal. Applied to God, such a notion of knowledge would be 'a dangerous piece of presumption'.[68] The answer to the question 'How do we love through believing what we do not see?' is that we are known, reminded, converted, reconciled, enlightened by God and thus granted the form of knowledge of God belonging to our present condition, that is faith: 'The certitude of faith at least initiates knowledge; but the certitude of knowledge will not be completed until after this life when we see *face to face* (1 Cor 13.12)'[69]—a faith which indeed 'does not see' and which, nonetheless, through love, is qualified as vision.[70] The answer to the question 'How is it that we discover ourselves in the act of loving and believing God even though we do not (yet) see him?' is the identity between love and vision: 'Oh but you do see the Trinity if you see charity.'[71] This paradox is the only theologically adequate way of setting the epistemological issue.

Thus, the first key for the understanding of the second half of the *De Trinitate* is that knowledge of God is something we can approach only from the viewpoint of its actuality, that is in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Enquiry into the way God has revealed himself through reconciling us to himself is only retrospective. Our fundamental threefold dependence on God for our life, knowledge, and love both in creation and in reconciliation becomes object of knowledge only as this same dependence is 'ac-knowleged' in cultus, 'worship' (which is identified with wisdom).[72] This crucial role attributed to

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[67] 9.1 (292. Trans. Hill, 270): 'Perfectionem in hac uita dicit non aliud quam ea quae retro sunt obliuisci et in ea quae ante sunt extendi secundum intentionem. Tutissima est enim quaerentis intentio donec apprehendatur illud quo tendimus et quo extendimur.' Bailleux (1975), 549 n. 60, brings together this passage of book 9 with two other sentences where Augustine urges the theologian to be always seeking for God: 15.2 (461) 'Nam et quaeritur ut inueniatur dulcius et inuenitur ut quaeratur auidius. . . . Ad hoc ergo debet esse homo intellegens ut requirat deum' and 12.10 (365) 'quantumcumque se extenderit in id quod aeternum est tanto magis inde formatur ad imaginem dei' and establishes a comparison with Gregory of Nyssa's *epectasis*. Whereas for Gregory of Nyssa the movement of desire and the discovery never end, Augustine considers the vision of God as a rest. Cf. *ep. Jo.* iv.6 (PL 35, 2008): 'Tota uita christiani boni, sanctum desiderium est. Quod autem desideras, nondum uides; sed desiderando capax efficeris, ut cum uenerit quod uideas, impleris . . . extendendo facis capaciorem: sic Deus differendo extendit desiderium, desiderando extendit animum, extendendo facit capacem. Desideremus ergo, fratres, quia implendi sumus.'

[68] 9.1 (292. Trans. Hill, 270): 'periculosa praesumptio'.

[69] 9.1 (292 f. Trans. Hill, 270): 'Certa enim fides utcumque inchoat cognitionem; cognitio uero certa non perficietur nisi post hanc uitam cum uidebimus facie ad faciem.'

[70] Cf. 8.12 (286).   [71] 8.12 (287).   [72] 14.15 (442 f.).

love has far-reaching consequences for knowledge as such which Augustine details in most of the second half of the *De Trinitate*. From the vantage point of love (*dilectio*) he can detect the impasse of any pretension to independent philosophical enterprise,[73] of any attempt to 'philosophize without Christ'.[74] Only love (*dilectio*) restores knowledge and finally enables philosophers to yield to the injunction which resumes philosophical enterprise as a whole, namely 'Know yourself'.

[73] Cochrane (1940), 406 f.   [74] 13.24 (416) and *conf.* 3.8 (CCL 27, 30).

9

Knowledge and its Paradoxes

'The mind itself assembles notions both of bodily things through the senses of the body, and of non-bodily things through itself':[1] with this sentence Augustine announces the lengthy discussion on the process of knowledge in the second half of book 9. Although he starts with intellectual knowledge in books 9 and 10 and reserves the description of knowledge from senses until book 11, for the purpose of clarity, we prefer to follow the reverse order. The sentence just quoted states that mind collects the notions from empirical knowledge: for this reason, we shall start by a description of knowledge from the senses. Then, the same sentence mentions 'non-bodily things' (*incorporeae res*) that the mind knows through itself. Behind this expression, there is Augustine's theory of illumination which is not treated *ex professo* in any of the books of the treatise, but recurs in several passages throughout it. For this reason, after the description of knowledge from the senses, it will be useful to gather a synthetic overview of the doctrine of illumination from all these passages. After that, we shall be better equipped to tackle Augustine's description of the process of knowledge and of its relation to the doctrine of the Trinity.

I. KNOWLEDGE FROM THE SENSES

i. Vision

As an example of knowledge from the senses, Augustine chooses vision. Indirectly, this provides us with many useful hints for the interpretation of the doctrine of illumination, which Augustine illustrates precisely through resorting to the example of vision.[2]

   In vision[3] there is a (i) visible external object (*res uisibilis*) which has its own aspect (*forma corporis*), (ii) the vision (*uisio* or *imago corporis impressa*)

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[1] 9.3 (296. Trans. Hill, 273): 'Mens ergo ipsa sicut corporearum rerum notitias per sensus corporis colligit sic incorporearum per semetipsam.'
[2] 12.24 (378).   [3] Described in 11.2–5 (334–339).

and (iii) the intention to see (*animi intentio* or *uoluntas animi*). A crucial distinction has to be made between the visible aspect of the external object (*forma corporis*) and the modification of the sense of sight resulting from the vision (*forma in sensu uidentis*). The difference between the two is compared to that existing between the form of the seal and the form the seal impresses on the wax when it is pressed against it. As long as the seal touches the wax, the difference between the two forms can only be established with the help of reason. And yet, this distinction is very important: it shows that the modification of the sense we call 'vision' is the result of an external body; Augustine goes as far as to say that it is begotten from the external body.[4] We are indeed 'in touch' with the material world outside us. The word Augustine uses to describe this 'impression' is *informatio*: 'the sense (is) informed' (*sensus informatus*); 'information of the sense' (*informatio sensus*).[5] At the same time, the sense is at the borderline between the body and the soul, so that the form impressed in it by the external body[6] pertains both to the body of the seeing subject and, through his body, to his soul: 'it happens in the body, and through the body in the soul; it happens in the sense, which is neither without body nor without soul'.[7]

That which applies the sight to the object seen so that the form of the latter can 'inform' the former is the will (*uoluntas*):[8] 'the will exerts such force in coupling the two together that it applies the sense to be formed to the thing that is being looked at and holds it there once it is formed'.[9] Already at this most elementary stage of the process of knowledge, we are warned about the

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[4] 11.3 (336): 'gignit tamen formam uelut similitudinem suam quae fit in sensu cum aliquid uidendo sentimus'.

[5] Ibid. This recalls the way the *forma* of *iustitia* informs us so that we become *iusti* in our turn, cf. 8.9 (283).

[6] This does not prevent Augustine from sharing Plato's odd theory that sight results from rays spreading out from the eyes, cf. 11.4 (338) and 9.3 (296), and Plato, *Timaeus* 45b–d (*Platonis Opera*, ed. Ioannes Burnet, Oxford: Clarendon, 1902, vol. IV, 45b–d); for other possible philosophical sources of this theory cf. notes CCL 50, 338. Cf. also 10.10 (324), where it is said: 'Quapropter sicut ea quae oculis aut ullo alio corporis sensu requiruntur ipsa mens quaerit (ipsa enim etiam sensus carnis intendit, tunc autem inuenit cum in ea quae requiruntur idem sensus uenit)': in this light, the ray theory seems to be a way of understanding the activity of the mind in and through knowledge from senses.

[7] 11.5 (338. Trans. Hill, 307): 'ita pertinet ut et in corpore fiat et per corpus in anima; fit enim in sensu qui neque sine corpore est neque sine anima'. Augustine's treatment of knowledge from senses in the *De Trinitate* is less concerned with stating the independence and separation of *animus* from sensation than in earlier works, cf. *Gn. litt.* 3.5 (CSEL 28/1, 67): 'sentire non est corporis, sed animae per corpus' and *quant.* 23.41 (CSEL 89, 182): 'sensum puto esse non latere animam quod patitur corpus', inspired from the Plotinian μὴ λαθεῖν. Instead, in the *De Trinitate*, the stress lies on the active role of the will.

[8] This is reminiscent of the role of *amor* with regard to *bonum* in 8.9 (283).

[9] 11.5 (339. Trans. Hill, 307): 'Voluntas autem tantam habet uim copulandi haec duo, ut et sensum formandum admoueat ei rei quae cernitur et in ea formatum teneat.'

extraordinary power of the will on the knowing subject. If, by its violence, this attention (*intentio*) ignites into covetousness (*cupiditas*) or lust (*libido*), it affects not only the senses, but the very body of the knowing subject.[10]

ii. Memory

The following stage in the process of knowledge is represented by the act of remembering things previously known from senses and stored in memory.[11]

Again, we find here a distinction between (i) the likeness of the object known from senses stored in memory (*similitudo in memoria*), then (ii) the sight of the mind which goes back to memory (*acies recordantis animi*) and finally, and crucially, (iii) the role of the will (*uoluntas*) to turn the sight of mind towards memory and to join it to the likeness stored in it. Also in the case of memory, the distinction between the likeness stored in memory and that which is formed in the *acies recordantis animi* can be established through reason.

Most importantly, however, the power of the will in this process of remembering is such that it can result in self-deception. The will can turn the sight (*acies*) of our mind towards our memory with such cogency that it can become impossible to distinguish that which we remember from the reality surrounding us. This form of alienation worries Augustine so much that he does not hesitate to illustrate it not only through the examples of dreams, seers, and mad people, but also with the help of a surprisingly salacious anecdote.[12] The role played by memory with regard to knowledge of eternal realities will be considered later on. As far as bodily realities are concerned, Augustine openly declares that no knowledge of them is possible which is not gathered from external reality through the senses and stored in the memory.[13] In the end, the point he stresses the most is the role of the will. Already with regard to knowledge of external and bodily reality, the power of the will is enormous, depending on whether it joins (*conciliat, coniungit*) the knowing faculty with the object to be known or it separates them (*disiungit, separat*). Just as the act of turning the sight to a visible object can be called a conversion (*conuersio*), so the failings of knowledge, of senses, or of memory are the result of a turning away (*auersio*) which Augustine tends to describe through examples loaded with ethical overtones.[14] If we go wrong, it depends on the will: 'How is it that we often think false things. . . . It must be that the will . . . , as coupler and separator of this kind of things, leads the thinking attention where it pleases through the stores of memory in order to be formed, and prompts it to take

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[10] 11.5 (339). This is illustrated through the example of the chameleon and Jacob's herds.
[11] 11.6–7 (339–343).   [12] 11.7 (341 f.).   [13] 11.14 (351).   [14] 11.15 (352).

something from here out of the things we remember, something else from there, in order to think things we do not remember.'[15] Before we go further in the investigation of the ethical dimension of this stage of knowledge, however, we need to complete our overview of Augustine's epistemology.

II. ILLUMINATION

Interpretation of the notoriously complex issue of Augustine's doctrine of illumination can benefit from one of the main characteristics of this theory, namely the analogy with sight. To start with some general observations, it is certainly not an accident if the description of knowledge from senses in the eleventh book focuses on sight.[16] Then, the vocabulary of vision is prominent in the passages of the *De Trinitate* directly or indirectly devoted to illumination:[17] *intueor*,[18] *cerno*,[19] *conspicio*,[20] and *uideo*.[21] The parallel with sight is explicitly put forward for the main description of illumination, in a well-known passage from the twelfth book:

The conclusion we should rather draw is that the nature of the intellectual mind has been so established by the disposition of its creator that it is subjoined to intelligible things in the order of nature, and so it sees such truths in a kind of non-bodily light that is *sui generis*, just as our eyes of flesh see all these things that lie around us in this bodily light, a light they were created to be receptive of and to match.[22]

The comparison between sight and illumination, in this passage, introduces an element which was not mentioned in Augustine's description of sensible vision in the eleventh book, namely *light*. In book 11,[23] we saw that in vision there is (i) a visible external object (*res uisibilis*) which has its own

[15] 11.17 (353 f. Trans. Hill, 317): 'cur plerumque falsa cogitamus ... nisi quia uoluntas illa quam coniunctricem ac separatricem ... formandam cogitantis aciem per condita memoriae ducit ut libitum est, et ad cogitanda ea quae non meminimus ex eis quae meminimus aliud hinc, aliud inde, ut sumat impellit?'

[16] 11.2–5 (334–339).

[17] The passages we are referring to are 8.7–9 (275–284); 8.13 (289 f.); 9.9–11 (301 ff.); 10.2 (312 ff.); 12.23–24 (376 ff.); and 14.21 (449 ff.).

[18] 8.9 (283); 9.9 (301); 10.2 (313).   [19] 8.9 (283); 8.13 (290); 9.11 (303); 10.2 (313).

[20] 8.13 (290) and 10.2 (313).   [21] 12.24 (378) and 14.21 (450).

[22] 12.24 (378. Trans. Hill, 336):

Sed potius credendum est mentis intellectualis ita conditam esse naturam ut rebus intelligibilibus naturali ordine disponente conditore subiuncta sic ista uideat in quadam luce sui generis incorporea quemadmodum oculus carnis uidet quae in hac corporea luce circumadiacent, cuius lucis capax eique congruens est creatus.

[23] 11.2–5 (334–339).

aspect (*forma corporis*), (ii) the vision (*uisio* or *imago corporis impressa*) and (iii) the intention to see (*animi intentio* or *uoluntas animi*). We also mentioned Augustine's odd theory that sight results from rays spreading out from the eyes, which he shares with Plato and other philosophers. In the passage just quoted, the stress is on the twofold condition of the very possibility of seeing, namely the surrounding physical light and the 'capacity' or 'congruity' of the eye with regard to this light. In the same way, for our mind, the stress lays on a '*kind* of light'—notice the *quadam*—incorporeal and of its own kind (*sui generis*) in which it is possible to see intelligible realities.

The *quadam* and the qualification *sui generis* remind us of the highly metaphorical nature of this theory of illumination. Augustine does not conceive intellectual life as if it really was an act of seeing requiring a kind of light of its own. The aspect of the life of the mind this doctrine is meant to illustrate is rather our ability to define and to judge that which we know from senses. In the *De Trinitate*, the doctrine of illumination concerns almost always actions expressed by verbs of judgement: *approbare*,[24] *improbare*,[25] *reprehendere*,[26] *iudicare*.[27] It also intervenes in the process of the definition of notions of kind and species (*notitiae generales aut speciales*),[28] or in thinking (*cogitare*),[29] but this will require closer analysis. Metaphorical language plays an even more striking role when Augustine refers to the 'place' where this illumination occurs. Often, spatial vocabulary simply states that it is a 'place' above us: *supra mentem*,[30] *super aciem mentis*,[31] *desuper*,[32] *supra nos*,[33] and yet also, through a paradox familiar to him, next to us.[34] Once it is said to be in non-bodily nature.[35] Otherwise, truth itself is sometimes described as that which is known,[36] other times as the 'place' where we are enlightened.[37] The meaning of such an extensive use of metaphorical language needs to be elucidated. We have seen how clearly Augustine states that knowledge of bodily realities—which include individual instances of kinds and species, like this man or this *good* man—must be traced back to what we gather from external reality through the senses and the act of collecting images stored in memory.[38] However, the analysis of the process of knowledge comes up against two main paradoxes which cannot be solved by simply resorting to empirical knowledge.

The first paradox concerns the way the process of knowledge is set off. The searching (*inquisitio*) starts when a craving (*appetitus*) prompts us to inquire and to find out what we want to know.[39] However, what does explain

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[24] 8.9 (282); 9.9 (301).   [25] 9.10 (302).   [26] 14.21 (450).   [27] 9.11 (303).
[28] 9.9 (301).   [29] 8.7 (277); 14.21 (450).   [30] 9.10 (302).   [31] 9.11 (303).
[32] Ibid.   [33] 8.13 (290).   [34] 8.9 (282): *apud nos.*
[35] 12.23 (376): *in incorporali natura.*   [36] 8.9 (283) and 9.9 (301).
[37] 8.13 (290); 9.9 (301); 10.2 (313); 12.23 (376).   [38] 11.14 (351).   [39] 9.18 (310).

the awakening of this craving? Since 'no one can love a thing that is quite unknown',[40] a kind of 'knowledge-before-knowledge' must be at the origin of the searching. This is one of the cases in which Augustine resorts to the metaphor of illumination. When we want to find out the meaning of an unknown word, we are incited by the perception of the utility and the beauty of language and of the possibilities it opens to us to establish relations with other people. In this case, Augustine will say that such beauty (*pulchritudo*) and utility (*utilitas*) are seen 'in the light of truth' (*in luce ueritatis*). This is something conceived both in active terms, expressed by the metaphor of seeing, and more passively as the result of something 'touching' our soul: 'For that species touches the mind, which the mind knows and considers, in which is manifested the loveliness of linking minds together by hearing and exchanging known vocal sounds.'[41]

Another epistemological paradox Augustine felt very acutely has to do with the ability to judge according to, for example, ethical notions like that of justice, even without actually being a just man. This paradox is discussed at length on two occasions in the *De Trinitate*.[42] In the eighth book, Augustine argues that the notion of justice—that is 'knowingly and deliberately, in life and in conduct, giving each man what is his own'—presupposes the presence of the truth in us (*apud nos*),[43] or the possibility of seeing the form of justice 'above ourselves in truth itself'.[44] This form is immutable, eternal, stable. Changes in the way justice is embodied by the individuals we know and love do not affect our ability to judge according to the form of justice. This case is developed more stringently in book 9. The topic is love for an individual person, whose faith we admire and we desire to acquire. The paradox is that even if eventually we discover that the faith of this person was a counterfeit, we do not cease to know what faith is and to be able to judge according to this perception. The form of truth in which we make this judgement dwells in an immovable eternity and sheds its light on our mind.[45]

This theory of illumination, therefore, could be considered more as a reformulation of paradoxes than a real attempt to solve them. Augustine is determined to avoid both Platonic reminiscence-theory and Pythagoraean transmigration of souls.[46] In their stead, whenever he deals with the issue of the principles or laws of our intellectual and indeed ethical judgements, he

[40] 10.1 (311. Trans. Hill, 287): 'rem prorsus ignotam amare omnino nullus potest'.
[41] 10.2 (314. Trans. Hill, 288, modified): 'Species namque illa tangit animum quam nouit et cogitat in qua elucet decus consociandorum animorum in uocibus notis audiendis atque reddendis.'
[42] 8.9 (279–284) and 14.21 (450 f.).
[43] 8.9 (282): 'scientia atque ratione in uita ac moribus sua quique distribuit'.
[44] 8.13 (290. Trans. Hill, 254): 'supra nos in ipsa ueritate'.
[45] 9.11 (303): 'imperturbabili aeternitate'.   [46] 12.23 f. (376–379).

resorts again to the same heavily metaphorical language which generations of scholars have tried to systematize in vain. For the purpose of our book, we do not need to solve the conundrums of Augustine's epistemology, but simply to highlight the strands of his theory of knowledge which either throw some light on his understanding of the way we can know God or depend on it.

We have seen that he resorts to vocabulary of illumination to elucidate the mechanism of our judgements according to laws or principles we do not possess and cannot be traced back to empirical knowledge. Another area where the same vocabulary occurs is that of definitions. In this case, the object of knowledge can be a notion like that of 'human mind', which entails knowledge of kinds and species:

Nor do we assemble a specific or generic knowledge or the human mind by seeing many minds with our bodily eyes, but we gaze upon the inviolable truth from which we define as perfectly as we can, not what kind of thing any particular mans's mind is, but what kind of thing by everlasting ideas it ought to be.[47]

This passage is important because it shows that what we see in truth itself is not the notion of 'human mind'. Augustine explains that we gaze upon (*intueor*) indestructible truth and from it (*ex qua*) we see the *rationes* i.e. the 'grounds', the 'reasons' according to which the definition is made. Thus, illumination does not provide us with notions, but just as it allows us to judge ethical principles, so it enlightens our mind with the reasons[48] or the rules[49] necessary to reach a definition of the object of our sensible knowledge according to kinds and species.[50] These reasons can allow us to judge about the beauty or the utility of something.[51] When Augustine talks about the 'reason of a squared body', he refers to that which allows us to perceive the immutable form of a squared body, not the form of the square itself.[52] Again, his examples are deliberately vague and defy any attempt to press their meaning too much.

Comparison with knowledge from senses can be useful again when we consider another aspect of illumination. Besides the vocabulary of vision we have listed above, another set of metaphors assigns a more active role to light or its equivalent terms: concerning the judgement of truth, it is said that it

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[47] 9.9 (301. Trans. Hill, 276):

Neque enim oculis corporeis multas mentes uidendo per similitudinem colligimus generalem uel specialem mentis humanae notitiam, sed intuemur inuiolabilem ueritatem ex qua perfecte quantum possumus definiamus non qualis sit uniuscuiusque hominis mens, sed qualis esse sempiternis rationibus debeat.

[48] Cf. 9.11 (303); 10.2 (313); 12.23 (376).   [49] cf. 8.8–9 (277–284); 14.21 (450).
[50] Cf. 8.7–8 (275–279) and 10.2 (313).   [51] 10.2 (313).   [52] 12.23 (377).

shines from above;[53] the form of truth (*forma ueritatis*) sheds an incorruptible light on the sight of our minds;[54] the species in which the beauty of knowledge of languages shines, is said to touch (*tangere*) our soul;[55] light again touches (*tangit*) even those who live sinfully, since they also can know eternity and sometimes make right judgements.[56] In the last example, both the act of knowing eternity and of making ethical judgements is attributed to immutable and eternal rules which cannot obviously be looked for in the nature nor in the attitude of the minds of those evil persons, since 'these are the standards of justice, while it is agreed that their minds are unjust'.[57] The alternative explanation runs as follows:

Then where are these standards written down, where can even the unjust man recognize what being just is, where can he see that he ought to have what he does not have himself? Where indeed are they written but in the book of that light which is called truth, from which every just law is copied, and transferred into the heart of the man who does justice, not by locomotion but by a kind of impression, rather like the seal which both passes into the wax and does not leave the signet ring? As for the man who does not do justice and yet sees what should be done, he is the one who turns away from that light, and yet is still touched by it.[58]

The comparison of the seal and the wax had been used in book 11 to explain the difference between the visible aspect of the external object (*forma corporis*) and the modification of the sense of sight resulting from the vision (*forma in sensu uidentis*). At the same time, it conveyed the idea that the sense undergoes a modification caused by the object known, called a formation (*informatio*).[59] In the same way, there are passages of the *De Trinitate* where generic or specific knowledge is attributed either to an imprinted standard of likeness (*regula similitudinis impressa*) or to general or specific notions,[60] i.e. either to the notions formed in our mind in the light of eternal reasons or to the likeness of a standard imprinted in our mind (*impressa*) in the same light. Thus, to the formation[61] caused in our senses by the object seen, corresponds the formation depending on the form seen in truth itself. A crucial difference,

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[53] 9.10 (302): 'claret desuper'.   [54] 9.11 (303).

[55] 10.2 (314).   [56] 14.21 (451).

[57] 14.21 (450 f. Trans. Hill, 387): 'illae regulae sint iustitiae, mentes uero eorum esse constet iniustas'.

[58] 14.21 (451. Trans. Hill, 387):

Vbinam sunt istae regulae scriptae, ubi quid sit iustum et iniustus agnoscit, ubi cernit habendum esse quod ipse non habet? Vbi ergo scriptae sunt, nisi in libro lucis illius quae ueritas dicitur unde omnis lex iusta describitur et in cor hominis qui operatur iustitiam non migrando sed tamquam imprimendo transfertur, sicut imago ex anulo et in ceram transit et anulum non relinquit? Qui uero non operatur et tamen uidet quid operandum sit, ipse est qui ab illa luce auertitur, a qua tamen tangitur.

[59] 11.3 (336).   [60] 8.8 (278).   [61] 11.3 (336).

however, exists between the two: the formation by a form seen in truth itself results from a real conversion requiring the role of the will. We saw above that we can know what justice is, even if we are not just ourselves. However, knowledge of this form sets off—so to speak—a dynamism which is inherent to the very aim of a *forma*, namely that of forming (*informare*).[62]

A final example can be given of the extent to which Augustine resorts to sensible vision—external or internal—to exemplify illumination: just as knowledge drawn from senses is stored in memory, so the notions or the judgements we elaborate in the light of the rules, laws, or principles seen in truth itself, are entrusted to an intellectual memory; this facilitates future elaborations of the same notions or judgements.[63]

In conclusion, all this confirms the extent to which Augustine resorts to sensible vision—external or internal—to exemplify illumination and therefore the highly metaphorical, rather than explanatory, character of this theory. Added to the vocabulary of vision, the very way in which we judge or define reality is conceived analogically from the way external reality affects our senses. Even the examples which illustrate this process tend to be the same for empirical knowledge and for illumination.

III. INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE

On the basis of this description of knowledge from senses and illumination, we can go back to the sentence from the ninth book quoted at the beginning of this chapter which announces the lengthy discussion of intellectual knowledge of the second half of the *De Trinitate* and explore its meaning: 'So the mind itself assembles notions both of bodily things through the senses of the body, and of non-bodily things through itself.'[64] Empirical knowledge (i.e. knowledge of bodily realities, *corporeae res*) remains the basis of the process of knowledge, originating either directly from the external senses or indirectly from memory and imagination, as is again made clear in this same book 9.[65] 'Bodily realities' encompass everything which is an object of our experience, including for example human persons and their virtues.

On the other hand, 'non-bodily realities' (*incorporeae res*), which the mind knows through itself, are not an alternative source of knowledge of reality, but the condition for the possibility of performing the most typical rational

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[62] Cf. 8.9 (283).   [63] 12.23 (377).

[64] 9.3 (296. Trans. Hill, 273): 'Mens ergo ipsa sicut corporearum rerum notitias per sensus corporis colligit sic incorporearum per semetipsam.'

[65] 9.10 (301 f.).

activity, that is to define reality according to kinds and species and to judge it. In the previous section on illumination we have found that the standards or reasons, that is the laws, the principles, the grounds, the proportions according to which we define and judge empirical knowledge, are seen in truth itself or in a kind of incorporeal light[66] which touches our mind.[67] This also is stated in book 9: the kinds and species which allow us to define reality, and the principles according to which we judge it, are eternal and immutable; they are common to everyone; they cannot be traced back to empirical knowledge. Therefore, they must originate from an independent source which shares their same characteristics, namely eternity and immutability, and which is common to everyone, at least potentially. To illustrate more than to explain what this independent source must look like, we find the familiar metaphorical vocabulary: to see in truth itself, 'The judgment of truth is shining vigorously from above, and it is firmly supported by the wholly unbiased rules of its own proper law' etc.[68]

This relation between 'incorporeal' and 'corporeal' realities, that is to say between knowledge through the senses and the standards or reasons according to which we judge and define it, is clearly restated in book 9. Augustine distinguishes knowledge from the senses or memories from the faculty to judge this knowledge. Knowledge from the senses is one thing, the faculty of mind that makes aesthetic judgments is another, i.e. 'But with the mind I observe something else, in terms of which I take pleasure in this work of art, in terms of which I would put it right if it displeased me. Thus it is that we make judgments about these things [i.e. things known from senses] according to that form of truth, and we perceive that by insight of the rational mind.'[69] Realities known through the senses or represented through memory are one thing, quite another are 'the proportions, the inexpressibly beautiful art of such shapes, existing above the apex of the mind, we grasp by simple intelligence'.[70]

These explanations concerning the relation between the empirical origin of our knowledge and the 'transcendent' nature of our principles of judgement, however, are not yet a description of the process of intellectual knowledge as such. For this, we must resort to a crucial passage for Augustine's theory of

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[66] 12.24 (378).   [67] 10.2 (314) and 14.21 (451).

[68] 9.10 (302. Trans. Hill, 276): 'Viget et claret desuper iudicium ueritatis ac sui iuris incorruptissimis regulis firmum est.'

[69] 9.11 (303. Trans. Hill, 277): 'secundum quod mihi opus illud placet, unde etiam si displiceret corrigerem. Itaque de istis secundum illam iudicamus, et illam cernimus rationalis mentis intuitu.'

[70] Ibid.: 'rationes artemque ineffabiliter pulchram talium figurarum super aciem mentis simplici intellegentia capientes'.

knowledge which puts a strain on the compartmentalized analytical lines of inquiry we have adopted so far for the purpose of clarity:

Thus it is that in that eternal truth according to which all temporal things were made we observe with the eye of the mind the form according to which we are and according to which we do anything with true and right reason, either in ourselves or in bodies. And by this form we conceive true knowledge of things, which we have with us as a kind of word that we beget by uttering inwardly, and that does not depart from us when it is born.[71]

The act of judging empirical knowledge—and indeed action—in the light of the eternal truth is illustrated through the metaphor of the conception of a notion (*notitia*) which in turn is begotten under the form of a word (*uerbum*)—let us notice here the distinction between *concipere* and *gignere* which we shall find later in the distinction between 'word conceived' (*uerbum conceptum*) and 'word born' (*uerbum natum*). This word, however, is not generated in the sense that it becomes external to us. It is an internal word. Before we say more about this word, however, we must make a few comments on the passage just quoted. First of all, the theory of illumination we have tried to explore from a 'purely' epistemological point of view so far, unveils an unmistakeable theological connotation: the truth which provides us with the principles of our judgements and definitions, is the very origin (*ex qua*) of the objects of our empirical experience (*temporalia*), from which they are created.[72] Further, instead of talking of knowledge, as we might have expected in this context, the passage focuses on operation (*operatio*) according to the right reason (*recta ratio*), thus alluding to the 'science' Augustine will take up in the twelfth book, which is the field of our rational activity dealing with our action in the temporal realm. Finally, and most importantly, a clear distinction is established between the illumination and the notion or the word which constitute the actual knowledge of something according to kind and species, i.e. intellectual knowledge. *This confirms our interpretation of illumination as relating to the formal conditions of intellectual knowledge rather than to its material content.* Intellectual knowledge is not the result of an 'infusion' in our mind of a pre-existing reality, but the production of a new reality, a notion, which, for this reason, is compared to the inner-begetting of a word.

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[71] 9.12 (303 f. Trans. Hill, 277 f.):

In illa igitur aeterna ueritate ex qua temporalia facta sunt omnia, formam secundum quam sumus et secundum quam uel in nobis uel in corporibus uera et recta ratione aliquid operamur uisu mentis aspicimus, atque inde conceptam rerum ueracem notitiam tamquam uerbum apud nos habemus et dicendo intus gignimus, nec a nobis nascendo discedit.

[72] A few lines further into the same passage, there is a clear identification between *creator* and *incommutabilis ueritas*, 9.13 (304). Cf. also the end of 10.10 (324).

Coming back to the word resulting from the process of intellectual knowledge mentioned above, a short sentence of book 9 describes it in these terms: 'knowledge with love'.[73] This means that the production of this new reality in the process of knowledge, conveyed through the metaphor of the inner-begetting of a word, entails the inseparability between knowledge and will so characteristic of Augustine's theory of knowledge. In intellectual knowledge, the will plays a determining role right from the outset by setting off the process of knowledge itself, as a 'craving to find out' (*appetitus inueniendi*), which is a form of love.[74] It causes the knowing subject to hang (*pendet*), so to speak, until he finds a rest by a *copulatio* with the object known: 'The same appetite with which one longs open-mouthed to know a thing becomes love of the thing known when it holds and embraces the acceptable offspring, that is knowledge, and joins it to its begetter.'[75] The metaphor of the begetting of a word here is loaded with definite sexual overtones: appetite, embrace, copulation, rest, begetting of an offspring.[76] This vocabulary and these metaphors give a picture of intellectual operations as anything but a cold, detached, controlled activity. Intellectual activity severed from desires, yearning, sense of lack, movement, is an abstraction which does not interest Augustine. The complexity, the unresolved tensions, the paradoxes of his epistemology and the impossibility of systematizing it might well result from its close adherence to life, rather than from a lack of *esprit de système*.

Just as it plays a determining role at the origin of the process of knowledge, so the will leads this process to completion or rest. The metaphor of the begetting is further refined through the distinction between the conception and the actual birth, the 'word conceived' and the 'word born', already hinted at in the passage quoted above. The intellectual activity of defining something according to kinds and species or to judge, for example, an act of justice, is intertwined with the activity of the will. We would not look for the definition of something—i.e. to know it—nor bother to evaluate its beauty or utility, unless an appetite was driving our interest. The same appetite could not possibly be satisfied with a simple representation or notion: its inner dynamism

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[73]   9.15 (307. Trans. Hill, 279): 'cum amore notitia'.

[74]   At the same time Augustine explains that, since 'rem prorsus ignotam amare omnino nullus potest', a 'knowledge-before-knowledge' of some sort must be postulated, which he explains in the following way: (i) we know and we love the *genus* and we yearn to acquire the knowledge of one individual instance of it; or (ii) we see it *in specie sempiternae rationis*, according to the theory of illumination we have seen already; or (iii) we love something we know which spurs us to look for something else we do not know; or (iv) finally we love *ipsum scire*, knowledge itself (10.4 (315 f.)).

[75]   9.18 (310. Trans. Hill, 281 f.): 'appetitus quo inhiatur rei cognoscendae fit amor cognitae dum tenet atque amplectitur placitam prolem, id est notitiam gignentique coniungit.'

[76]   All these terms recur in 9.18 (309 f.).

only reaches its end, its rest, in the actual *copulatio* between the knowing subject and the object craved for.

However, a distinction in the completion of this act of knowledge exists in our dealings with bodily realities on the one hand and with intellectual realities on the other.

In the case of knowledge of temporal or bodily realities, the process might be described as follows: something is recorded by our sensorial activity; this sensation awakens in us a desire to know its cause and to appreciate its value; this desire drives us to turn the sight of our mind to the reasons and standards so that they might enable us to define and to evaluate the object known; at this point, if this definition or evaluation pleases us to the point of converting our initial eagerness into full-blown love, we conceive a word (knowledge with love); this love, however, will not be satisfied until it is united to the thing known or possesses it (*copulatio*): only then the word is not only 'conceived', but really 'born'. This is explained in the following sentence:

But in the love of temporal and material things the conception of a word is one thing and its birth another, as it is with the breeding of animals. In this case the word is conceived by wanting and born by getting, as it is not enough for greed to know and love money unless it also has it, or to know and love eating or copulating unless it also does them, or to know and love honours and political power unless they are also forthcoming.[77]

Before we go further, we must draw attention to the extent of the inseparability between knowledge and love presupposed by this theory. There is no *inquisitio* which is not driven by a form of eagerness or desire. Then, knowledge of something does not only consist in the definition or the judgement we elaborate about it according to rational standards, but entails union or rather copulating. This approach to knowledge immediately betrays a strong affinity with that of the Old Testament, where the verb 'to know' is used to indicate both epistemological and sexual activity.[78] The remarks we have made above concerning the sexual overtones of Augustine's vocabulary of knowledge go in exactly the same direction.

On the basis of what we have seen in the case of knowledge of bodily and temporal realities, we must now turn to knowledge of 'spiritual' realities (*spiritualia*). In this case, there is identity between the word conceived and

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[77] 9.14 (305. Trans. Hill, 278):

In amore autem carnalium temporaliumque rerum . . . alius est conceptus uerbi, alius partus. Illic enim quod cupiendo concipitur adipiscendo nascitur, quoniam non sufficit auaritiae nosse et amare aurum nisi et habeat, neque nosse et amare uesci aut concumbere nisi etiam id agat, neque nosse et amare honores et imperia nisi proueniant.

[78] Cf. Gen. 4:1.

word born. Here, the notion is not only a representation of something which remains outside ourselves and which, once known, still needs to be reached and possessed. With spiritual realities, the notion is the object not only of love—knowledge with love—but also of the rest of the will:

But the conceived word and the born word are the same thing when the will rests in the act itself of knowing, which happens in the love of spiritual things. For example, someone who perfectly knows and perfectly loves justice is thereby already just even if no occasion exists for him to do justice externally in bodily activity.[79]

By loving the notion of justice conceived in the light of truth itself, we already are just, even before we actually perform deeds of justice. The other way round, if we perform acts of justice, it is because we already love justice, we are already 'informed' by it so as to be able to act justly. An adequate interpretation of this last assertion needs to take into account examples of love for just men in books 8 and 9. Socratic ethical intellectualism is alien to Augustine: for him, simply knowing what justice is does not automatically entail that we are just. In book 8, he explicitly declares that 'the man who is not just yet know what "just" is'[80] and, while looking for the origin of this notion of justice, he states:

For when I say, and say with full knowledge, 'That mind is just which knowingly and deliberately, in life and in conduct, gives each man what is his own', I am not recalling something absent like Carthage, or fabricating it as best I can like Alexandria, whether it is like my fabrication or not like it; but I am perceiving something that is present to me, and it is present to me even if I am not what I perceive, and many will agree with me when they hear me.[81]

To become just in our turn, we need to be 'shaped', 'informed' (*informari*) by the form seen in the light of truth itself. Augustine declares that 'all form of specific knowledge is like the thing which it knows'.[82] However, the 'assimilating' power of this knowledge depends on love. This is stated several times. In

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[79] 9.14 (305. Trans. Hill, 278):

Conceptum autem uerbum et natum idipsum est cum uoluntas in ipsa notitia conquiescit, quod fit in amore spiritalium. Qui enim uerbi gratia perfecte nouit perfecteque amat iustitiam, iam iustus est etiamsi nulla exsistat secundum eam forinsecus per membra corporis operandi necessitas.

[80] 8.9 (280. Trans. Hill, 249): 'nouit quid sit iustus etiam qui nondum est'.
[81] 8.9 (282. Trans. Hill, 249):

Cum enim dico et sciens dico: 'Iustus est animus qui scientia atque ratione in uita ac moribus sua cuique distribuit', non aliquam rem absentem cogito sicut Carthaginem aut fingo ut possum sicut Alexandriam, siue ita sit siue non ita; sed praesens quiddam cerno et cerno apud me etsi non sum ipse quod cerno, et multi si audiant, approbabunt.

[82] 9.16 (307. Trans. Hill, 279, modified): 'omnis secundum speciem notitia similes est ei rei quam nouit'.

the case of knowledge of God, though of course remaining inferior to him, we are made similar to him:

> when we know God we are indeed made better ourselves than we were before we knew him, especially when we like this knowledge and appropriately love it and it becomes a word and a kind of likeness to God; yet it remains inferior to God because it is an inferior nature.[83]

It is by loving the notion (*notitia*) that a word (i.e. a loving knowledge, *cum amore notitia*), a new reality, a similarity with God, is born in us. In another example, even though the notion of good is imprinted in us,[84] we only become good through will and action: 'but in order to be a good soul I see that it must deliberately (*uoluntate*) choose to do something' and 'the reason it is not yet called a good soul is that it still remains for it to act by deliberate choice (*actio uoluntatis*) in order to acquire excellence. If it neglects to do this it is justly blamed and rightly said to be not a good soul....But when it does act with this intention and becomes a good soul, it cannot in fact achieve this unless it turns to something which it is not itself.'[85]

Finally, the same conclusion can be drawn from a detailed description of this process of 'informatio' in book 8. Conceiving a notion of justice in the light of the form seen in truth itself is not enough to fulfil its dynamism: a form is known only when it has 'informed' us, that is 'shaped' us:

> And how will they ever be able to be so (just minds) but by cleaving to that same form which they behold, in order to be formed by it and become just minds, now no longer merely perceiving and saying that the mind is just which 'knowingly and deliberately in life and in conduct gives each man what is his own', but themselves now living justly and conducting themselves justly by giving each man what is his own, in order to *owe no man anything but to love one another* (Rom 13.8)?

And, of course, the 'shaping' factor is love: 'And how is one to cleave to that form except by loving it?'[86]

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[83] 9.16 (307. Trans. Hill, 279 f.):

cum deum nouimus, quamuis meliores efficiamur quam eramus antequam nossemus maximeque cum eadem notitia etiam placita digneque amata uerbum est fitque aliqua dei similitudo illa notitia, tamen inferior est quia in inferiore natura est.

[84] Cf. 8.4 (272. Trans. Hill, 244): 'nisi esset nobis impressa notio ipsius boni secundum quod et probaremus aliquid et aliud alii praeponeremus'.

[85] 8.4 (272 f. Trans. Hill, 244): 'Vt autem sit bonus animus uideo agendum esse uoluntate' and 'nondum dicitur bonus animus quia restat ei actio uoluntatis qua sit praestantior. Quam si neglexerit, iure culpatur recteque dicitur non bonus animus;...Cum uero agit hoc studio et fit bonus animus, nisi se ad aliquid conuertat quod ipse non est non potest hoc assequi.'

[86] 8.9 (283. Trans. Hill, 251):

Quod unde (*iusti*) esse poterunt nisi inhaerendo eidem ipsi formae quam intuentur ut inde formentur et sint iusti animi, non tantum cernentes et dicentes iustum esse animum 'qui scientia

All these examples, therefore, unequivocally discharge Augustine from any suspicion of ethical intellectualism.

Coming back to the declaration concerning the identity between word conceived and word born in the knowledge of spiritual realities, we should notice the word *perfecte* in the sentence quoted above: 'For example someone who perfectly knows and perfectly loves justice is thereby already just even if no occasion exists for him to do justice externally in bodily activity.'[87] Even though justice can be attributed to someone already on the basis of his love for this virtue alone, if this love is real, it necessarily entails the performance of acts of justice. In short, knowledge of spiritual reality does not depend on *copulatio* with external realities, as in the case of knowledge of temporal realities. The completion of the process of knowledge does not depend on a movement outwards, but on a movement inwards and upwards. The likeness we are 'shaped' or 'informed' by is not drawn from outside, but from above. Yet, the very dynamism of this form shapes our behaviour accordingly.

IV. THE MIND

So far, our analysis of intellectual knowledge has deliberately omitted to take up the role of the key player in it, namely the knowing subject. The crucial importance of this role is hinted at in the pregnant sentence quoted at the outset of this chapter which has become our guide: 'So the mind itself assembles notions both of bodily things through the senses of the body, and of non-bodily things through itself. Therefore it knows itself through itself, because it is non-bodily. Anyhow, if it does not know itself, it does not love itself.'[88] Incorporeal realities are known through mind itself, which entails that self-knowledge and self-love are the indispensable presupposition of the process of knowledge. This is stated in another sentence of book 14: 'What after all do we know, if we do not know what is in our own mind, seeing that whatever we know we can only know it with the mind?'[89] The meaning of these sentences,

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atque ratione in uita ac moribus sua quique distribuit', sed etiam ut ipsi juste uiuant justeque morati sint sua cuique distribuendo ut nemini quidquam debeant nisi ut inuicem diligant? Et unde inhaeretur illi formae nisi amando?

[87] 9.14 (305. Trans. Hill, 278): 'Qui enim uerbi gratia perfecte nouit perfecteque amat iustitiam, iam iustus est etiamsi nulla exsistat secundum eam forinsecus per membra corporis operandi necessitas.'

[88] 9.3 (296. Trans. Hill, 273, modified): 'Mens ergo ipsa sicut corporearum rerum notitias per sensus corporis colligit sic incorporearum per semetipsam. Ergo et se ipsam per se ipsa nouit quoniam est incorporea. Nam si non se nouit, non se amat.'

[89] 14.8 (430. Trans. Hill, 375): 'Quid enim scimus si quod est in nostra mente nescimus cum omnia quae scimus non nisi mente scire possimus?' Cf. also 10.16 (328): 'Nullo modo autem recte dicitur sciri aliqua res dum eius ignoratur substantia.'

however, is not immediately evident. Is it really true that the condition for the possibility of knowing is self-knowledge and self-love? And, anyway, what do self-knowledge and self-love mean in the first place? To answer these questions and to find an explanation to this crucial aspect of Augustine's epistemology, we must not forget the inseparability between knowledge and love which characterizes it.

First of all, through an extensive and minute demonstration, Augustine establishes that the mind does not know itself in the way every other object is known, i.e. either through empirical knowledge[90] or in the light of the eternal reasons.[91] It is even inadequate to say that the mind knows itself through itself, as if the two could be separated, i.e. as if the mind could be considered even for one moment in abstraction from self-knowing. In reality, the mind *is* self-knowledge. This is stated with the greatest clarity in the following sentence:

> But when the mind is told 'Know thyself', it knows itself the very moment (*eo ictu*) it understands what 'thyself' is, and for no other reason than that it is present to itself. If it does not understand what is said, then naturally it does not do it. So it is being commanded to do something which it automatically does the moment it understands the command.[92]

This point is restated several times, under different forms. Even when the mind tries to know itself, it knows itself in the act of making this attempt; paradoxically, even when the mind thinks it ignores itself or doubts about itself or about anything else, it knows itself in the act of ignoring or of doubting.[93] The *eo ictu* of the sentence just quoted echoes the *eo ipso* of the following passage: 'It follows then that it simply cannot not know itself, since by the very fact (*eo ipso*) of knowing itself not knowing, it knows itself. If it did not know itself not knowing, it would not seek to know itself.'[94] Added to the inescapability of self-knowledge, there is the impossibility of the mind knowing itself only partially: it can only know itself entirely, *tota*.[95]

Such statements, endlessly rehearsed in every possible form, make sense only if self-knowledge is understood not simply as an activity of the mind,

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[90] Cf. 9.9 (301).   [91] 10.5 (317).
[92] 10.12 (326. Trans. Hill, 295 f.):

Cum dicitur menti: 'Cognosce te ipsam', eo ictu quo intellegit quod dictum est 'Te ipsam', cognoscit se ipsam, nec ob aliud quam eo quod sibi praesens est. Si autem quod dictum est non intellegit, non utique facit. Hoc igitur ei praecipitur ut faciat quod cum praeceptum ipsum intellegit facit.

[93] 10.5 (318) and 10.14 (327 f.).
[94] 10.5 (318. Trans. Hill, 291): 'Quapropter eo ipso quo se quaerit magis se sibi notam quam ignotam esse conuincitur. Nouit enim se quaerentem atque nescientem dum se quaerit ut nouerit.'
[95] 10.6 (318 f.).

but as its own life: 'So just as the whole mind is, in the same way the whole mind lives.'[96] Mind and self-knowledge coincide to the point that the suppression of either of the two entails the disappearance of the other, since the very substance of the mind is self-knowledge: 'Therefore, when mind knows itself it knows its substance, and when it is certain of itself it is certain of its substance.'[97]

This finding reveals a paradox of the life of the mind expressed in a question Augustine formulates in the middle of book 10: 'Why then is the mind commanded to know itself?'[98] The command he is referring to, of course, is the well-known Delphic oracle, γνῶθι σεαυτόν famously echoed by Socrates and often quoted by Cicero.[99] This command appears no less than ten times in book 10.[100] Its first role here is that of formulating the most puzzling paradox in the life of the mind: on the one hand our mind is self-knowledge; on the other, this does not seem to be a self-evident truth, to the point that it has to become the object of a command. However, the Delphic oracle is resorted to also because of its paradigmatic nature with regard to philosophical activity as a whole. Any dysfunctional aspect related to the self-knowledge reverberates within philosophy, as Augustine's treatment of this topic will reveal.

Before we embark upon the analysis of this paradox and of its causes, some preliminary reminders concerning Augustine's epistemology are necessary, together with some remarks concerning the role of love in the process of knowledge.

V. LOVE'S MISLEADING POWER

At all stages of the cognitive process we have discovered the essential role played by the will and have been warned about its potentially highly misleading power.

Already at the level of knowledge from the senses, the attention (*intentio*) can lead to such a modification of the sensorial faculty in its adhesion to the external object perceived, that this can have a repercussion on the whole body. When the attention reaches such a degree of intensity, Augustine calls

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[96] 10.6 (319. Trans. Hill, 291): 'Sicut ergo mens tota mens est, sic tota uiuit.'

[97] 10.16 (328. Trans. Hill, 297): 'Quapropter dum se mens nouit substantiam suam nouit, et cum de se certa est de substantia sua certa est.' Cf. also 9.6 (298): 'Notitia qua se mens nouit si esse desinat, simul et illa nosse se desinet.'

[98] 10.7 (320. Trans. Hill, 292): 'Vtquid ergo ei praeceptum est ut se ipsa cognoscat?'

[99] Cf. for example Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, 3.22.73, and the list of other passages quoted in CCL 50, 316 n. 32.

[100] Cf. in particular the section 10.11–13 (324–327).

it lust (*libido*) or covetousness (*cupiditas*).[101] At the level of memory and imagination, the stress was laid upon the deceiving power of the will because of its ability to turn the *acies* of our mind towards memories with such cogency that it can become impossible to distinguish what we remember from the reality surrounding us.[102] We do not need to repeat here the results of our enquiry into these topics, but the time has come to add some more elements concerning the ethical implications of these findings which already made themselves felt at the level of empirical knowledge.

In the context of empirical knowledge, the difference between a praise-worthy will (*laudabilis uoluntas*) and a depraved longing (*turpis cupiditas*) depends on whether this knowledge is referred to something useful.[103] The opposite attitude, graphically described as adhering to, applying to, wallowing in, plunging into, being polluted by[104] bodily realities (or by their representations in us), treats these realities as ends in themselves and enjoys them as such. The role of the will, on the contrary, should be that of ordering all dealings with bodily realities to the truer and better life,[105] that is to beatitude. There is a sequence (*conexio*) between all the separate acts of will which lead our activity of knowledge. This sequence consists in the subordination of all these acts to the rest (*requies*) sought by the will:

Now all wills or wishes are straight, and all the ones linked with them too, if the one to which they are all referred is good; but if that is bent then they are all bent. And thus a sequence of straight wishes or wills is a ladder for those who would climb to happiness, to be negotiated by definite steps; but a skein of bent and twisted wishes or wills is a rope to bind anyone who acts so, and have him *cast into outer darkness* (Mt 8.12).[106]

Our activity of knowledge should be ordered towards happiness and we should not place our delight or look for our rest in the things known. Behind these injunctions, we can already guess the main theme running through the issue of self-knowledge, that is the distinction between using and enjoying (*uti* and *frui*), defined as follows:

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[101] 11.5 (339). Cf. the examples of the chameleon and Jacob's herds.
[102] 11.7 (341 ff.).   [103] 11.6 (339): 'ad utile aliquid referat'.
[104] Cf. in particular 12.14 (368 f.): *inhaerere, accommodare, uolutare, immergere, inquinari.*
[105] 11.8 (343 f.).
[106] 11.10 (346 f. Trans. Hill, 312):

Rectae autem sunt uoluntates et omnes sibimet religatae si bona est illa quo cunctae referuntur; si autem praua est, prauae sunt omnes. Et ideo rectarum uoluntatum conexio iter est quoddam ascendentium ad beatitudinem quod certis uelut passibus agitur; prauarum autem atque distortarum uoluntatum implicatio uinculum est quo alligabitur qui hoc agit ut proiciatur in tenebras exteriores.

will is there for us to enjoy things or use them. We enjoy things we know when the will reposes in them because it is delighted by them for their own sakes; we use things when we refer them to something else we would like to enjoy. And what makes the life of men vicious and reprehensible is nothing but using things badly and enjoying them badly.[107]

The role of love in the process of intellectual or rational knowledge is even more pervasive and crucial than in knowledge from the senses. The generation of an inner word—Augustine's favourite metaphor to exemplify a completed act of knowledge—consists in the 'modification' or 'formation' undergone by the knowing subject as a result of his love for the object of knowledge, the *notitia*. The definition of a word is 'knowledge with love'.[108] But love does not start playing a role only in view of the completion of the act of knowledge. On the contrary, we have seen that, right from the outset of the process of knowledge, a sort of pre-knowledge[109] must awake an appetite in us which, although not yet love (*amor*), is of the same kind: 'This appetite, that is inquisitiveness, does not indeed appear to be the love with which what is known is loved (this is still busy getting known), yet it is something of the same kind.'[110] Then, according to the object of knowledge, that is whether it concerns spiritual or bodily realities, we have seen that the completion of the act of knowledge, respectively, can either be situated within the spiritual sphere or can require us to go outside ourselves. Everything depends on where the will's intended rest (*requies*) lies.[111]

All these reminders, therefore, show the decisive role played by the *will* in the process of knowledge, starting from sensations up to the completed act of knowledge which consists in a sort of assimilation of—or to—the object known. This finding inevitably raises the issue of the ethical dimension of the act of knowledge, which Augustine tackles from the angle of his well-known pair *uti* and *frui*. The example of the love for someone because of his faith is the best introduction into his mature thought on this point.[112]

The first striking feature of this example is that the articulation between using and enjoying is not that of an either/or: Augustine is really ablaze with the flame of brotherly love (*ardor fraterni amoris*) for a man because of the

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[107] 10.13 (327. Trans. Hill, 296):

uoluntas autem adest per quam fruamur eis uel utamur. Fruimur enim cognitis in quibus uoluntas ipsis propter se ipsa delectata conquiescit; utimur uero eis quae ad aliud referimus quo fruendum est. Nec est alia uita hominum uitiosa atque culpabilis quam male utens et male fruens.

[108] 9.15 (307. Trans. Hill, 279) 'cum amore notitia'.   [109] Cf. 10.4 (315 f.).
[110] 9.18 (310. Trans. Hill, 281 f.): 'quamuis amor esse non uideatur quo id quod notum est amatur (hoc enim adhuc ut cognoscatur agitur), tamen ex eodem genere quiddam est'.
[111] 9.14 (305).   [112] 9.11 (302 f.).

beauty and the steadfastness of his faith. Indeed, the ultimate rest (*requies*) of this love (the *fruitio*) is in the spiritual reality, i.e. in faith. Faith is the notion known in the light of truth itself and loved; love for this notion sets off a dynamism which assimilates the knowing subject to the object known (*copulatio*) or moulds him in the likeness of the object known. The production of the inner word—that is to say the completed act of knowledge—results from the fact that the form of faith has been loved to the point that it has reached the fulfilment of its dynamism, that it to say forming (*informare*) the knowing subject. Faith is no longer something simply yearned for or known in the light of truth itself; it has become an attribute of the knowing subject. In this example, therefore, the object of enjoyment is the form of faith, i.e. a spiritual reality.

However, what role does the love for the person who was the occasion for the discovering of faith play in this process? Is it a purely instrumental role? Is the person just 'used' for the purpose of reaching faith? Such a conclusion could be easily assumed when we read that, whether or not the person really exemplifies this faith (in the case discussed in book 9, in the end he does not), love for faith remains unscathed. The Augustine of the *De doctrina christiana* would have maintained such a clear-cut instrumental approach in the love for people just as in the love for inanimate realities.[113] In the *De Trinitate*, however, the articulation between *uti* and *frui* in the love for our neighbour and for God (or for spiritual realities) is far more sophisticated.

First of all—and here we reach a key declaration which has a critical bearing on the whole of Augustine's epistemology—from empirical knowledge up to the knowledge of intellectual realities in the light of truth itself, *the will is never neutral*. Will, for Augustine, means desire, love, longing for. In can never be envisaged as a mechanical force, duly regulated by a reason which could apply it to the pursuing of its aims so to speak 'at will'. If Augustine consistently presupposes the principle that there is no love without knowledge and that even the appetite which sets off the process of knowledge relies on some form of 'pre-knowledge', he also consistently betrays his bewilderment at will's idiosyncrasies and relentlessly investigates its possible causes. The key declaration on the role of the will in the process of knowledge, and particularly of the role of will in the completion of this process by the begetting of an inner word, runs as follows: 'this word is conceived in love of either the creature or the creator, that is of changeable nature or unchangeable truth'.[114] Had this statement not been clear enough, he immediately qualifies the alternative: 'either in

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[113] *doc. Chr.* 1.22.20; 1.31.34; 1.32.35 (CCL 32, 16 f.; 25 f.; 26). Cf. O'Donovan (1980), 24–29.
[114] 9.13 (304. Trans. Hill, 278): 'Quod uerbum amore concipitur siue creaturae siue creatoris, id est aut naturae mutabilis aut incommutabilis ueritatis.'

covetousness or in charity'.[115] The will which presides over, runs through or is breathed into the whole process of knowledge, thus conferring to it its peculiar living, moving, and elusive character, is never a neutral force—it is either a form of covetousness or God's given love; it either inverts the right order between using and enjoying or respects their hierarchy. Covetousness consists in enjoying (*frui*) that which should only play an instrumental role (*uti*) and finding one's rest in it. In this way, covetousness not only compromises the possibility of attaining the happiness we are made for, but also inverts the fundamental dynamism of our moral and cognitive life—corresponding to the right articulation between using and enjoying—which become deeply dysfunctional as a result.

There is no distinction, for Augustine, between natural and supernatural levels of knowledge, which would grant to the former an independent field in which it could fulfil its role autonomously. In his theory of knowledge, this would require a possibility of neutrality for the will, neither turning itself towards God nor averting itself from him, but simply ignoring both options. Wittingly or unwittingly, we always are either acting out of covetousness or of charity or, rather, we can either wittingly or unwittingly act out of covetousness or be given the grace of consciously letting charity restore the right order between using and enjoying which is the condition for an harmonious moral and cognitive life.[116] All this is admirably summed up in the passage we have begun to quote above and which we reproduce now in full:

This word is conceived in love of either the creature or the creator, that is of changeable nature or unchangeable truth; which means either in covetousness or in charity. Not that the creature is not to be loved, but if that love is related to the creator it will no longer be covetousness but charity. It is only covetousness when the creature is loved on its own account. In this case it does not help you in your use of it, but corrupts you in your enjoyment of it. Now a creature can either be on a par with us or lower than us; the lower creature should be used to bring us to God, the creature on a par should be enjoyed, but in God. Just as you ought to enjoy yourself not in yourself but in him who made you, so too with the one whom you love as yourself. Let us then enjoy both ourselves and our brothers in the Lord, and from that level let us not dare to lower ourselves down even to our own, and so slacken off in a downward direction. Now this word is born when on thinking over it we like it either for sinning or for doing good. So love, like something in the middle, joins together our word and the mind it is begotten from, and binds itself in with them as a third element in a non-bodily embrace, without any confusion.[117]

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[115] 9.13 (304. Trans. Hill, 278): 'aut cupiditate aut caritate'.
[116] Cf. Rist (2000), 209 and 214.
[117] 9.13 (304 f. Trans. Hill, 278):

Quod uerbum amore concipitur siue creaturae siue creatoris, id est aut naturae mutabilis aut incommutabilis ueritatis. Ergo aut cupiditate aut caritate, non quo non sit amanda creatura, sed

To start with, this passage solves the issue of the articulation between using and enjoying in the love for our neighbour and for God. Other people do not simply play an instrumental role (*uti*) in view of a delight (*frui*) we are only permitted to find in God. On the contrary, there already is a rest, a joy, a delight in fraternal charity. Fraternal charity is not simply a means to an end, it is an end in itself inseparable from the final end of love for God. To say that the brother has to be 'enjoyed' not 'for' God but 'in' God, means that we love him 'out of' God. In other words, the articulation between using and enjoying in this passage is a translation of Augustine's theology of charity developed in book 8: 'This connexion[118] shows clearly and sufficiently how this brotherly love…is proclaimed on the highest authority not only to be from God but also simply to be God. When therefore we love our brother out of love, we love our brother out of God.'[119]

Further, this passage shows that self-love obeys exactly the same relation between *uti* and *frui* at work in love for our neighbour: 'Just as you ought to enjoy yourself not in yourself but in him who made you, so too with the one whom you love as yourself. Let us then enjoy both ourselves and our brothers in the Lord.'[120] We must love ourselves 'out of' God's given love (*dilectio*) just in the same way as we love our brothers. There is *a right kind of rest, delight, enjoyment in oneself* which not only does not turn us away from God, but already is an anticipation of the rest, delight, and enjoyment we will find in God himself in the life to come.

Finally, this passage makes an important transition between the issue of charity which permeates Augustine's Christology, pneumatology, and doctrine of the immanent Trinity, and the topic of most of the second half of the *De Trinitate*, namely self-love. Whereas charity was the main topic of the eighth book, the beginning of book 9 is often interpreted as an awkward way of brushing the issue aside and turning towards some other more effective

si ad creatorem refertur ille amor, non iam cupiditas sed caritas erit. Tunc enim est cupiditas cum propter se amatur creatura. Tunc non utentem adiuuat sed corrumpit fruentem. Cum ergo aut par nobis aut inferior creatura sit, inferiore utendum est ad deum, pari autem fruendum sed in deo. Sicut enim te ipso non in te ipso frui debes sed in eo qui fecit te, sic etiam illo quem diligis tamquam te ipsum. Et nobis ergo et fratribus in domino fruamur, et inde nos nec ad nosmetipsos remittere et quasi relaxare deorsum uersus audeamus. Nascitur autem uerbum cum excogitatum placet aut ad peccandum aut ad recte faciendum. Verbum ergo nostrum et mentem de qua gignitur quasi medius amor coniungit seque cum eis tertium complexu incorporeo sine ulla confusione constringit.

[118]   That is the quotations from 1 John, see p. 182.

[119]   8.12 (288. Trans. Hill, 253) 'Ista contextio satis aperteque declarat ipsam fraternam dilectionem…non solum ex deo sed etiam deum esse tanta auctoritate praedicari. Cum ergo de dilectione diligimus fratrem, de deo diligimus fratrem.'

[120]   9.13 (304. Trans. Hill, 278): 'Sicut enim te ipso non in te ipso frui debes sed in eo qui fecit te, sic etiam illo quem diligis tamquam te ipsum. Et nobis ergo et fratribus in domino fruamur.'

anagogical or analogical way of climbing to the mystery of the Trinity. The reality is that the issue of charity permeates not only book 8, but the whole of the second half of the *De Trinitate*, according to exactly the same comparison between love for our neighbour and love for ourselves we find in the passage we are examining. This means that the transition from love for neighbour 'out of' God to self-love (still 'out of' God) remains within the sphere of charity, even though the focus shifts to the relation between charity and epistemology. The key passage from book 9 we are examining marvellously illustrates this transition, which can be summed up as follows: first of all, the integrity or the corruption of the process of knowledge depend on the unavoidable option between covetousness and charity; secondly, knowledge of any reality, whether empirical or spiritual, depends on self-knowledge; thirdly, according to the fundamental rule of the inseparability between knowledge and love, the integrity or the corruption of self-knowledge also depends on whether we truly love ourselves 'in' God (i.e. out of *charity*) or we give ourselves over to covetousness thus in fact hating ourselves. As a result, *self-knowledge, and epistemology as a whole rest on the crucial issue of self-love.* In other words, we only know properly if we love ourselves properly. Charity is brought to the heart of epistemology as such and becomes the condition of the integrity of the process of knowledge. To the exploration of this intertwining between self-charity and epistemology we now turn.

VI. SELF-CHARITY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The perfect equality between mind, its self-knowledge, and its self-love we find at the beginning of book 9, is not simply nor predominantly dictated by the need to find an analogy for the mystery of the Trinity. In reality, behind the idea of the perfect equality between the elements of this triad, a fundamental principle is at stake: everything must be known and loved or, rather, lovingly known in accordance with the teleological nature of our will and in obedience to the right ordering between using and enjoying.

Just as there is a proper way for the mind to know itself, so there is a proper way of loving itself. Or, rather, since the completed process of knowledge is the production of a word which is 'knowledge with love', then proper self-knowledge depends on right self-loving. Indeed, the metaphor of the production of a word is applied to self-knowledge as well. A notion known according to the species—that is in the light of truth itself—is a resemblance of the thing known. This resemblance of the thing known, this form, under the effect of love, tends to 'inform' us, that is to make us similar to the thing known. This applies both to empirical knowledge and to knowledge of God,

with the difference, of course, that in the former case, if this assimilation goes too far, we undergo a 'de-formation'—whereas in the latter we are 're-formed' in God's image for the better. In any case, however far the deformation or the reformation might go, there is never going to be an absolute equality between our mind and either bodily realities or God, because we are of a nature different from both. Equality and identity between reality, knowledge, and word occur only between the mind, its self-knowledge, and its self-love:

When we know God we are indeed made better ourselves than we were before we knew him, especially when we like this knowledge and appropriately love it and it becomes a word and a kind of likeness to God; yet it remains inferior to God because it is an inferior nature, our consciousness being a creature, but God the creator. From this we can gather that when the mind knows and approves itself, this knowledge is its word in such a way that it matches it exactly and is equal to it and identical, since it is neither knowledge of an inferior thing like body nor of a superior one like God.[121]

The meaning of this passage becomes clearer when it is compared with another declaration from book 9, where Augustine explains that the mind acts sinfully (*peccat*) both if it loves itself less than it should, for example as much as the human body, and if it loves itself more that it should, that is in the way God alone should be loved.[122] As we have seen above, the mind should love and enjoy (*frui*) itself 'in God' or 'out of God', that is to say out of 'charity'. In the case of the self there is no option other than covetousness or charity. Either we love ourselves out of charity, in which case we can talk about self-love, or covetousness takes the upper hand and leads us to effectively hate ourselves by alienating us from ourselves and enslaving us to temporal and bodily realities.

 A first, crucial conclusion can be drawn from this finding with regard to the structure of the argument in the transition between the eighth and the ninth book and especially on whether Augustine (i) leaves behind charity to concentrate on the self as a way of constructing an analogy or an anagogy towards the mystery of the Trinity; or also on whether (ii) he leaves behind the triad of self-love to concentrate on that of self-knowing. Such interpretations

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[121] 9.16 (307. Trans. Hill, 280):

Cum deum nouimus, quamuis meliores efficiamur quam eramus antequam nossemus maximeque cum eadem notitia etiam placita digneque amata uerbum est fitque aliqua dei similitudo illa notitia, tamen inferior est quia in inferiore natura est; creatura quippe animus, creator autem deus. Ex quo colligitur quia cum se mens ipsa nouit atque approbat sic est eadem notitia uerbum eius ut ei sit par omnino et aequale atque identidem quia neque inferioris essentiae notitia est sicut corporis neque superioris sicut dei.

[122] 9.4 (297).

completely miss the point of Augustine's argument. From beginning to end in the last eight books of the *De Trinitate*, his whole epistemology is governed by charity, as we have already argued at the end of the previous paragraph. From beginning to end, his whole inquiry deals with self-love (or, rather, self-charity), precisely because of the decisive role charity plays in any form of proper knowledge; of the decisive role self-knowledge plays in the process of knowledge of anything else; of the decisive role self-charity plays in the process of self-knowledge. The other way round, the right form of self-love, i.e. self-charity, is the condition for the right form of self-knowledge, which in turn is the ground for any other form of what counts as *real* knowledge, a knowledge, that is, permeated by love for God and for the neighbour.

On the basis of what we have ascertained so far, we can throw some more light on a puzzling aspect of Augustine's conception of love we have already touched upon in our exploration of book 8, namely the fact that to love ourselves we must love *amor*[123] itself. This point recurs in book 9 as well:

When I who am engaged on this search love something, there are three: I myself, what I love, and love itself. For I do not love love unless I love it loving something, because there is no love where nothing is being loved. . . . For it is not the case that anyone who loves himself is love except when love loves itself. It is one thing to love oneself and another to love one's love. For love is not loved unless it is already loving something, because where nothing is being loved there is no love.[124]

We have seen that the will never exists as a neutral dynamism. Either it is a form of covetousness or, by grace, it has been transformed into charity. Under the form of covetousness, our will does not love *amor* itself, but is captured by realities inferior to itself and becomes their prisoner. Only a 're-formation' of the will made possible by Christ's salvation and the action of the Holy Spirit frees it from this alienation and gives it the right orientation, which then permeates every other activity, starting from knowledge. The complex demonstration of book 8 established that charity is not known as any other reality either through empirical experience nor even in the light of truth itself. It is something we know in the act of being filled by it through the Holy Spirit given to us and of being 'empowered', so to speak, to love accordingly: love (*dilectio*) only exists in the act of love (*diligens*).[125] In the same way, that

[123] Here *amor* is used without ethical connotations and stands for *dilectio* or *charity.*

[124] 9.2 (294. Trans. Hill, 272):

Ecce ego qui hoc quaero cum aliquid amo tria sunt, ego et quod amo et ipse amor. Non enim amo amorem nisi amantem amem, nam non est amor ubi nihil amatur. . . . Non enim quisquis se amat amor est nisi cum amatur ipse amor. Aliud est autem amare se, aliud amare amorem suum. Non enim amatur amor nisi iam aliquid amans quia ubi nihil amatur, nullus est amor.

[125] 8.12 (287): 'Quia cum diligimus caritatem, aliquid diligentem diligimus propter hoc ipsum quia diligit aliquid.'

which must be loved not instrumentally (*uti*), but for itself (*frui*), namely the neighbour and ourselves, must be loved 'in God' or, as we have seen, 'out of' God. This means that, at the heart of any proper act of love—any act of love that is, which is not a form of covetousness——there is love for God, love for Love. Self-charity and charity for our neighbour are the other side of the coin of charity for God. This is the meaning of the love for Love itself which Augustine identifies as the condition for the love of anything.

VII. THE GENESIS OF SELF-ALIENATION

On the basis of these reminders, we are now able to appreciate the significance of the question we came up against earlier: why is it that the 'Know thyself' has become an injunction, a command, despite the fact that self-knowledge constitutes the very substance of our mind? This paradox is chosen to illustrate the consequences of covetousness on self-knowledge and, through self-knowledge, on the whole process of knowledge and becomes the starting point for Augustine's demonstration of the only way epistemology can be restored, namely through the love (*dilectio*) re-established and exemplified by Christ and poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us. Or, to use the theme of the image of God, to demonstrate how the image is renewed or reformed in the the knowledge of God, in *agnitio dei*.

How is it possible, then, that such a fundamental epistemological given has become unavailable to us? The whole section between the ninth and the fourteenth book can be seen as an attempt to solve this mystery. Augustine himself openly declares in book 14 that his intention all along had been that of leading his reader to the acknowledgement that he does not know, that he ignores the most fundamental thing about himself, i.e. that he is self-knowledge.[126] His own effort at clarification does not overcome his perplexity altogether: 'How it [mind] can not be in its own view when it is not thinking about itself, seeing that it can never be without itself, as though it were one thing and its view another, I cannot really fathom.'[127] In an attempt to explain this anomaly, he unfolds a sort of genesis of the alienation of the self which is one of the most powerful and suggestive passages of the whole treatise and requires close analysis.[128]

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[126] 14.9 (432 ff.).
[127] 14.8 (431. Trans. Hill, 375 f.): 'Quomodo autem quando se non cogitat (mens) in conspectu suo non sit cum sine se ipsa numquam esse possit quasi aliud sit ipsa, aliud conspectus eius, inuenire non possum.'
[128] 10.7 (320 f.).

The definite culprit responsible for this disastrous self-oblivion is covetousness. Its defining character is, as we have seen, a disordered relation between using and enjoying. In this passage, the right relation between the two is pushed a step further away from the way it was presented in the *De doctrina christiana*. In fact, here we are told that not only God or our neighbours or the self can be enjoyed, *frui*, but also the notions seen in the light of truth itself—here Augustine calls them the beautiful things seen in that more excellent nature which is God. The perversion of our will is attributed here to pride: we ascribe these gifts to ourselves in an attitude which amounts to a refusal to acknowledge our dependence on God, to an *auersio*: 'but instead of staying still and enjoying them as it ought to, it wants to claim them for itself, and rather than be like him by his gift it wants to be what he is by its own right. So it turns away from him.'[129]

The first result of this turning away (*auersio*) is the creation of a situation of permanent dissatisfaction, since only God can satisfy us. Hence, an increasingly anxious focus on our actions and on the delights drawn from knowledge of external realities, *quae foris sunt*. The fleeting nature of these realities causes a permanent sense of insecurity which contributes to the obsessive character of our involvement with them. The combined influence of this anxiety and this insecurity confers such a power to the ability of covetousness to join us with the object known, that we become progressively incapable of discriminating between that which we know and ourselves. We somehow confer on the object coveted something of our own essence, which means that we become unaware of our spiritual nature and lose all distance from our actions, from the things we desire, from the objects we possess: 'but the mind is mistaken when it joins itself to these images with such extravagant love that it even comes to think it is itself something of the same sort.... So in short, when the mind thinks of itself like that, it thinks it is a body.'[130]

The genesis of our epistemological fall can therefore be summed up as follows: covetousness and pride, anxious attempts to find our satisfaction elsewhere than in God alone, increasing dependence on that which is exterior to us to the point of forgetting ourselves (*obliuio sui*), and becoming unable to think ourselves separately from the external realities to which we so desperately cling. Self-oblivion, i.e. the loss of our natural ability to know ourselves, results from the wrong articulation between using and enjoying, i.e. from a dysfunctional self-love. We lose the ability to think ourselves (*se cogitare*), to

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[129] 10.7 (320. Trans. Hill, 292): 'Et cum stare debeat ut eis fruatur, uolens ea sibi tribuere et non ex illo similis illius sed ex se ipsa esse quod ille est auertitur ab eo.'

[130] 10.8 (320 f. Trans. Hill, 293): 'Errat autem mens cum se istis imaginibus tanto amore coniungit ut etiam se esse aliquid huiusmodi existimet.... Cum itaque se tale aliquid putat, corpus esse se putat.'

desire or to love according to our own nature: 'under him it should be subject to and over all that it should be in control of; under him it should be ruled by, over all that it ought to rule'.[131]

   This loss not only results in an ethical failure, that is the total upsetting of the right order of love, but has far-reaching consequences for knowledge as such which lurk behind philosophical errors. Just after the passage we have summed up so far, Augustine establishes a link between this self-oblivion which clouds our self-knowledge and a series of philosophical errors concerning the nature of the soul. The causes of the errors of Physicists, Atomists, Stoics, etc. who identified the nature of the soul with one bodily reality or another, are traced back to the loss of our ability to know ourselves. All these philosophers have not understood that the mind is a non-corporeal substance and the cause of this mistake is not that mind is not knowable in its spiritual nature, but that we add bodily images to it.[132] In fact,

[as the mind is] in the things that it thinks about with love, and it has got used to loving sensible, that is bodily things; so it is unable to be in itself without their images. Hence arises its shameful mistake, that it cannot make itself out among the images of the things it has perceived with the senses, and see itself alone; they are all stuck astonishingly fast together with the glue of love. And this is its impurity, that while it attempts to think of itself alone, it supposes itself to be that without which it is unable to think of itself.[133]

This example illustrates the paradigmatic nature of self-knowledge with regard to philosophical activity as a whole and displays the connection between the lengthy discussion on self-knowledge in books 9 to 11—which is resumed in book 14—and the criticism of philosophers in books 4 and 13 which we have analysed in earlier chapters. This criticism of philosophy reaches its climax in the section going from book 12 to 14, through the discussion of science and wisdom, the object of our next chapter.

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   [131] 10.7 (320. Trans. Hill, 292): 'sub eo scilicet cui subdenda est, supra ea quibus praeponenda est; sub illo a quo regi debet, supra ea quae regere debet'.
   [132] 10.9 f. (322 ff.).
   [133] 10.11 (324. Trans. Hill, 295):

quia in his est quae cum amore cogitat, sensibilibus autem, id est corporalibus, cum amore assuefacta est, non ualet sine imaginibus eorum esse in semetipsa. Hinc ei oboritur erroris dedecus dum rerum sensarum imagines secernere a se non potest ut se solam uideat; cohaeserunt enim mirabiliter glutino amoris. Et haec est eis immunditia quoniam dum se solam nititur cogitare hoc se putat esse sine quo se non potest cogitare.

10

Wisdom or Augustine's Ideal
of Philosophy

By this stage of our exploration of the *De Trinitate*, it will have become clear that Augustine's recurrent criticism of philosophers in this treatise goes beyond disagreement on some of their conclusions or even on all of them, and challenges the very possibility of philosophizing without Christ. It is no accident that the main polemical sections against philosophers are to be found in the Christological books of the treatise, namely books 4 and 13. Following Augustine's own way of dealing with this issue, we analysed these polemical sections against philosophers in connection with Christology. It will be useful to recall our conclusions here.

In books 4 and 13 Augustine tackled the issue from the angle of the common human desire for happiness and from that of mediation. Philosophers' attempt to deal with happiness by either restricting it to this mortal life or trying to ignore it through a neutral attitude which neither wishes nor shuns it, exemplifies not only ethical but also epistemological depravity and aversion of sinful humanity. Depravity (*prauitas*) qualifies the corruption of our desire for happiness, so that we want to be happy, but we do not want what is good, we do not want happiness rightly (*recte*). Our hearts are fixed in an aversion (*auersio*) from light and truth. Added to our mortality, depravity and aversion give a full picture of our illness (*infirmitas*): we are made for eternity, truth, and love but we find ourselves prisoners of death, error, and unhappiness. Philosophers share the worst destiny of all because to this illness they add pride and self-delusion. They behave as if human illness had not had any bearings on their ability or possibility of knowing. They try to reach blessedness and truth by their own efforts; they rely on their own strength (*uirtus*), thinking they do not need any mediation and thus falling below even those who resort to demons for this mediation.

From these polemical passages against philosophers it appeared that Augustine was not simply criticizing some of their views but questioning the foundations of received epistemology altogether. We saw how, in the suggestive opening passage of the fourth book, he opposed two kinds of

sciences: one which yields pride and is severed from wisdom and the other which proceeds from charity and which 'builds up'.[1] We know from Augustine himself that this introduction to the fourth book was added at the time of the final editing of the treatise.[2] By that stage, books 9 to 14 had been written already and the discussion of self-knowledge had proved to be the most apt in illustrating the epistemological deadlock of the pretension to philosophize without Christ. This is why, in this introduction to the fourth book, the object of the real science was self-knowledge and was identified with the knowledge of our illness. In the end, this short prologue to the fourth book proves to be one of the best summaries of the sections of books 9 to 14 of the *De Trinitate*.

This is what our own analysis of the second half of the treatise and in particular of books 9 to 11 has established so far. The paradox of self-knowledge, or rather of self-forgetting (*obliuio sui*) is highlighted by Augustine because it is paradigmatic of philosophical activity as a whole. Apart from books 4 and 13, the other main polemical section against philosophers is to be found in book 10, as we have seen, where errors of philosophers concerning the nature of the soul—especially the materialist views of the Physicists—are attributed to dysfunctional self-knowledge. Under the heading of 'Augustine's genesis of self-alienation', we explored the relation he establishes between self-forgetting—the contrary of self-knowledge—and covetousness, that is the distortion of the right order between using and enjoying. Self-forgetting results not only from the covetousness which enjoys that which should simply be used, but also from the pride which refuses to enjoy that which indeed should be enjoyed, but in God, in dependence on God.

Thus, the lengthy treatment on self-love and self-knowledge of books 9 to 11 echoes the prologue to the fourth book: from the vantage point of the restoration of our ability to know God made possible through the love mediated through Christ in the Holy Spirit, Augustine throws a theological light on to epistemology as such. Sin impaired not only our ability to know God, but our ability to know altogether, as the examples of happiness and of self-knowledge prove. Covetousness and pride are the causes of this situation and therefore they are that which the love and the humility of God have come to heal. If books 4 and 13 establish that it is impossible to philosophize without Christ, the second half of the *De Trinitate* as a whole is meant to refine this assertion by stating that the integrity of our ability to know ourselves and therefore God and everything else depends on love (*dilectio*).

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[1] 4.1 (159), quoting 1 Cor. 8:1.   [2] *ep.* 174 (CCL 50, 26).

The discussion of science and wisdom Augustine undertakes from book 12 onwards can therefore be approached as his own version of what a restored epistemology should look like. The analysis of this version shall occupy us in this chapter.

I. SCIENCE AND WISDOM

The prologue of book 4 we have mentioned few times already, opposed two sciences. In contrast to the science constituted by the knowledge of our illness stemming from the charity which builds up, Augustine criticized the proud science which indeed 'deals with earthly and celestial things' but *inflat*, 'puffs up'.[3] This proud science, which in fact coincides with philosophy without the Mediator,[4] does not count as real knowledge for Augustine, because it is severed from wisdom. We saw how, in book 4, despite apparent generous concessions to what philosophers relying on their own strength can know, Augustine denies them knowledge in wisdom itself: the fact that philosophers have been right in arguing that all temporal realities have been made in eternal reasons, does not mean that they were able to know in these reasons.[5] As a result, paradoxically, philosophers do not really know even that which seems to be within their reach in the mutable and temporal realm of empirical experience because they cannot contemplate the eternal reasons of these things in God himself, in wisdom itself.[6]

In the fourth book, this demonstration was driven by the theological presupposition of the Incarnation of Christ and of his mediatory role with regard to the vision or contemplation of the Father: weighed down by the consequences of our covetousness and pride in our dealings with temporal things, we had become unable to grasp eternal things and were therefore in need of purification. This purification had to be performed through the same reality which had become not the *cause* but the *occasion* of our fall, namely temporal realities (*temporalia*)—the *causes* are covetousness and pride. From this standpoint Augustine developed his treatment of the agreement (*conuenientia*) of the Incarnation not only with regard to the possibility of knowing God, but to the restoration of our ability to know as such. Only in Christ is the object of faith—through the intermediary of temporal realities—the same as the object of the eschatological vision, even though the modality of knowledge is different. Only in Christ science and wisdom are finally reconnected and the

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[3] 4.1 (159).   [4] 14.26 (459).   [5] 4.21 (188).   [6] Ibid.

light shed by the latter restores the former by freeing it from the slavery of covetousness and pride.[7]

Exactly the same pattern presides over the structure of books 12 to 14, but with a deeper analysis of these motifs and the addition of the theme of the image of God. The twelfth book is devoted to the discussion of science and wisdom with an emphasis on the consequences of sin on the former; book 13 again presents Christ and especially the love mediated through his reconciling activity in the Holy Spirit as the restoring factor of the right relation between science and wisdom; finally, book 14 dwells on wisdom and applies the identity between revelation and reconciliation to the reformation and renewal of man in the knowledge of God (*in agnitione Dei*) through Christ in the Holy Spirit, through the theme of the image of God.

Very interestingly, the main scriptural framework for the establishment of the distinction and of the relation between science and wisdom in book 12 is the account of the fall in the first book of Genesis. The first reason for this choice is, of course, the introduction of the theme of the image of God which anticipates the discussion of book 14. But the inseparability between the ethical and the epistemological consequences of the fall is just as crucial to the intention presiding over this choice. Of course, the temptation to resort to allegorical explanations of the account of the fall to reduce it to a myth cannot be attributed to Augustine. In reality, Augustine's purpose behind the close association of the dynamics of the first sin with the dysfunctional relation between science and wisdom flows from the theological presupposition consisting in the identification between reconciliation and revelation. The causes of separation from God and of the impossibility of knowing him—and of knowing everything else through something which can count as *real* knowledge—are the same: pride and covetousness. Thus, the lengthiest account of the consequences of sin on knowledge can be found precisely in the twelfth book, devoted to the definition of science and wisdom and of their relation to each other.

Augustine is a realist. Added to what we have seen concerning the place of knowledge from the senses in the process of knowledge, he maintains that 'before we come to the knowledge of intelligible things that are supreme and everlasting, we meet the rational knowledge of temporal things'.[8] Even negatively, if sensible, mutable, and temporal realities can have such a baneful influence on us, it is because of their unavoidable place both on the epistemological and the ethical level. The right kind of dealings with these realities is

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[7] 4.24 ff. (191–195).
[8] 12.25 (379. Trans. Hill, 336): 'antequam ad cognitionem rerum intellegebilium atque summarum quae sempiternae sunt ueniremus, temporalium rerum cognitio rationalis occurrit'.

necessary for the development of the virtues through which we can live rightly and reach happiness.[9] Thus, the necessary inter-relation between science and wisdom goes both ways, that is science is just as necessary to wisdom as wisdom is to science. Augustine sees them as the two functions of the unique mind.[10] The function of science is the 'action by which we make good use of temporal things', whereas the function of wisdom is the 'contemplation of eternal things'.[11] The 'function' of wisdom very much echoes what we have seen concerning illumination:

> But it pertains to the loftier reason to make judgments on these bodily things according to non-bodily and everlasting meanings; and unless these were above the human mind they would certainly not be unchanging, and unless something of ours were subjoined to them we would not be able to make judgments according to them about bodily things. But we do make judgments on bodily things in virtue of the meaning of dimensions and figures which the mind knows is permanent and unchanging.[12]

Thus wisdom fulfils a discriminating role in our dealings with temporal things which, properly speaking, are the object of the other function of human mind, namely science:

> However, while that part of us, which is occupied with the performance of bodily and temporal actions in such a way that it is not common to us and beasts, is indeed rational, still it has, so to say, been led off from that rational substance of our minds by which we cling from underneath to the intelligible and unchanging truth, and deputed to the task of dealing with and controlling these lower matters.[13]

In Augustine's treatment of the relation between science and wisdom, it is very difficult to distinguish that which applies to epistemology as such and that which specifically applies to knowledge of God, undoubtedly because he himself was unwilling to draw such a distinction. Thus, the description of the function of wisdom at the end of book 12,[14] contains the criticism of Platonic reminiscence theories and of the Pythagorean theory of transmigration of souls and one of the most well-known texts concerning the metaphor of illumination which we have analysed already and which seems to concern general epistemology, irrespective of our sinful condition. When Augustine says that intelligible realites are available to the human mind—'available to

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[9] 12.21 (374 f.).   [10] 12.3 (357 f.).   [11] 12.22 (375).

[12] 12.2 (357. Trans. Hill, 323):

sublimioris rationis est iudicare de istis corporalibus secundum rationes incorporales et sempiternas quae nisi supra mentem humanam essent, incommutabiles profecto non essent, atque his nisi subiungeretur aliquid nostrum, non secundum eas possemus de corporalibus iudicare. Iudicamus autem de corporalibus ex ratione dimensionum atque figurarum quam incommutabiliter manere mens nouit.

[13] 12.3 (357).   [14] 12.22–24 (375–379).

the inspection of the mind'[15] he also adds: 'Few have the acuteness of mind to reach these ideas, and when someone does manage as far as possible to attain them he does not abide in them, because his very acuteness of mind gets blunted so to say and beaten back, and there is only a transitory thought about a non-transitory thing.'[16] It is not clear here whether this difficulty in reaching the contemplation of intelligible realities depends on the nature of these realities or on our sinful condition. Only by combining such declarations with the scathing criticism of philosophers in book 4, where knowledge in wisdom itself or knowledge of eternal reasons is denied to them precisely *because of their pride*, it is possible to argue that, for Augustine, reconciliation with the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit is integral to the restoration of the mutual dependence between wisdom and science. Once again, Augustine is prepared to acknowledge some sort of knowledge to philosophers and to resort to the very metaphor of illumination to talk of a positive action of light reaching—or rather, 'touching'—even sinners.[17] But these are concessions.

The character of *real* and *proper* knowledge cannot be attributed to a fleeting and uncertain perception of intelligible realities somehow entrusted to memory for both the discernment necessary to the definition and the judgement integral to the process of knowledge.[18] The integrity of this process of knowledge is restored only when the mind is *totally* devoted to the contemplation of truth,[19] according to the following description:

> it is clear that when we live according to God our mind should be intent on his invisible things and thus progressively be formed from his eternity, truth and charity, and yet that some of our rational attention, that is to say some of the same mind, has to be directed to the utilisation of changeable and bodily things without which this life cannot be lived; this however not in order to be *conformed to this world* (Rom 12.2) by setting up such goods as the final goal and twisting our appetite for happiness onto them, but in order to do whatever we do in the reasonable use of temporal things with an eye to the acquisition of eternal things, passing by the former on the way, setting our hearts on the latter to the end.[20]

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[15] 12.23 (376. Trans. Hill, 335): 'praesto sunt mentis aspectibus'.

[16] Ibid.: 'Ad quas mentis acie peruenire paucorum est, et cum peruenitur quantum fieri potest, non in eis manet ipse peruentor, sed ueluti acies ipsa reuerberata repellitur et fit rei non transitoriae transitoria cogitatio.'

[17] 14.21 (451).   [18] 12.23 (376 f.).   [19] 12.10 (365).

[20] 12.21 (374. Trans. Hill, 333):

cum secundum deum uiuimus, mentem nostram in inuisibilia eius intentam ex eius aeternitate, ueritate, caritate proficienter debere formari, quiddam uero rationalis intentionis nostrae, hoc est eiusdem mentis, in usum mutabilium corporaliumque rerum sine quo haec uita non agitur dirigendum, non ut conformetur huic saeculo finem constituendo in bonis talibus et in ea detorquendo beatitudinis appetitum, sed ut quidquid in usu temporalium rationabiliter facimus aeternorum adipiscendorum contemplatione faciamus per ista transeuntes, illis inhaerentes.

The epistemological integrity thus described works both ways. On the one hand, contemplation of truth—which relies on illumination—is needed for the definition and the judgement necessary for proper intellectual knowledge. On the other hand, it is not possible to govern our life properly if our mind does not devote itself to the right dealings with temporal realities—through the right hierarchy between using and enjoying—to reach the truth which *is not just object of knowledge, but also and more importantly object of love and desire.* The inseparability between knowledge and love should never be forgotten when reading Augustine. The process of knowledge is set off by desire for the object to be known and is completed only through the union with the object known through love.

However, it is above all the lengthy discussion on the epistemological consequences of sin which militates in favour of a reading of the relation between science and wisdom inseparable from Christ's mediatory and reconciliatory role. This section[21] is built around the heading of covetousness and pride we have seen at work each time Augustine talks about sin.

Covetousness takes over when the function of the mind which is delegated to the administration of temporal realities lets itself to be caught by external realities to the point of escaping from the supervision of the superior part of the mind, thus losing the enlightenment of truth.[22] As usual when dealing with this topic, Augustine indulges in graphic descriptions of this decadence, evoking for example the 'fanciful sort of fornication' through which the mind 'defiles itself foully'.[23] Just as was the case for each stage of the process of knowledge we explored earlier on, even so for the relation between science and wisdom, the main consequence of covetousness is the perversion of the right order between using and enjoying: 'But when the mind, greedy for experience or for superiority or for the pleasure of physical contact, does something to obtain the things that are sensed through the body to the extent of setting its end and its proper good in them, then whatever it does it does basely and *commits fornication, sinning against its own body* (1 Cor 6.18).'[24] Temporal realities in themselves are neutral. They become occasions for sin only when we try to enjoy them as if they could suffice for our happiness instead of referring them to the end represented by the highest good:

But the appetite is very close to the reasoning of science, seeing that it is the function of this science to reason about the bodily things that are perceived by bodily sensation. If it does this well, it does it in order to refer them to the highest good as their end; if

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[21] 12.13–20 (367–374). [22] 12.13 (368): 'illustratio ueritatis'. [23] 12.14 (369).
[24] 12.15 (369. Trans. Hill, 330): 'Cum uero (mens) propter adipiscenda ea quae per corpus sentiuntur propter experiendi uel excellendi uel contrectandi cupiditatem ut in his finem boni sui ponat aliquid agit, quidquid agit turpiter agit.'

badly, in order to enjoy them as goods of a sort it can take its ease in with an illusory happiness.[25]

At the same time, temporal realities become objects of sin also through pride. Loving its own power more than God, the mind tries to govern itself according to its own whims rather than following the harmonious guidance of God's laws.[26] Our pretension to act as if we were under nobody (*sub nullo*) leads us to the degrading slavery of covetousness.[27] This pride results in the science which puffs up censured in the prologue of book 4. The quotation from 1 Corinthians 8:1 around which the prologue of book 4 was built—'*Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up*'—recurs twice in book 12, each time in key sentences summing up the core of Augustine's argument:

If you neglect to hold dear in charity the wisdom (*caritas sapientiae*) which always remains the same, and hanker after science (*concupiscitur scientiae*) through experience of changeable, temporal things, this science puffs up instead of building up. In this way the consciousness is overweighted with a sort of self-heaviness, and is therefore heaved out of happiness . . . ; nor can it go back up again, having squandered and lost its strength, except by the grace of its maker calling it to repentance and forgiving its sins. For *who will ever free* the hapless soul *from the body of this death except by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom 7.24)?[28]

and

For science too is good within its own proper limits if what puffs up or tends to puff up in it is overcome by the love of eternal things, which does not puff up but builds up, as we know. Indeed without science one cannot have the virtues which make for right living and by which this woeful life is so conducted that one may finally reach the truly happy life which is eternal.[29]

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[25] 12.17 (371. Trans. Hill, 331, modified):

Rationi autem scientiae appetitus uicinus est quandoquidem de ipsis corporalibus quae sensu corporis sentiuntur ratiocinatur ea quae scientia dicitur actionis; si bene ut eam notitiam referat ad finem summi boni; si autem male ut eis fruatur tamquam bonis talibus in quibus falsa beatitudine conquiescat.

[26] 12.14 (368).   [27] 12.16 (370 f.).
[28] 12.16 (370 f. Trans. Hill, 331, modified):

Cum enim neglecta caritate sapientiae quae semper eodem modo manet concupiscitur scientia ex mutabilium temporaliumque experimento, inflat non aedificat; ita praegrauatus animus quasi pondere suo a beatitudine expellitur, . . . nec redire potest effusis ac perditis uiribus nisi gratia conditoris sui ad poenitentiam uocantis et peccata donantis. *Quis* enim infelicem animam *liberabit a corpore mortis huius* nisi *gratia dei per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum?*

The end of this passage reads: 'De qua gratia suo loco quando ipse praestiterit disseremus' and refers to the development on Christology and reconciliation of book 13.
[29] 12.21 (374 f. Trans. Hill, 334, modified):

Habet enim et scientia modum suum bonum si quod in ea inflat uel inflare assolet aeternorum caritate uincatur, quae non inflat sed, ut scimus, aedificat. Sine scientia quippe nec uirtutes ipsae

Therefore, the same pride and covetousness responsible for separation from God compromise the whole process of knowledge. Restoration of this relation and of the possibility of knowing can only be granted through Christ's grace, that is the love (*caritas* or *dilectio*) poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The description of this restoration, however, is unfolded through the theme of the image of God which also summarizes the whole project Augustine was pursuing through the treatise and which we shall reserve for the next chapter.

II. PHILOSOPHY AS WORSHIP

It would be totally erroneous of course, to deduce from what we have seen so far that the doctrine of the Trinity is only instrumental to other aims. On the contrary, it is precisely the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity or, rather, of what God the Trinity *is*—his life, his light, his love—that, once discovered, forces Augustine to reconsider anthropology, epistemology and philosophy from this new perspective. We have looked already at epistemology and we shall explore anthropology in the chapter concerning the image of God. In the present chapter, we take up the way Augustine's ideal of philosophy was reshaped in the light of the Trinity.

It will have become evident by now that, from this viewpoint, the *De Trinitate* is of enormous significance. It can be seen as the mature outcome of one of the most encompassing factors in Augustine's long life, namely his love for wisdom. Book 14 starts by discussing the possibility of attributing the title of 'wise man' (*sapiens*) to oneself. Unusually, Augustine appeals to the authority of a philosopher, Pythagoras, without any of the precautions or slight ironical hints he usually resorts to whenever he quotes a philosopher (cf., for example, the *philosophaster* applied to Cicero in the *De ciuitate Dei*).[30] Imitating Pythagoras, Augustine does not dare to call himself 'wise' (*sapiens*) but only 'wisdom-lover' (*philosophus*). Wisdom is indeed the most pervasive theme of the *De Trinitate* and even though, in the course of the treatise, sometimes it plays an instrumental role and other times seems to disappear, in the whole final section going from book 12 to book 15, it becomes the focus of the argument. 'Wisdom' is Augustine's chosen term to designate the specific character of proper knowledge of God and of the result of God's redeeming action

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quibus recte uiuitur possunt haberi per quas haec uita misera sic gubernetur ut ad illam quae uere beata est perueniatur aeternam.

[30] *ciu. Dei* 2.27 (CCL 47, 62).

on our ability to know as such. God the Trinity himself is Wisdom and his reconciling and revelatory action on us makes us wise. Insofar as 'philosophy' is love for wisdom, the Trinity—i.e. Christ's reconciling action with the Father through the Holy Spirit—becomes the condition for its possibility. Thus, the *De Trinitate* is not only a treatise of theology; it is inseparably a treatise of philosophy as well. It can be considered as the outcome of Augustine's life-long criticism of those who pretend to be able to philosophize without Christ. Two passages, one from the *Confessions* and the other from the *De Trinitate*, constitute excellent demonstrations of this point. They could be seen as the bookends holding together a life-long concern and revealing the extraordinary continuity, the stubborn and relentless determination Augustine devoted to claim the monopoly of what properly deserves the name of philosophical activity for Christians alone.

The first text from the *Confessions* is the well-known discovery of Cicero's *Hortensius*:

Following the usual curriculum, I had come across a book by a certain Cicero, whose language (but not his heart) almost everyone admires. That book of his contains an exhortation to study philosophy and is entitled *Hortensius*. The book changed my feelings. It altered my prayers, Lord, to be towards you yourself. It gave me different values and priorities. Suddenly every vain hope became empty to me, and I longed for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour in my heart. I began to rise up to return to you. ... For with you is wisdom. 'Love of wisdom' is the meaning of the Greek word *philosophia*. ... The one thing that delighted me in Cicero's exhortation was the advice 'not to study one particular sect but to love and seek and pursue and hold fast and strongly embrace wisdom itself, wherever found'. One thing alone put a break on my intense enthusiasm—that the name of Christ was not contained in the book.[31]

The second text is a long extract from Cicero's *Hortensius*, quoted at the end of book 14, which is the book where Augustine sets out his mature version of what real wisdom is.[32] This quotation is characterized by the deferential tone one reserves to an authority he is indebted to and yet, at the same time, by a clear demarcation which echoes the final sentence of the parallel passage from the *Confessions* just quoted. Our life must be devoted to philosophy, that is 'in reason and eager inquiry' ('in ratione et inuestigandi cupiditate'). In this activity 'is our great hope' because it makes 'easier their ascent and return to heaven' ('faciliorem ascensum et reditum in caelum').[33] This expresses Augustine's own love for wisdom, this is his own notion of philosophy. And yet, Cicero is irremediably wrong on several points.

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[31]　*conf.* 3.7 f. (CCL 27, 29 f.).　　　[32]　14.26 (457 ff.).　　　[33]　14.26 (458).

To begin with, Augustine deplores the proud Stoic detachment which dissociates the value of our activity from its end. Cicero thinks that philosophy is a value in itself whether there is life after death or not. This denotes a crucial epistemological fault which goes against the fundamental Augustinian standpoint concerning the inseparability between knowledge and love. Stoic indifference for the end denotes lack of love. Enquiry into truth (*inuestigatio ueritatis*) is not enough. An understanding of philosophy as that 'which makes happy by contemplation of the truth' cannot be accounted for without a desire for happiness, a topic Augustine developed in the thirteenth book. This is why, a real philosopher leads his life *both* 'in the love of and inquiry into truth' ('in amore atque inuestigatione ueritatis').[34]

Then, that which, already at the time of the *Confessions*, had simply 'put a brake' on Augustine's 'intense enthousiasm' for the *Hortensius*, by the time of the *De Trinitate* had developed into a full-blown and uncompromising persuasion of the impossibility of philosophizing without Christ:

But this course which is set in the love of and inquiry into truth, is not enough for unhappy men, that is for all mortals who have this reason alone without any faith in the mediator. This point I have tried to demonstrate as best I could in the previous books, especially the fourth and the thirteenth.[35]

Reference to books 4 and 13 in this definition of proper philosophy confirms our claim as to the crucial role played by Christology not only with regard to knowledge of God, but also for the redefinition of the parameters of epistemology as such. No science or at least nothing which counts as *real science* is possible without wisdom, that is that specific kind of wisdom which is only restored in Christ' Incarnation, in his sacrifice, in his gift of the Holy Spirit, and in his mediatory role with regard to the vision or contemplation of the Father. This is what is implied in the definition of wisdom as *dei cultus*, 'worship of God'. The tenuous Scriptural basis for this definition is a sentence from a Latin version of the book of Job Augustine found after assiduous scrutinizing of many translations of Scripture: 'Behold, piety is wisdom.'[36] He knew what he was looking for and did not hesitate even to subject this sentence

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[34] 14.26 (459).

[35] 14.26 (459. Trans. Hill, 392):

Sed iste cursus qui constituitur in amore atque inuestigatione ueritatis non sufficit miseris, id est omnibus cum ista sola ratione mortalibus sine fide mediatoris, quod in libris superioribus huius operis, maxime in quarto et tertio decimo quantum potui demonstrare curaui.

[36] 'After searching the multiple stores of holy scriptures', 12.22 (375, 334): 'Ecce pietas est sapientia', cf. Job 28:28.

to some philological strain to reach his aim.[37] In reality, however, this notion of wisdom as 'the true and principal worship of God'[38] encapsulates the theological epistemology resulting from the doctrine of revelation, Christology and doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is summed up in the following sentence:

And what is the worship of him but the love of him by which we now desire to see him, and believe and hope that we will see him? And however much progress we make, we see now *in a puzzling reflection in a mirror, but then it will be* 'in clear'; for this is what the apostle Paul means by *face to face* (1 Cor 13.12); and also what John means: *Beloved, we are now sons of God, and that which we shall be has not yet appeared. We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (1 Jn 3.2).[39]

Despite the use of the word *amor* here, the worship of God Augustine is referring to consists, of course, in *dilectio*, that is God's love and love for God. Anticipating a little on the theme of the image of God, we can already quote another key sentence which states this point very clearly: 'Let it then remember its God to whose image it was made, and understand and love him. To put it in a word, let it worship the uncreated God, by whom it was created with a capacity for him and able to share in him; it is after all written *Behold, the worship of God is wisdom* (Jb 18.28).'[40] This identification between wisdom and worship through the intermediary of *dilectio* is the outcome of the whole argument of the *De Trinitate*.

  Finally, let us observe that, even though the Augustinian theology of sacrifice is not explicitly resorted to, it evidently is in the background of this identification, especially on the basis of the central role of love, of Christology, and of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in this definition of wisdom. In our exploration of the doctrine of sacrifice, we saw that the visibile sacrifice is sign of the invisible sacrifice constituted by a humble and repentant heart and, more deeply, by charity. In the New Covenant, only love confers value and meaning to our sacrifices or worship. More exactly, in the New Covenant,

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[37] Cf. 12.22 (375) and 14.1 (421), where he argues that, in the sentence 'Ecce pietas est sapientia', through the Greek translation of the word *pietas* as θεοσέβεια, it is possible to intepret *pietas* as meaning *dei cultus*.

[38] 14.1 (421. Trans. Hill, 370): 'uerus ac praecipuus cultus Dei'.

[39] 12.22 (375. Trans. Hill, 334):

Et quis cultus eius nisi amor eius quo nunc desideramus eum uidere credimusque et speramus nos esse uisuros, et quantum proficimus *uidemus nunc per speculum in aenigmate*, tunc autem 'in manifestatione'? Hoc est enim quod ait apostolus Paulus, *facie ad faciem*; hoc etiam quod Iohannes: *Dilectissimi, nunc filii dei sumus, et nondum apparuit quod erimus. Scimus quia cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus quoniam uidebimus eum sicuti est.*

[40] 14.15 (443. Trans. Hill, 383): 'Meminerit itaque dei sui ad cuius imaginem facta est eumque intellegat atque diligat. Quod ut breuius dicam, colat deum non factum cuius ab eo capax facta est et cuius esse particeps potest; propter quod scriptum est: *Ecce dei cultus est sapientia*.'

there is only one sacrifice and only one worship acceptable to God and making us acceptable to God, that is the love through which Christ gave himself over to death on the cross. This is why wisdom is in fact identified with *dilectio*, i.e. love of God and love for God and our neighbour, as we have seen above in the sentence from the twelfth book: 'what is the worship of him but the love of him'[41] and then in the identification of love and worship of the sentence from the fourteenth book: 'and love him. To put it in a word, let it worship the uncreated God'.[42] Thus, 'philosophizing *with Christ*' restores *dilectio* and heals pride. The 'wisdom-lover' acknowledges his dependence on God at the very root of his ability and possibility of knowing. His philosophy becomes worship.

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[41] 12.22 (375. Trans. Hill, 334): 'quis cultus eius nisi amor eius?'
[42] 14.15 (443. Trans. Hill, 383): 'eumque diligat. Quod ut breuius dicam, colat deum'.

11

The Image of God

Augustine's doctrine of the image of God is a wide-ranging theme which needs to be adequately located within the larger picture of his theological thought if something of its depth and of its complexity are to be perceived. This is why, more than for any of the other themes examined so far, it is necessary to step back from the *De Trinitate* for a little while and trace back to the genesis of this doctrine in Augustine's earlier works.

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IMAGE

Question 51 of the *De diuersis quaestionibus* (AD 388–396) is one of Augustine's most comprehensive early texts dealing with the image of God, which anticipates virtually all the main issues he developed subsequently in relation to this theme.[1] Within the framework of an enquiry into whether the image of God is to be understood of the body (*corpus*) and of the mind (*mens*) alike, we find here one of the earliest instances of the distinction between 'image' and 'likeness' (*similitudo*). Both body and mind bear the seal of God's likeness (*similitudo*) and for this reason they are the object of his salvific action, even though[2] the 'inward man', that is the mind, is renewed through justification already, now, whereas the 'outward man', that is the body, shall be renewed at the time of the resurrection.[3] This assertion leads to the main point: is it legitimate to claim that the body bears God's likeness as well? We only need to remember Augustine's strenuous intellectual struggle to overcome his own Manichaean prejudices against an alleged Christian materialistic notion of God[4] to appreciate the importance of this issue for him. In this same *Quaestio* 51, while reaching the conclusion that the body indeed bears some likeness to God (in the way we are about to see), he nevertheless feels the

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[1] Our interpretation of this text owes a great deal to Sullivan (1963), 15–22.
[2] Following 2 Cor. 4:16 which is the basis of the argument in this passage.
[3] *diu. qu.* 51.1 (CCL 44/A, 78 f.).   [4] *conf.* 5.20 (CCL 27, 68 f.).

need to issue a warning against materialistic notions of God.[5] The heart of
the passage runs as follows:

That there is no inconsistency in the scriptural claim that the body also was made in
the likeness of God is easily understood by the person who pays careful attention to the
words *And God made all things exceedingly good*. For no one doubts that God himself
is the primal good. Indeed, things can be said to be similar to God in many ways. (i)
Some, created in accordance with power and wisdom, are similar because uncreated
power and wisdom are in him; (ii) others are similar insofar as they simply live, because
he is supremely life and the source of life; (iii) and others are similar insofar as they
have being, because he is the highest being and the source of being. And accordingly
(iii) those things which merely exist and yet do not live or know are in his likeness,
not completely, but in a slight degree, because even they are good in their own order,
since he is that good transcending all things from whom everything good proceeds.
(ii) However, everything which lives but does not know shares somewhat more in his
likeness, for what lives also exists, but not every existing thing also lives. (i) Moreover,
as for those beings which know, they are so near to God's likeness that no other created
beings are closer, for what shares in wisdom both lives and exists. However, what lives
necessarily exists, though it does not necessarily know. For this reason, since man can
participate in wisdom according to the inner man, as such he is in the image of God in
such a way that he is formed without the interposition of any other nature. Therefore
nothing is more closely united to God, for man knows and lives and exists and thus is
unsurpassed among created beings.[6]

Virtually everything's in this passage is worth noticing.

First of all, Augustine establishes a distinction between 'likeness' (*simili-
tudo*) and 'image' (*imago*). The likeness of God concerns everything which
exists and has life insofar as to exist means to participate in God's being and

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[5] *diu. qu.* 51.4 (CCL 44/A, 82): 'Sed cauendum in talibus, ne quid nimis asseuerandum pute-
tur, illa re sane salubriter custodita, ne, quoniam corpus quodlibet per localia spatia porrectum
est, aliquid tale credatur esse substantia dei. Nam res quae in parte minor est quam in toto nec
dignitati animae conuenit, quanto minus maiestati dei.'
[6] *diu. qu.* 51.2 (CCL 44/A, 79 f. Trans. Mosher 85 f.):

Quomodo autem non sit incongruum, quod dicitur etiam corpus factum ad similitudinem dei,
facile intellegit qui diligenter attendit quod dictum est: *Et fecit Deus omnia bona ualde*; nemo
enim dubitat, quod sit ipse primitus bonus. Multis enim modis dici res possunt similes deo:
(i) aliae secundum uirtutem et sapientiam factae, quia in ipso est uirtus et sapientia non facta;
(ii) aliae in quantum solum uiuunt, quia ille summe et primitus uiuit; (iii) aliae in quantum
sunt, quia ille summe et primitus est. Et ideo (iii) quae tantummodo sunt, nec tamen uiuunt aut
sapiunt, non perfecte sed exigue sunt ad similitudinem eius, quia et ipsa bona sunt in ordine suo,
cum sit ille supra omnia bona, a quo bona sunt. (ii) Omnia uero quae uiuunt et non sapiunt,
paulo amplius participant similitudinem. Quod enim uiuit etiam est, non autem quidquid est,
etiam uiuit. (i) Iam porro quae sapiunt ita illi similitudini sunt proxima, ut in creaturis nihil sit
propinquius. Quod enim participat sapientiae et uiuit et est, quod autem uiuit necesse est ut sit,
non necesse est ut sapiat. Quare cum homo possit particeps esse sapientiae secundum interiorem
hominem, secundum ipsum ita est ad imaginem, ut nulla natura interposita formetur, et ideo
nihil sit deo coniunctius. Et sapit enim et uiuit et est, qua creatura nihil est melius.

goodness and, for animals and plants, in God's life as well. *This participation includes some notion of exemplarity*, i.e. it allows us to understand God's invisible qualities, his power and his divine nature, from what he has made, to paraphrase Romans 1:20, a passage Augustine's constantly quotes in this context.[7]

The notion of image is reserved to the highest form of likeness to God, our participation in God's wisdom (elsewhere attributed to the Son as well, although in a different way). Four characteristics of the image are outlined in this passage:

 (i) *the relation of exemplarity with the creator*, which the image has in common with all other beings, but to the highest possible level, 'they are so near to God's likeness that no other created beings are closer' ('ita illi similitudini sunt proxima, ut in creaturis nihil sit propinquius');

 (ii) *the immediacy of the link between the mind and God*, formulated through some expressions which are characteristic of Augustine's doctrine of the image of God: 'without the interposition of any other nature' ('nulla natura interposita'), 'no other created beings are closer' ('nihil sit propinquius'), 'nothing is more closely united to God' ('nihil sit Deo coniunctius').[8] The immediacy of this relation[9] distinguishes the likeness which belongs to the image of God from the likeness common to all other beings, the body included. The body can be united to God only through the intermediary of the mind.[10]

 (iii) *the dynamic and more particularly the relational (or Trinitarian) quality of the image* which appear in the assertion that 'man can participate in wisdom according to the inner man' ('possit particeps esse sapientiae secundum interiorem hominem') and especially in the accusative of

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 [7] Cf. for example *Trin.* 2.25 (114), 4.21 (188) etc.
 [8] Cf. Sullivan (1963), 16: 'The expression *nulla natura interposita* ... is used by Augustine so often in association with the image of God in man that it is almost the equivalent expression.' Cf. also Heijke (1956), 4 and 7, who quotes *Gn. litt. imp.* 16.55–60 (CSEL 28/1, 496–503); *Gn. litt.* 3.19 f. (CSEL 28/1, 84–87); *Trin.* 11.8 (344).
 [9] Further qualified in this passage through the formulas: 'nulla interposita substantia' and 'nulla interposita creatura'.
 [10] *diu. qu.* 51.3 (CCL 44/A, 80): 'Quod si exterior homo uita illa accipitur, qua per corpus sentimus quinque notissimis sensibus, quos cum pecoribus habemus communes ... non immerito et iste homo particeps dicitur similitudinis dei, non solum quia uiuit, quod etiam in bestiis apparet, sed amplius quod ad mentem conuertitur se regentem, quam inlustrat sapientia, quod in bestiis non potest ratione carentibus.'

ad imaginem ('in the image of God'). We are allowed to participate not only in God's being and life, but in his wisdom as well through knowledge and love. The Trinitarian aspect of this relational quality of the image is hinted at in a sentence in this same *Quaestio* 51 concerning the Son. Only the Son is '*the* image and *the* likeness' of God; we are '*to* the image and *to* the likeness of God' (*ad* plus the accusative in Latin) in the sense that we are not eternally equal to the Father like the Son, but we are called to grow in the image and in the likeness of the Father by adhering to him through the Son.[11]

(iv) *the distinction between a possibility and an actuality* in the life of the image, suggested in the sentence 'man can participate' ('possit particeps esse') which already announces the distinction we shall find in book 14 of the *De Trinitate* between capacity (*capax*) and participation (*participes*).[12] Two variables enter into the description of this feature of the image: the effect of the fall on the image;[13] the relation between the ontological goodness of creation and the likeness of God.[14]

Finally, the triad of 'being, life and knowledge' operative in this *Quaestio* can be traced back to the influence of Marius Victorinus.

The plan of the present chapter will follow the points we have disentangled in the analysis of this passage. We shall start by going deeper into the distinction between likeness and image and identify the role played by the exemplary (or 'analogical') aspect of the image of God in Augustine's Trinitarian thought. Then, we shall focus on the prominent relational caracter of the image of God which in fact encompasses all the features singled out above. This will require us to deal with all the main issues related to Augustine's doctrine of the image of God, namely: its roots in the doctrine of creation; its dependence on Plato's doctrine of participation; its kinship with the teaching of Plotinus and

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[11] *diu. qu.* 51.4 (CCL 44/A, 81 f.): 'Sed ad imaginem mentem factam uolunt, quae nulla interposita substantia ab ipsa ueritate formatur, qui etiam spiritus dicitur. . . . Ergo iste spiritus ad imaginem dei nullo dubitante factus accipitur, in quo est intellegentia ueritatis; haeret enim ueritati nulla interposita creatura.'

[12] Cf. 14.6 (428); 14.11 (436); 14.15 (443).

[13] In this same *diu. qu.* 51.1 (CCL 44/A, 78 f.), Augustine argues that the image is lost with the fall: 'Sed cum Adam, sicut a deo factus est, bonus non manserit, et diligendo carnalia carnalis effectus sit, non absurde uideri potest, hoc ipsum ei fuisse cadere imaginem dei et similitudinem amittere. Ac per hoc ipse renouatur et ipse est etiam interior.'

[14] *diu. qu.* 51.2 (CCL 44/A, 79): 'Quomodo autem non sit incongruum, quod dicitur etiam corpus factum ad similitudinem dei, facile intellegit qui diligenter attendit quod dictum est: *Et fecit deus omnia bona ualde*; nemo enim dubitat, quod sit ipse primitus bonus. . . . Et ideo quae tantummodo sunt, nec tamen uiuunt aut sapiunt, non perfecte sed exigue sunt ad similitudinem eius, quia et ipsa bona sunt in ordine suo, cum sit ille supra omnia bonus, a quo bona sunt.'

Marius Victorinus; the question of whether the image was lost with the fall or not; the question of whether the image is related to the Son or to the Trinity; the distinction between image created and image renewed or, according to the formulations some interpreters are fond of, the distinction between the 'natural' and 'supernatural' levels; and finally, the role of the image with regards to the knowledge of the Trinity and the bearing of this point on the interpretation of the *De Trinitate*.

i. 'Image-relation' and 'image-exemplar'

The *Quaestio* 51 already showed that likeness and image are not coextensive. This can surprise if we remember one of the main features of Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 1:26, as compared to that of other Fathers of the Church. While the latter tend to distinguish image from likeness, attributing the first to what we are as created and the second to what we become through God's saving action,[15] Augustine considers the two terms as synonymous. 'It is customary thing—he declares—to seek for the relation between image and likeness. The only relation I can see is that he [Moses] wished to signify the very same reality by these two words'.[16] Indeed, as we have seen above, the image always entails likeness,[17] at the very least because, even after the fall, we still retain being and life and some ability to know.

However, likeness does not have exactly the same meaning as image. There can exist beings which bear likeness with God, but are not his image nor do they possess equality with him: 'where [there is] a likeness, [there is] not necessarily an image and not necessarily an equality'.[18] Likeness is more apt to express the fundamental exemplary relation of all created reality with God usually declined along the lines of being, life, and wisdom we have seen above, but also of participation in the Son's divine likeness to the Father:

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[15] Cf. Jerome, *In illud Ezeck*. 2.29 (PL 25, 269): 'Et notandum, quod imago tunc [at the time of creation] facta sit tantum, similitudo in Christi baptismate compleatur', quoted by Sullivan (1963), 31 n. 45.

[16] *qu. Hept*. 5.4 (CSEL 28/2, 371): 'Quid intersit inter similitudinem et imaginem quaeri solet, sed hic non uideo quid interesse uoluerit, nisi aut duobus istis uocabulis unam rem significauerit.'

[17] Cf. also *diu. qu*. 74 (CCL 44/A, 213): 'Ubi imago, continuo similitudo, non continuo aequalitas'.

[18] *diu. qu*. 74 (CCL 44/A, 213. Trans. Mosher, 189): 'Ubi similitudo, non continuo imago non continuo aequalitas.'

The likeness of God, through which all things were made [i.e. the Son], is properly said to be the likeness, because it is not like by participation in some likeness, but is itself the first likeness, and whatever things God made through it are like by participation in it.[19]

While pointing to the dependence of every being on God, 'likeness' is mainly intended to stress the exemplary relation existing between created being and its creator. Applied to the Son, it expresses his role with regards to created reality which follows from his inner-Trinitarian equality with the Father. The following text formulates the way in which 'likeness', 'equality', and 'image' can be said of the Son:

In God . . . the conditions of time do not obtain, for God cannot be thought of as having begotten in time the Son through whom he has created the times. Hence it follows that not only is [the Son] his image, because he is from [God], and the likeness, because the image, but also the equality is so great that there is not even a temporal distinction standing in the way between them.[20]

If the Son is perfectly equal to the Father, what does the notion of 'image' add to that of 'equality'? Augustine explains that '[the Son is] his image, because he is from [God]' ('imago eius sit, quia de illo est'), thus drawing the attention on the main characteristic of the image as distinguished from equality and likeness. *The image is not intended primarily to stress exemplarity*—although always implying it, since every image is a likeness too—, *but the relation of origin*—'because he is from [God]' ('quia de illo est')—*and, we shall see, of end*. This is exactly the main feature of a definition of the image of God in human beings formulated in a passage from the unfinished book on *The literal interpretation of Genesis*:

And God said, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness. Every image is like that of which it is an image, but not everything which is like something is also its image. Thus, because in a mirror or in a picture there are images, they are also like. But if the one

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[19] *Gn. litt. imp.* 16.57 (CSEL 28/1, 498. Trans. Teske, 184):

Quapropter etiam similitudo dei, per quam facta sunt omnia, proprie dicitur similitudo, quia non participatione alicuius similitudinis similis est, sed ipsa est prima similitudo, cuius participatione similia sunt, quaecumque per illam fecit deus.

[20] *diu. qu.* 74 (CCL 44/A, 214. Trans. Mosher, 191):

In deo autem condicio temporis uacat—non enim potest recte uideri Deus in tempore generasse filium, per quem condidit tempora—, consequens est ut non solum imago eius sit, quia de illo est, et similitudo, quia imago est, sed etiam aequalitas tanta, ut nec temporis interuallum impedimento sit.

does not have its origin from the other, it is not said to be the image of the other. For it is an image only when it is derived from the other thing.[21]

The defining feature of the image is the relation of origin—'if the one has its origin from the other' ('si alter ex altero natus est') and 'when it is derived from the other thing' ('cum de aliquo exprimitur')[22]—which is to be combined with the distinction found in the text quoted above between the Son who is '*the* image and *the* likeness' of God and we who are '*to* the image and *to* the likeness of God' (*ad* plus the accusative in Latin): we are not eternally equal to the Father like the Son, but we are called to grow in the image and the likeness[23] of the Father by adhering to him through the Son.[24]

   One major conclusion can be drawn from this first overview of the doctrine of the image of God which shall prove greatly helpful for the understanding of the *De Trinitate*. 'Image' implies much more than the simple relation of exemplarity (i.e. of 'analogy') between human beings and God.[25] For the purpose of clarity, we shall distinguish the features which are specific to the image from the exemplary dimension which indeed belongs to the image as to all other created beings, although at the highest possible created level. On the one side, the defining qualities of the image, namely the immediacy of its link with God, its dynamic and more particularly Trinitarian relational character and its essential relation of origin (and of end) from God can be referred to under the heading of '*image-relation*'; on the other side, the exemplary character of the image can be referred to under the heading of '*image-exemplar*'. We are

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[21] *Gn. litt. imp.* 16.57 (CSEL 28/1, 497 f. Trans. Teske, 183 f.):

Et dixit Deus, Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram. Omnis imago est similis ei cuius imago est; nec tamen omne quod simile est alicui, etiam imago est eius: sicut in speculo et pictura quia imagines sunt, etiam similes sunt, tamen, si alter ex altero natus non est, nullus eorum imago alterius dici potest. Imago enim tunc est, cum de aliquo exprimitur.

[22] '*Exprimo*' here should be understood in the etymological sense derived from 'press, squeeze out'.

[23] Although mainly used to stress exemplar causality, there are instances where Augustine uses 'likeness' with exactly the same meaning as 'image' to portray the dynamic Trinitarian relation between us and God, cf. in particular *Trin.* 7.12 (266).

[24] *diu. qu.* 51.4 (CCL 44/A, 81 f.): 'Sed ad imaginem mentem factam uolunt, quae nulla interposita substantia ab ipsa ueritate formatur, qui etiam spiritus dicitur. . . . Ergo iste spiritus ad imaginem dei nullo dubitante factus accipitur, in quo est intellegentia ueritatis; haeret enim ueritati nulla interposita creatura.'

[25] Cf. Sullivan (1963), 16: 'Such expressions indicate that the relation of origin implies more than pure exemplarity. Ordinarily it would seem to include something of efficient causality, though this would not be verified in the case of that Image who is the Son of God.' Cf. also Ladner (1954), 874 f.: 'How little St. Augustine's concept of the divine image in man is exhausted by that of similitude, can be seen in his work *On the Trinity*.' Cf. *Trin.* 11.8 (344): 'Non sane omne quod in creaturis aliquo modo simile est deo etiam eius imago dicenda est, sed illa sola qua superior ipse solus est. Ea quippe de illo prorsus exprimitur inter quam et ipsum nulla interiecta natura est.'

aware that the introduction of this distinction runs the risk of separating that which in Augustine's mind was unified. However, a great deal of secondary literature on the *De Trinitate* seems to miss the relational aspect of the image almost completely and to take for granted that its epistemological status consists mainly if not exlusively in its exemplary character: these commentators only see the 'image-exemplar'.[26] This is virtually unavoidable when the *De Trinitate* is not read against the background of Augustine's doctrine of creation, together with the full appreciation of the bearing of his Christology and his doctrine of the Holy Spirit on the relational dynamism of the image.

Therefore, our next task is to become acquainted with the main features of Augustine's doctrine of creation.

II. AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF CREATION

i. The *De uera religione*

The earliest writing which can best introduce us into Augustine's doctrine of creation is the *De uera religione* (AD 390–391), written just before his ordination. This work is mainly directed against the Manichees,[27] with the intention of weaning 'Romanianus[28] from Manicheism toward a contemplative mode of Catholic Christianity'.[29] It contains the first explicit mention of the 'creator Trinity' ('Trinitas creatrix')[30] together with a shift from a waning optimism about Plato's philosophy to the increasingly self-conscious development of an ontology and an anthropology dependent on the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.

The anti-Manichaean stance of this work is reflected in the emphasis on the goodness of creation:

'Why did he make them?' So that they might be. Just being, after all, in whatever degree, is good, because the supreme Good is being in the supreme degree. 'What did he make them out of?' From nothing, since whatever is must have some kind of specific look, however minimal.[31]

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[26] For example, Gilson (1943), 286–298.   [27] *retr.* 1.xiii.1 (CCL 57, 36).
[28] Friend and benefactor of Augustine at Thagaste, cf. *conf.* 6.24 (CCL 27, 89).
[29] Van Fleteren (1999b), 864.   [30] *uera rel.* 7.13 (CCL 32, 196); cf. Du Roy (1966), 382.
[31] *uera rel.* 18.35 (CCL 32, 208 f. Trans. Hill, 51):

Cur ea fecit? Ut essent. Ipsum enim quantumcumque esse, bonum est; quia summum bonum est summe esse. Unde fecit? Ex nihilo. Quoniam quidquid est, quantulacumque specie sit necesse est. Ita etsi minimum bonum, tamen bonum erit, et ex deo erit. Nam quoniam summa species summum bonum est, minima species minimum bonum est.

Cf. also *uera rel.* 11.21 (CCL 32, 201): 'in quantum est quidquid est, bonum est'.

Insofar as something exists, it is good. This goodness, however, is not confined to mere existence, but is refracted into a threefold ontological constitution of reality, usually named as follows: (i) being (*esse*); (ii) form (*forma*); (iii) order (*ordo*), salvation (*salus*), integrity (*integritas*), peace (*pax*), agreement (*concordia*) etc. Whatever the Platonic, Neoplatonic or specifically Plotinian background of this distinction might be[32]—some aspects of issue shall be discussed later on in this chapter—Augustine intends to shape it anew in the light of the mystery of the Trinity:

When this Trinity is known, as far as that is given to us in this life, then it is perceived without the slightest doubt that every creature, intelligent, animated, material, (i) gets its being (*esse*), to the extent that it is, from the same creator Trinity (ii) and derives from that source its own specific nature (*forma*) (iii) and is governed by it in the most beatiful order (*ordo*) conceivable. . . . Every particular thing or substance or essence or nature, or whatever else you like to call it, has simultaneously about it these three aspects: that (i) it is one something, and that (ii) it is distinguished by its own proper look or species from other things, and that (iii) it does not overstep the order of things.[33]

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[32]   On this issue, cf. Vannier (1997), 125 ff.:

Sans doute la dialectique des degrés à laquelle il a recours pour expliciter la création rappelle-t-elle celle du *Banquet* (210a–212c) et de la *République* (VI, 510a–511e). Elle n'est pas sans analogie non plus avec Plotin (*Enn.* VI.4 (22), 11–5 (23), 2–10). Mais à la différence de ses prédécesseurs, Augustin ne présente pas la dialectique comme une remontée anagogique vers le monde des Idées ou vers l'Un. Il y voit plutôt le moyen de percevoir le rôle du créateur.

Despite his tendency to emphasize Augustine's dependence on 'Neoplatonic' sources, Du Roy (1966) ends up stressing the originality of Augustine's doctrine of creation. First of all, he acknowledges the possible dependence of the triadic ontological structure of creation on the 'three kinds of questions' of Cicero, Quintilianus, or Martianus Capella [cf. *conf.* 10.17 (CCL 27, 163): 'Tria genera esse questionum, an sit, quid sit, quale sit'] (p. 385), but he believes that this source is purely literary. He thinks that Augustine uses it only as the framework for the unfolding of a content elaborated under the influence of 'Neoplatonism' (p. 386). He then discusses the theory which traces the triad, *esse, species, ordo*, back to Porphyry (p. 387), but he believes that Plotinus is a more likely source (p. 407). Having said that, however, he carries on stressing the 'radical transformation' this triad undergoes in Augustine's writings and shows that the 'Neoplatonic' pattern is inverted (p. 408 f.):

Il s'agit pour lui [Augustin] de montrer que la chute de la créature ne pouvait atteindre au néant, mais qu'englobée par la providence divine dans son mouvement d'éloignement, elle était convertie par Dieu et stabilisée en lui. Ce cycle est d'abord indistinctement celui de la chute et de la création, puis il se différencie peu à peu en une création, dont la chute ne peut dénouer entièrement le processus et dont le salut reprend le mouvement pour l'achever.

[33]   *uera rel.* 7.13 (CCL 32, 196 f. Trans. Hill, 38):

qua trinitate quantum in hac uita datum est cognita, omnis intellectualis et animalis et corporalis creatura, ab eadem trinitate creatrice (i) esse in quantum est, (ii) et speciem suam habere, (iii) et ordinatissime administrari, sine ulla dubitatione perspicitur. . . . Omnis enim res, uel substantia, uel essentia, uel natura, uel si quo alio uerbo melius enuntiatur, simul habet haec tria; ut (i) et unum aliquid sit, (ii) et specie propria discernatur a ceteris, (iii) et rerum ordinem non excedat.

Such an insistence on the unity of the creative principle—against Manichaean dualism and Platonic eternity of matter—goes hand in hand with a stress on the goodness even of matter and body and the elaboration of an account of evil which progressively overcomes the deadlock, from a Christian viewpoint, of a cosmological approach of this issue.

The goodness of the body is explained with the help of the threefold pattern just highlighted. Like everything else which has existence, the body also 'has a certain harmony of its parts without which it could not be at all.... [It] gets a kind of peace from its shape, without which it would certainly be nothing.... [It] has a certain look about it, without which a body isn't a body.'[34] In this respect, this text represents an evolution as compared to the *Quaestio* 51 of the *De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* examined above, where Augustine was more tributary to the triad of 'being, life, knowledge' he had inherited from Marius Victorinus and did not mention the goodness of the body deriving from the agreement, the peace, and the beauty it also receives from its creator.

Then, in the *De uera religione*, Augustine deepens his characteristic account of evil and sin, well summarized in sentences of this kind: 'There is no life which is not from God, because God of course is supremely life and is himself the fountain of life; nor is any life, precisely as life, something evil, but only insofar as it tilts towards death.'[35] Or, the other way round,

And that is why death is not from God, because *God did not make death nor does he delight in the destruction of the living*, since the supreme Being makes everything to be that is, which is why he is also called Being. Death on the other hand forces whatever dies not to be, insofar as it dies. You see, if things that die were to die totally, they would without a doubt be reduced to nothing, but they only die to the extent that they participate less in being, which can be put more briefly like this: they die the more the less they are.[36]

Not only all created reality is good insofar as it is created, but it cannot go back into nothingness either. Rather than negatively, therefore, it would

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[34] *uera rel.* 11.21 (CCL 32, 200 f. Trans. Hill, 42): 'habet aliquam concordiam partium suarum, sine qua omnino esse non posset..., quamdam pacem suae formae, sine qua prorsus nihil esset..., aliquam speciem, sine qua corpus non est corpus'.

[35] *uera rel.* 11.21 (CCL 32, 200. Trans. Hill, 42): 'Nulla uita est quae non sit ex deo, quia deus utique summa uita est et ipse fons uitae, nec aliqua uita in quantum uita est, malum est, sed in quantum uergit ad mortem.'

[36] *uera rel.* 11.22 (CCL 32, 201. Trans. Hill, 43):

Et ideo ex deo non est mors. Non enim deus mortem fecit, nec laetatur in perditione uiuorum: quoniam summa essentia esse facit omne quod est, unde et essentia dicitur. Mors autem non esse cogit quidquid moritur, in quantum moritur. Nam si ea quae moriuntur, penitus morerentur, ad nihilum sine dubio peruenirent; sed tantum moriuntur, quantum minus essentiae participant: quod breuius ita dici potest: tanto magis moriuntur, quanto minus sunt.

be more accurate to say that evil is defined in comparative terms—'to participate less in being' (*minus essentia*)—or in terms of a tendency to move away from the source of goodness and being—'insofar as it tilts towards death' (*in quantum uergit ad mortem*)—without ever actually returning to nothingness.

The boldest expression of this understanding of evil is given in the section of the *De uera religione* dealing with the three passions of lust (*uoluptas*), pride (*superbia*), curiosity (*curiositas*).[37] Such is the fundamental goodness of everything which exists that even lust would not hold its sway over us unless it retained a form of agreement (*conuenientia*): 'Ask bodily pleasure what there is to it; you will find it is nothing else but concord. I mean, if things that resist you cause pain, then things that accord with you cause pleasure.'[38] Even though the Platonic influence can be detected in the anagogic role attributed to beauty,[39] the doctrine of creation gives a proper theological content to the assertion of goodness of creation through the role of wisdom and God's lordship over his creation:

This is why, after all, *the Wisdom of God stretches out mightily to the end*; this is why the supreme craftsman has woven his works together through her into one finale of gracefulness and glory; this is why his goodness, reaching from the highest to the least of things, has been envious of no beauty (which could issue from him alone)—all this to ensure that nobody who was not excepted from being in some way a portrait of Truth would be cast off from Truth herself.[40]

A decisive transition takes place in the *De uera religione*: leaving behind a Platonic-inspired anagogy from earthly—and even depraved—beauty to real Beauty or Truth, Augustine forges another form of anagogy which shall pervade his thought from now on and is crucial for the understanding of the theme of the image of God. In the text just quoted, the reason why the 'portrait of truth' (*effigies ueritatis*) or some kind of 'accord' (*conuenientia*) can be found in everything which exists, even in bodies and in vices, is traced back

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[37] *uera rel.* 37.68–54.106 (CCL 32, 231–255).

[38] *uera rel.* 39.72 (CCL 32, 234. Trans. Hill, 78): 'Quaere in corporis uoluptate quid teneat, nihil aliud inuenies quam conuenientiam: nam si resistentia pariant dolorem, conuenientia pariunt uoluptatem.'

[39] A Platonic reminiscence can also be detected in the absence of jealousy, cf. *Timaeus* 30 (*Platonis Opera*, ed. Ioannes Burnet, Oxford: Clarendon, 1902, vol. IV, 30), cf. the *inuidit* of the sentence from the *uera rel.* which follows.

[40] *uera rel.* 39.72 (CCL 32, 234. Trans. Hill, 78):

Ita enim sapientia dei pertendit usque in finem fortiter (Wis 8.1). Ita per hanc summus ille artifex opera sua in unum finem decoris ordinata contexuit. Ita illa bonitas a summo usque ad extremum nulli pulchritudini, quae ab ipso solo esse posset, inuidit; ut nemo ab ipsa ueritate deiciatur, qui non excipiatur ab aliqua effigie ueritatis.

to divine action, especially God's wisdom and goodness. In this same passage, the typical Augustinian anagogical sequence of interiority and transcendence leads from created *conuenientia* up to *summa conuenientia*:

Ask bodily pleasure what there is to it; you will find it is nothing else but concord. . . . Recognize therefore what the last word in concord (*summa conuenentia*) might be. Do not go outside, come back into yourself. It is in the inner self that Truth dwells. And if you find your own nature to be subject to change, transcend even yourself. . . . See there the concord which cannot be surpassed, and put yourself in accord with her.[41]

This anagogical movement, however, undergoes a fundamental change which appears in the conclusion of the *De uera religione*, a passage we must quote in full:

So let our religion, then, bind us tight to the one almighty God, because between our minds, by which we understand him to be the Father, and the Truth, that is, the inner light through which we understand him, there is set no intermediate creature. That is why we also venerate in him and with him this same Truth, which is unlike him in no way whatever, which is the form and shape of all things that have been made by the One and that direct themselves towards the One. From this it is apparent to spirit-filled intellects that all things were made through this shape and form, which alone fully matches what all of them are aiming at. All things nonetheless would not have been made by the Father through the Son unless God were supremely good, so good that he is not jealous of any nature's being able to derive its goodness from him and has given them all the ability to abide in this good, some as much as they wish, others as much as they can. That is why it is incumbent on us to worship and confess the very Gift of God, together with the Father and the Son unchanging—a Trinity of one substance, one God (i) from whom we are, (ii) through whom we are, (iii) in whom we are, (i) from whom we have departed, (ii) whom we have become unlike, (iii) by whom we have not been allowed to perish; (i) the Source to which we are retracing our steps, (ii) the Form or Shape which we are following, and (iii) the Grace by which we are being reconciled; the One, (i) the author of our being, and (ii) his Likeness, through which we are being formed into unity, and (iii) his Peace, in which we cleave to unity; God, (i) who said *Let there be*, and (ii) the Word through which everything was made which was made as a substance and a nature, and (iii) the Gift of his kindness by which whatever was made by him through his Word pleased and proved acceptable to its author; one God, (i) by whose creating us we live, (ii) by whose refashioning of

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41 Ibid.:

Quaere in corporis uoluptate quid teneat, nihil aliud inuenies quam conuenientiam. . . . Recognosce igitur quae sit summa conuenientia. Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat ueritas; et si tuam naturam mutabilem inueneris, transcende et teipsum. . . . Vide ibi conuenientiam qua superior esse non possit, et ipse conueni cum ea.

us we live wisely, (iii) by loving and enjoying whom we live blessedly; one God, (i) from whom, (ii) through whom, (iii) in whom are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.[42]

In the first half of this text the Truth discovered at the end of the anagogic movement is identical to the form which not only has an exemplary role in creation, but an instrumental role as well: 'all things were made through this shape and form' ('per hanc formam esse facta omnia'). However many Plotinian reminiscences might be detected in this text,[43] the framework is provided by the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and of creation: the Father creates through the Son, Truth and form of everything,[44] and preserves the existence of everything out of his goodness, as a gift, a *donum*. Then, the declared aim Augustine fixes on the reader is expressed with the verbs *uenerare* et *colere*, that is an act of worship of the one God, Father, Son, and Gift of God (*donum dei*). Worship flows from the acknowledgement of our radical threefold dependence on God both for creation and for salvation, beautifully declined in the rigorous threefold pattern of the second half of the text. From this moment onwards, this becomes the aim of the anagogical movement of

[42] *uera rel.* 55.113 (CCL 32, 259 f. Trans. Hill, 104):

Religet ergo nos religio uni omnipotenti deo; quia inter mentem nostram qua illum intelligimus patrem, et ueritatem, id est lucem interiorem per quam illum intelligimus, nulla interposita creatura est. Quare ipsam quoque ueritatem nulla ex parte dissimilem in ipso, et cum ipso ueneremur, quae forma est omnium, quae ab uno facta sunt, et ad unum nituntur. Unde apparet spiritalibus animis, per hanc formam esse facta omnia, quae sola implet quod appetunt omnia. Quae tamen omnia neque fierent a patre per filium, neque suis finibus salua essent, nisi deus summe bonus esset: qui et nulli naturae, quae ab ipso bona esse posset, inuidit; et in bono ipso alia quantum uellent, alia quantum possent, ut manerent dedit. Quare ipsum donum dei cum patre et filio aeque incommutabile colere et tenere nos conuenit: unius substantiae trinitatem, unum deum (i) a quo sumus, (ii) per quem sumus, (iii) in quo sumus; (i) a quo discessimus, (ii) cui dissimiles facti sumus, (iii) a quo perire non permissi sumus; (i) principium ad quod recurrimus, (ii) et formam quam sequimur, (iii) et gratiam qua reconciliamur; unum (deum) (i) quo auctore conditi sumus, (ii) et similitudinem ejus per quam ad unitatem formamur, (iii) et pacem qua unitati adhaeremus; (i) deum qui dixit, 'Fiat' (ii) et uerbum per quod factum est omne quod substantialiter et naturaliter factum est; (iii) et donum benignitatis eius, quo placuit et conciliatum est auctori suo, ut non interiret quidquid ab eo per uerbum factum est; unum deum (i) quo creatore uiuimus, (ii) per quem reformati sapienter uiuimus, (iii) quem diligentes et quo fruentes beate uiuimus; unum deum (i) ex quo omnia, (ii) per quem omnia, (iii) in quo omnia. Ipsi gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

[43] Du Roy (1966), 418, goes as far as to declare that 'Les dernières pages du *De uera religione* font coïncider pleinement le schème de la création trinitaire avec celui du cycle [plotinien] de l'émanation et du retour'.

[44] Cf. Vannier (1997), 149, who notices that, although borrowed from Plato, the concept of *forma*, insofar as it expresses both the Son's consubstantiality with the Father and his role in creation, can be found in Col. 1:15, '*qui est imago Dei inuisibilis primogenitus omnis creaturae*'; Heb. 1:3, '*qui cum sit splendor gloriae et figura substantiae eius*' and 1 John 1:2, '*et uita manifestata est et uidimus et testamur et adnuntiamus uobis uitam aeternam quae erat apud Patrem et apparuit nobis*'.

introspection and transcendence in Augustine's thought: *to explore the forms and the depths of our dependence on God, to increase our awareness of God's gift, and thus open the floodgates of worship, of confession*[45] (*confessio*).[46]

As we start unveiling this fundamental stream of Augustine's thought, we must rule out one of the most recurrent misunderstandings of this form of anagogy straight away. On the basis of our findings on the inseparability of divine action, even though some actions can be attributed to one of the persons in particular, this can only be the result of a retrospective movement in the light of the revealed action of Christ and of the Holy Spirit and can be applied to divine action in creation only with the greatest caution. Augustine, of course, tends to attribute particular roles to each of the three persons, and yet he does so tentatively, often in disguise, and always balancing this tendency with a proper Trinitarian framing of divine action. The passage we have just quoted is a model in this respect. Whereas Truth seems to be more openly identified with the Son, the role of stabilisation, of allowing things to endure (*manere*), is attributed to the gift of God. The identification of the gift of God with the Holy Spirit is, of course, only too legitimate in the light of Augustine's own theology.[47] However, on several occasions we have pointed out that this characteristically tentative way of introducing the Holy Spirit is deliberate

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[45] Hence the title of Augustine's masterpiece which combines the meaning of praise and worship, of acknowledgement of God's deeds in creation and salvation, and of human sinfulness.

[46] On the distinction between Augustine and Plotinus on this point, cf. J. Pépin, 'Le problème de la communication des consciences chez Plotin et S. Augustin', *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 55 (1950), 145–147, quoted by Vannier (1997), 136:

En premier lieu l'appel à la transcendance intériorisée, qui caractérise l'une et l'autre doctrine, est pour S. Augustin une *conversion à une personne*, un recours à la *présence dans l'âme du Dieu tripersonnel*, spécialement du Verbe. Or, rien de tel chez Plotin. L'Un manque de la détermination minima indispensable à toute personne. . . . L'appel à la transcendance apparaît en deuxième lieu, chez Augustin, comme une *conversion à une personne aimante*. . . . Rien de tel chez l'Alexandrin, pour qui l'Un ne connaît pas le monde émané de lui par nécessité. Enfin, chez S. Augustin, la conversion à une personne est aussi la *conversion d'une personne*; l'âme, dans son recours unifiant à Dieu, Maître intérieur, conserve sa personnalité distincte; elle n'y oublie jamais qu'elle n'est pas une partie de la substance divine. . . . Pour Plotin, au contraire, le contact de l'Un volatilise la personnalité, au point que le voyant y perd toute notion de soi-même.

Cf. also A. Solignac, (1962d), BA 14, 615.

[47] Even in the *uera rel.* 7.13 (CCL 32, 196), we find the expression 'in dono spiritus sancti' and in 12.24 (CCL 32, 202) it is said 'frueturque deo per spiritum sanctum, quod est donum dei', although not in the context of creation, but of *reformatio*. According to Du Roy (1966), 320, *uera rel.*, 12.24 (CCL 32, 202), is the first instance of the identification of the Holy Spirit with *donum dei*, and the Holy Spirit becomes the gift through which we enjoy the Good, i.e. God. Du Roy also argues that this is a considerable change in Augustine's Trinitarian theology. Before the *uera rel.*, for example in the *b. uita* 4.34 (CCL 29, 84), the Holy Spirit introduces to *Veritas*, but then the soul is united to the *summum Modum* through *Veritas* (that is the Son and not the Holy Spirit). However, the attribution of the triads of Augustine's early works to each of the divine persons is not as clear-cut as Du Roy would like us to believe, cf. Madec (1989), 78 ff.

and signals the mysterious nature of his action and the difficulty entailed by
its delimitation. In the same way, particularly in an early work like the *De
uera religione*, the ambivalence of the expression 'gift of God' should not be
overlooked too easily for the profit of its straightforward identification with
the Holy Spirit.

   Then, and more fundamentally, the second half of the passage quoted
above, built on the assertion of the unity of the Trinity—cf. the recurrent 'one
God' (*unus deus*)—reminds us of the only proper way of construing divine
action, through the 'theological' prepositions 'from whom, through whom, in
whom'. This is clearly stated at the beginning of the *De uera religione*, where
the creative action of the Trinity is differentiated into 'being, beauty and order'
(*esse, species* and *ordo*), but with an essential proviso:

every creature, intelligent, animated, material, gets its being, to the extent that it is,
from the same creator Trinity, and derives from that source its own specific nature and
is governed by it in the most beautiful order conceivable. Not that the Father should be
understood to have made one part of the whole creation and the Son another and the
Holy Spirit yet another, but that each and every nature has been made simultaneously
by the Father through the Son in the Gift of the Holy Spirit.[48]

Therefore, the aim of the anagogy based on creation is the acknowledgement
of our threefold—i.e. 'total'—dependence on God.[49] The persistent 'from
God' (*ex deo*) is meant to convey this truth: 'every good is either God or from
God';[50] any kind of form which qualifies matter, 'however meagre, however
inchoate, is not yet anything; and thereby it too, insofar as it is, is from none
but God';[51] 'all safety and soundness comes from God'[52] etc. And, of course,
the worship (*cultus*) which is meant to result from this acknowledgement—
which is identical to the condition for this acknowledgement to happen—
is the overcoming of inordinate longing (*cupiditas*) through love (*dilectio*).
Already in such an early work, we have the inseparable corollary and the aim

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   [48] *uera rel.* 7.13 (CCL 32, 196. Trans. Hill, 38):

omnis intellectualis et animalis et corporalis creatura, ab eadem trinitate creatrice esse in quan-
tum est, et speciem suam habere, et ordinatissime administrari, sine ulla dubitatione perspicitur;
non ut aliam partem totius creaturae fecisse intelligatur pater, et aliam filius, et aliam spiritus
sanctus, sed et simul omnia et unamquamque naturam patrem fecisse per filium in dono spiritus
sancti.

Cf. Bailleux (1971b), 195.

   [49] Cf. Du Roy (1966), 328: 'Toute existence corporelle et spirituelle est suspendue à cette triple
gratuité du don divin: l'être encore informe, sa formation par conversion vers son principe et
l'adhésion à son bien qui lui donne béatitude et stabilité.'

   [50] *uera rel.* 18.35 (32, 209. Trans. Hill, 51): 'Omne autem bonum, aut deus, aut ex deo est.'

   [51] Ibid.: 'quamuis exiguum, quamuis inchoatum, nondum est nihil, ac per hoc id quoque in
quantum est, non est nisi ex deo'.

   [52] *uera rel.* 18.36 (32, 209. Trans. Hill, 52): 'salus igitur omnis ex deo'.

of the anagogy described so far, namely renewal (*reformatio*). The relation between the anagogy from saved created being and its corollary on renewal needs to be seen from two viewpoints at the same time, which we could name the 'theological' and the 'anagogical' perspectives. According to a theological perspective, Trinitarian action in our renewal (that is salvation in the Son through the Holy Spirit) comes first and throws a light on the Trinitarian structure of our createdness or dependence on God. When he adopts the 'anagogical' perspective, Augustine delights his reader through the exploration of the threefold pattern of our saved created nature as a means to illustrate his distinctive dynamic understanding of salvation.[53]

Before leaving a writing of such decisive significance, it is worthwhile collecting an embryonic stage of a theme which we are going to take up in the *Confessions* and the *De genesi ad litteram*, namely the pattern of 'creation, conversion, formation' (*creatio, conuersio, formatio*). Underlying the ethical explanation of evil as voluntary failing (*uoluntarius defectus*), there is an ontological explanation of the possibility of this failure, namely the mutability of created being:

But you say to me: 'Why are they failing?' Because they are subject to change. 'Why are they subject to change?' Because they do not have being in the supreme degree. 'Why not?' Because they are inferior to the one by whom they were made. 'Who is it that made them?' The one who is in the supreme degree. 'Who is that?' God, the unchanging Trinity, since he both made them through his supreme wisdom and preserves them through his supreme kindness.[54]

A narrow understanding of creation simply as 'coming into being' is unsatisfactory. The consequence of our mutability is that the gift of existence needs to be 'kept', 'preserved' (*conseruare*) as well. This point—added to the consequence of the doctrine of God's simplicity we shall see shortly—leads Augustine to elaborate a (logical) distinction between 'creation' and 'formation':

For this reason, even if the world was made out of some unshaped, formless matter, this was itself made out of absolutely nothing. You see, even that which has not yet been given any shape or form, but has all the same been somehow or other begun with the potentiality of being formed, can be given a form by God's good act. For the good is

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[53] In the *uera rel.* this appears for example in 12.24 (CCL 32, 202). Cf. also, in the conclusion of the treatise quoted above (*uera rel.* 55.113, CCL 32, 260), the intertwining of the aspects of creation and salvation, for example in the following sentence: 'unum deum quo creatore uiuimus, per quem reformati sapienter uiuimus, quem diligentes et quo fruentes beate uiuimus'.

[54] *uera rel.* 18.35 (CCL 32, 208. Trans. Hill, 51):

Sed dicis mihi: Quare deficiunt? Quia mutabilia sunt. Quare mutabilia sunt? Quia non summe sunt. Quare non summe sunt? Quia inferiora sunt eo a quo facta sunt. Quis ea fecit? Qui summe est. Quis hic est? Deus incommutabilis trinitas, quoniam et per summam sapientiam ea fecit, et summa benignitate conseruat.

that which has been formed; even the potentiality, therefore, of being formed is a good of some sort, and that is why the author of all good things, who has bestowed form on them, has himself also made the potentiality of being formed. Thus everything that is, insofar as it is, and everything that is not yet, insofar as it potentially is, has this from God—which can be put in other words as follows: Everything formed or shaped, insofar as it is formed or shaped, and everything which has not yet been formed or shaped, insofar as it can be formed or shaped, has this from God. Now no particular thing attains to the integral completeness of its nature unless it is preserved safe and sound in its own kind of being. But all safety and soundness comes from the one from whom comes all good, and all good comes from God. Therefore all safety and soundness comes from God.[55]

The same aim highlighted above, i.e. the assertion of the radical goodness of creation, together with the necessity of contingent created reality to be kept in being and with Augustine's dynamic approach to creation, leads him to stress God's gift (*ex deo habet*) down to the very capacity of form (*capacitas formae*), and then up to the attainment of the integrity of form (*integritas formae*).[56] To the development of this idea in the *Confessions* and the *De genesi ad litteram* we now turn.[57]

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[55] *uera rel.* 18.36 (CCL 32, 209. Trans. Hill, 52):

Quapropter etiam si de aliqua informi materia factus est mundus, haec ipsa facta est de omnino nihilo. Nam et quod nondum formatum est, tamen aliquo modo ut formari possit inchoatum est, dei beneficio formabile est: bonum est enim esse formatum. Nonnullum ergo bonum est et capacitas formae: et ideo bonorum omnium auctor, qui praestitit formam, ipse fecit etiam posse formari. Ita omne quod est, in quantum est; et omne quod nondum est, in quantum esse potest, ex deo habet. Quod alio modo sic dicitur: omne formatum, in quantum formatum est; et omne quod nondum formatum est, in quantum formari potest, ex deo habet. Nulla autem res obtinet integritatem naturae suae, nisi in suo genere salua sit. Ab eo autem est omnis salus, a quo est omne bonum; et omne bonum ex deo: salus igitur omnis ex deo.

[56] A good summary of the genesis of this idea in Augustine's thought can be found in Du Roy (1966), 328 f.

[57] We must criticize here Du Roy's interpretation of the pattern *creatio, conuersio, formatio*, which he attributes to Augustine's confusion between Christian creation and the 'Neoplatonic' idea of fall. In his view, the distinction between *creatio* and *conuersio* would betray an initial understanding of creation as a 'fall' (because unformed created matter *tendit ad nihilum*, cf. *Gn. litt.* 1.4, CSEL 28/1, 7), somehow 'rectified' through the process of *formatio*: 'Ce cycle est d'abord indistinctement celui de la chute et de la création, puis il se différencie peu à peu en une création, dont la chute ne peut dénouer entièrement le processus et dont le salut reprend le mouvement pour l'achever' (p. 409). However, the texts from *Gn. litt.* we have analysed tell a different story. The distinction between *creatio* and *formatio* is required by our contingency and mutability over against the immutable and necessary being of God. *Only for God do being and attributes, esse and* exsistere *necessarily coincide.* In the very definition of contingent mutable beings these two elements are dissociated (not so much chronologically as ontologically, cf. Vannier (1997), 151 f.: 'La création s'effectue *tota simul*, mais pour son intelligibilité, la distinction entre *informitas* et *formatio* est utile' and she quotes *Gn. litt.* 5.5 (CSEL 28/1, 146): 'non temporali, sed causali ordine prius facta est informis formabilisque materies'). Cf. *Gn. litt.* 1.5 (CSEL 28/1, 8 f.).

ii. The *Confessions* and the *De Genesi ad litteram*

The first book of the *De Genesi ad litteram*—a work written between 401 and 415—is roughly contemporary with book 13 of the *Confessions* (about 401) and clearly expands some of its contents. With an analytical purpose in mind, we shall start from the *De genesi ad litteram*, since this work helps to understand what happens in the thirteenth book of the *Confessions.*

A key passage of book 1,[58] while not mentioning the theme of the image of God, refers to the apparently odd notion of the imitation of the Word (*imitatio uerbi*), not only with regard to spiritual or rational beings, but to bodily reality as well, even at the stage of unformed matter (*informitas*). A careful reading of the passage reveals that the form of the Word to be imitated is qualfed three times as follows: 'always and immutably adhering to the Father' (*semper atque incommutabiliter patri cohaerens*). That which is to be imitated is the 'immutable movement of adhesion', so to speak, of the Son towards the Father—which incidentally is a way of defining the identity of the Son not only as he who comes from the Father, but also as he who is eternally turned towards the Father. Unformed matter, left to itself, not only does not follow this movement, but even tends towards nothingness (*tendit ad nihilum*), goes the opposite direction, turning away from the creator (*auersa a creatore*).

Therefore, integral to the act of creation, there is a call (*reuocatio*), a conversion (*conuersio*) and a formation (*formatio*): through his Word, God summons the contingency of created reality into a movement of conversion, or adhesion towards God. This is summed up in the final sentence of the passage: 'his being the Word implies his conferring perfection on creation by calling it back to himself, so that it may be given form by adhering to the creator, and by imitating in its own measure the form which adheres eternally and unchangingly to the Father, and which instantly gets from him to be the same thing as he is'.[59]

Applied to spiritual and rational creatures,[60] this principle immediately takes an ethical connotation. Even so, however, we shall see that it should be understood as a *metaphysical* ethical connotation, in the sense that it describes not the result of human action but the ontological dynamism undergoing the

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[58] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 7 f.).

[59] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 172): 'per id autem quod uerbum est, insinuet perfectionem creaturae reuocatae ad eum, ut formaretur inhaerendo creatori, et pro suo genere imitando formam sempiterne atque incommutabiliter inhaerentem patri, a quo statim hoc est quod ille'.

[60] *Gn. litt.* 1.5 (CSEL 28/1, 8 f.).

situation of the moral agent.[61] Even spiritual and rational creatures, although nearer to the Word, can have a formless life, not primarily as a result of their sin or failure, but because of their mutability, 'because while for it to be is not the same as to live, to live is not the same as to live wisely and blessedly'.[62] In other words, essential to the ontological integrity of a mutable creature there is the teleological necessity of a conversion and a formation to attain wisdom and happiness: 'if it turns away from the unchangeable Wisdom, after all, it lives foolishly and miserably. It is formed, however, by turning to the unchangeable light of Widsom, the Word of God; it is to the one, you see, from whom it received existence, just to be and to live anyhow, that it turns in order to live wisely and blessedly.'[63]

Then, another feature of this conversion and formation is described in the following text:

Eternal wisdom is the origin or beginning[64] of the intelligent creation; this beginning, while abiding unchangeably in itself, would certainly never cease to speak to the creature for which it is the beginning and summon it by some hidden inspiration to turn to that from which it derived its being, because in no other way could it possibly be formed and perfected. That is why, when he was asked who he was, he replied, *The beginning, because I am also speaking to you*.[65]

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[61] A word must be said here on the following interpretation of the pattern *creatio–conuersio* for human creatures by A. Solignac (1962d), BA 14, 616 f.:

La formation implique la *liberté* . . . une décision de la personne libre. Paradoxalement, dans cette perspective, il dépend de l'esprit créé qu'il se constitue lui-même comme esprit au moment même où il consent à recevoir de Dieu la lumière qui le constitue tel. La *conuersio* est ainsi une réplique de la *creatio:* elle est une auto-création, ou du moins cette auto-création est-elle un moment essentiel et nécessaire de la dialectique du rapport de l'homme à Dieu.

Our investigation of the pattern *creatio–conuersio–formatio* reaches exactly the opposite conclusion: we are just as dependent on God's initiative and action for our *conuersio* and *formatio* (and indeed *perfectio*) as we are for our *creatio*. Cf. Hassel (1962), 384: 'These two moments [i.e. *creatio* and *conuersio*], being one creative act, involve no free decision on the part of the creature; briefly, they are the creature's initial, substantial orientation to God.' Hassel introduces freedom in the third stage of the creative act, namely the growth in *perfectio* (p. 385). A similar interpretation is given by Bailleux (1971b), 207.

[62] *Gn. litt.* 1.5 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 172, modified): 'quia non sicut hoc est ei esse quod uiuere, ita hoc uiuere quod sapienter ac beate uiuere'.

[63] *Gn. litt.* 1.5 (CSEL 28/1, 9. Trans. Hill, 172): 'Auersa enim a sapientia incommutabili, stulte ac misere uiuit, quae informitas eius est. Formatur autem conuersa ad incommutabile lumen sapientiae, uerbum dei. A quo enim extitit ut sit utcumque ac uiuat, ad illum conuertitur ut sapienter ac beate uiuat.'

[64] Not only in the sense of 'origin', but as the 'In the beginning', from Gen. 1:1

[65] *Gn. litt.* 1.5 (CSEL 28/1, 9. Trans. Hill, 172):

Principium quippe creaturae intellectualis est aeterna sapientia; quod principium manens in se incommutabiliter, nullo modo cessaret occulta inspiratione uocationis loqui ei creaturae cui principium est, ut conuerteretur ad id ex quo esset, quod aliter formata ac perfecta esse non posset. Ideoque interrogatus quis esset, respondit: *Principium, quia et loquor uobis*.

The combination of the present tense of the quotation from the Gospel of John[66] and of the past tense of the '*Dixit deus: fiat*' of Genesis (and, incidentally, the fact that the latter is attributed to the eternal Word, whereas the former is pronounced by the incarnate Word) reveals a dynamic understanding of creation, not in the sense that creation is not a completed act, but that the call, the conversion, and the formation are somehow constitutive of our being. Creatures of the Creator revealed in the incarnate Christ and in his Holy Spirit, we are summoned through a constant call into a God-ward bound existence.[67] The pattern 'creation, conversion, formation' means that our being imitates the adhesion of the Son to the Father, in the Holy Spirit, as we are about to see through the discussion on participation in the next paragraph.

The thirteenth book of the *Confessions* exhibits exactly the same pattern of 'creation, conversion, formation' and stresses its significance for our relation to God the Trinity. We are not simply offered an explanation of a theory, but a brilliant piece of rhetoric. Augustine turns towards created reality and challenges it to lay any claim whatsoever to merit from God for its existence and its qualities: 'Let the spiritual and physical creation, which you made in your wisdom, tell us what merit they have before you.'[68] Thus, the elaborate description of creation as 'creation, conversion, formation' becomes the most compelling demonstration of the extent of our dependence on God. To begin with, God's gift starts from the simple fact of coming into existence: 'What merit before you had physical matter even to be merely *invisible and unorganized* (Gen 1.2)? It would not exist at all unless you had made it. That it had no existence is the reason why it had no claim on you to be given existence.'[69] Then, it presides over the becoming of created reality as well:

Let the spiritual and physical creation, which you made in your wisdom, tell us what merit they have before you. On your wisdom depended even embryonic and formless things, all of which in their own spiritual or physical category move towards the chaos where there is no control, and to a far off dissimilarity to you. Formless spiritual being is superior to formed body. Formless physical entities are better than no existence at all. So formless things are dependent on your Word. It is only by that same Word that they are recalled to your unity and receive form. From you, the one, the supreme

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[66] John 8:25.

[67] Cf. Vannier (1997), 135 and 166. Cf. also *Gn. litt.* 4.12 (CSEL 28/1, 109 f.).

[68] *conf.* 13.2 (CCL 27, 242. Trans. Chadwick, 272): 'Dicant, quid te promeruerunt spiritalis corporalisque natura, quas *fecisti in sapientia* tua?' In this paragraph, the verb *promereo* is a real leitmotiv.

[69] *Conf.* 13.3 (CCL 27, 243. Trans. Chadwick, 274): 'Quid te promeruit materies corporalis, ut esset saltem *inuisibilis et incomposita*, quia neque hoc esset, nisi quia fecisti? Ideoque te, quia non erat, promereri ut esset non poterat.'

Good, they have being and are all *very good* (Gen 1.31). What merit had these things before you even to receive a formless existence when, but for you, they would not exist at all?[70]

Even at its most embryonic level, amorphous and drawn towards dissimilarity from God, created reality still depends on God. In this way, Augustine not only excludes any notion of a Platonic independent formless matter but establishes the extent to which dependence on God is rooted at the innermost imaginable level of our being. We find again the terminology of call (*reuocatio*) and formation of the *De Genesi ad litteram*, further expanded in the following passage: 'What claim upon you had the inchoate spiritual creation even to be merely in a dark fluid state like the ocean abyss? It would have been dissimilar to you unless by your Word it had been converted to the same Word by whom it was made, so that, illuminated by him, it became light and, though not in an equal measure, became conformed to a form equal to you (Rom 8.29; Phil 2.6).'[71] The call sets off a conversion which is identified here with the key Augustinian motif of enlightnement (*illuminatio*):

Among the first acts of creation you said *Let there be light, and light was created* (Gen 1.3). I do not think it out of harmony with the sense if we take this to mean the spiritual creation, since there already was a kind of life for you to illuminate. But just as it had no claim on you to be the sort of life which could be illuminated, so also now that it existed, it had no claim to receive light. Its formlessness could not be pleasing to you unless it were made light not by merely existing but by contemplating the source of light and adhering to it. Both the fact of its life and the fact of its living in a blessed state it owed only to your grace. By a change for the better it has become converted to that which cannot change either for the better of for the worse. That is what you alone are. You alone are in absolute simplicity. To you it is not one thing to live, another to live in blessed happiness, because you are your own blessedness.[72]

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[70] *Conf.* 13.2 (CCL 27, 242. Trans. Chadwick, 273 f., modified):

Dicant, quid te promeruerunt spiritalis corporalisque natura, quas fecisti in sapientia tua, ut inde (from *sapientia*) penderent etiam inchoata et informia quaeque in genere suo uel spiritali uel corporali euntia in immoderationem et in longinquam dissimilitudinem tuam, spiritale informe praestantius, quam si formatum corpus esset, corporale autem informe praestantius, quam si omnino nihil esset, atque ita penderent in tuo uerbo informia, nisi per idem uerbum reuocarentur ad unitatem tuam et formarentur et essent ab uno te summo bono uniuersa bona ualde. Quid te promeruerant, ut essent saltem informia, quae neque hoc essent nisi ex te?

[71] *conf.* 13.3 (CCL 27, 243. Trans. Chadwick, 274): 'Aut quid te promeruit inchoatio creaturae spiritalis, ut saltem tenebrosa fluitaret similis abysso, tui dissimilis, nisi per idem uerbum conuerteretur ad idem, a quo facta est, atque ab eo illuminata lux fieret, quamuis non aequaliter tamen conformis formae aequali tibi?'

[72] *conf* 13.4 (CCL 27, 243 f. Trans. Chadwick, 275):

Quod autem in primis conditionibus dixisti: *Fiat lux, et facta est lux*, non incongruenter hoc intellego in creatura spiritali, quia erat iam qualiscumque uita, quam illuminares. Sed sicut non te promeruerat, ut esset talis uita, quae illuminari posset, ita nec cum iam esset promeruit te,

The pattern 'creation, conversion, formation' is reformulated here in terms of enlightnement, according to the inseparability between epistemology and ontology never to be forgotten when dealing with Augustine. The conversion not only results from a call, but also from the contemplation (*intuitio*) of an 'enlightening light' and from the same movement of 'adhesion to God' (*cohaerendo*) highlighted above in the *De genesi ad litteram*.[73]

The extent to which our being and its intended dynamism is constituted by God's self-giving, however, does not end with the conversion and the formation or enlightnement. Once the formation is set off, it still needs to be led to its completion and to be somehow preserved, to be given stability,[74] by yet another 'aspect', so to speak, of God's gracious action, thereby revealing yet another 'aspect' of our dependence on him:

The corollary of your perfection is that the imperfection of created things is displeasing. So they seek perfection from you that they may please you, yet it is not that otherwise you would be imperfect and need to be perfected by their perfection. *Your good Spirit* (Ps 142.10) *was borne above the waters* (Gen 1.2), but not borne up by them as if resting weight on them. When scripture says your Spirit rests on people (Isa 11.2), it means that the Spirit makes them rest on himself. But your incorruptible and immutable will, sufficient to itself and in itself, was *borne above* the life which you had made, a life for which to live is not the same as living in perfect happiness, because even while in a fluid state in darkness it had life. It remains for it 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 (Ps 35.10), and to become perfect, radiant with light, and in complete happiness.[75]

Even though the act of leading creation to its perfection is ascribed to the Holy Spirit somehow cautiously (mainly through reference to God's 'Spirit' and to

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ut illuminaretur. Neque enim eius informitas placeret tibi, si non lux fieret non existendo, sed intuendo illuminantem lucem eique cohaerendo, ut et quod utcumque uiuit et quod beate uiuit, non deberet nisi gratiae tuae, conuersa per commutationem meliorem ad id, quod neque in melius neque in deterius mutari potest; quod tu solus es, quia solus simpliciter es, cui non est aliud uiuere, aliud beate uiuere, quia tua beatitudo es.

[73] Cf. Hassel (1962), 386: 'the word *conuertere* is used to refer to the creational process whereby men are created through their conversion to, and consequent illumination by, uncreated Wisdom or the Verbum'.

[74] Cf. *Gn. litt.* 1.8 (CSEL 28/1, 11).

[75] *conf*. 13.5 (CCL 27, 244. Trans. Chadwick, 275):

Perfecto enim tibi displicet eorum imperfectio, ut ex te perficiantur et tibi placeant, non autem imperfecto, tamquam et tu eorum perfectione perficiendus sis. *Spiritus* enim *tuus bonus superferebatur super aquas*, non ferebatur ab eis, tamquam in eis requiesceret. In quibus enim requiescere dicitur spiritus tuus, hos in se requiescere facit. Sed superferebatur incorruptibilis et incommutabilis uoluntas tua, ipsa in se sibi sufficiens, super eam quam feceras uitam; cui non hoc est uiuere, quod beate uiuere, quia uiuit etiam fluitans in obscuritate sua; cui restat conuerti ad eum, a quo facta est, et magis magisque uiuere apud fontem uitae et in lumine eius uidere lumen, et perfici et illustrari et beari.

God's goodness in Genesis),[76] Augustine suggests both in the *Confessions* and in the *De Genesi ad litteram* an affinity between the 'recall, conversion, enlightenement, formation' and the Word on the one hand, and between perfection and the Holy Spirit on the other hand. However, notice must be taken again of Augustine's care to rule out any straightforward distribution of tasks between the persons of the Trinity. The *De Genesi ad litteram* argues that, in the book of Genesis, the Trinitarian nature of the creator is suggested (*Trinitas insinuatur creatoris*) not through attributing creation to the Father, conversion to the Son, and perfection to the Holy Spirit, but through ascribing to the three persons of the Trinity each of these aspects of creation simultaneously:

creatio: ... when Scripture says *In the beginning God made heaven and earth*, we understand the Father in the word 'God' and the Son in the word 'beginning'; the beginning, not for the Father but for the creation created at the start through himself, and chiefly for the spiritual, and consequently for the totality of creation; while with scripture saying: *And the Spirit of God was being borne over the water*, we recognize the complete indication of the Trinity.

conuersio–perfectio: being converted and perfected in order to be distributed into its various species, the same 'threeness' should be suggested, of the Word of God, that is to say, and the Word's begetter, when it says *God said*; and of the holy goodness, by which God is pleased with whatever pleases him on its being perfected in its own small natural way, when it says, *God saw that it was good*.[77]

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are inseparably at work in creation and again the three together are mentioned with regard to the conversion and perfection of created reality.[78] In the same way, in the *Confessions*, Augustine resorts to his usual way of articulating the inseparability of the Trinity with divine action, namely the preposition in whom, through whom etc.[79] This point is essential

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[76] Cf. *Gn. litt.* 1.8 (CSEL 28/1, 11).

[77] *Gn. litt.* 1.6 (CSEL 28/1, 10. Trans. Hill, 173):

creatio: ... nam dicente scriptura, *In principio fecit deus caelum et terram*, intellegimus patrem in dei nomine, et filium in principii nomine, qui non patri, sed per se ipsum creatae primitus ac potissimum spiritali creaturae, et consequenter etiam uniuersae creaturae principium est: dicente autem scriptura, *Et spiritus dei superferebatur super aquam*, conpletam commemorationem trinitatis agnoscimus.

conuersio–perfectio: ita et in conuersione atque perfectione creaturae, ut rerum species digerantur, eadem trinitas insinuetur: uerbum dei scilicet, et uerbi generator, cum dicitur, *Dixit deus*; et sancta bonitas, in qua deo placet quidquid ei pro suae naturae modulo perfectum placet, cum dicitur, *Vidit deus quia bonum est*.

[78] Cf. Vannier (1997), 119: 'Le schème *creatio, conuersio, formatio* ... devient l'écho de l'action de chaque personne de la Trinité: le Père crée, le Fils donne aux êtres humains la possibilité de se retourner vers leur créateur et l'Esprit parachève la création. Cependant, nous ne voudrions pas systématiser l'action de chaque hypostase, car la Trinité agit de manière indissociable dans la création'.

[79] *conf.* 13.6 (CCL 27, 244).

to identify Augustine's fundamental aim in book 13 of the *Confessions* which, in turn, represents an invaluable insight into the aim of the theme of the image of God in the *De Trinitate*.

The mainstream reading of the *De Trinitate*, which focuses on the devising of created analogies for the mystery of the Trinity or on a grandiose 'Neoplatonic' anagogy from created reality to their uncreated Author, mistakes marginal aspects of this work for its main purpose. Equally misleading would be a reading of the thirteenth book of the *Confessions* which took the following passage out of its context:

> Who can understand the omnipotent Trinity? Yet everyone speaks the subject, if indeed it can be the matter of discourse. It is a rare soul who knows what he is talking about when he is speaking of it. People debate and quarrel, and without peace no one sees that vision. I wish that human disputants would reflect upon the triad within their own selves. These three aspects of the self are very different from the Trinity, but I may make the observation that on this triad they could well exercice 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. The fact is certain to anyone by introspection. Let him consider himself and reflect and tell me what is there.[80]

Can the upshot of the exquisite theological model of 'creation, conversion, formation' possibly be shrunk into a plain threefold pattern in our created nature (being, knowing, willing) purely instrumental to devising an analogy of the Trinity? The patent inadequacy of such an unsophisticated explanation to account for the complexity of the argument Augustine unfolds in the book 13 of the *Confessions* represents the best possible introduction to the theme of the image of God in the *De Trinitate* and the best shield against one-dimensional readings of the latter treatise as a quest for 'psychological analogies' of the Trinity.

The thrust underlying the exposition on creation in the thirteenth book of the *Confessions* is enshrined in the verbs 'merit' (*promerere*) and 'depend on'

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[80] *conf.* 13.12 (CCL 27, 247. Trans. Chadwick, 279):

Trinitatem omnipotentem quis intelleget? Et quis non loquitur eam, si tamen eam? Rara anima, quaecumque de illa loquitur, scit quod loquitur. Et contendunt et dimicant, et nemo sine pace uidet istam uisionem. Vellem, ut haec tria cogitarent homines in se ipsis. Longe aliud sunt ista tria quam illa trinitas, sed dico, ubi se exerceant et probent et sentiant, quam longe sunt. Dico autem haec tria: esse, nosse, uelle. Sum enim et scio et uolo: sum sciens et uolens et scio esse me et uelle et uolo esse et scire. In his igitur tribus quam sit inseparabilis uita et una uita et una mens et una essentia, quam denique inseparabilis distinctio et tamen distinctio, uideat qui potest. Certe coram se est; attendat in se et uideat et dicat mihi.

(*pendere*): once we become aware of the extent of our dependence on God, not only for our existence, but also for the dynamism which constitutes our identity and determines our destiny, what merit can we possibly attribute to ourselves in our relation to God the Trinity? Just as in the *De uera religione*, here too the intended outcome of this acknowledgement is by no means 'mere' knowledge of God—a meaningless thing in Augustinian terms—but the presupposition for worship represented by knowledge of ourselves in the light of God, in dependence on God. A God to whom we are so profoundly bound both with regard to our existence and to our destiny cannot be an object of knowledge like everything else. The outcome of the only proper way of knowing *this* God, as we have seen in the *De Trinitate*, is better expressed in terms of enjoyment (*fruitio*) or, as we are about to see in the *Confessions*, in terms of rest (*requies*).

The pattern 'creation, conversion–formation–enlightenement, perfection' applies to each level of created reality and not only explains the origin of creation and its ontological dynamism, but also reveals where this dynamism is directed to and finds its fulfilment. In the *Confessions* in particular, it is only too evident that the doctrine of creation is entirely instrumental to the light it throws on the perception of this fulfilment. It increases our awareness of our dependence on God not only for what we are, but especially for what we are called to be. Just as our existence results from God the Trinity's enduring action of creation, call, conversion and of illumination, so it finds its fulfilment—its perfection, its rest—in and through God alone.

This point is introduced through the exegesis of the book of Genesis, where it is said that 'the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.'[81] In his usual way, Augustine introduces the theme of rest (*requies*) almost casually, through the following remark: '*Your good Spirit* (Psa 142.10) *was borne above the waters* (Gen 1.2), but not borne up by them as if resting weight on them. When Scripture says your Spirit rests on people (Isa 11.2), it means that the Spirit makes them rest on himself.'[82] That which only seems to be a point of exegesis, slowly reveals its overarching role in the structure of the *Confessions* as a whole through echoing the beginning of this work. The *Confessions* start with the well-known declaration 'You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'[83] and ends with the passage on rest we are examining. The role played by happiness (*beatitudo*) in most of Augustine's other works, namely in the *De Trinitate*, is attributed

[81] Gen. 1:2.
[82] *conf.* 13.5 (CCL 27, 244. Trans. Chadwick, 275): '*Spiritus* enim *tuus bonus superferebatur super aquas*, non ferebatur ab eis, tamquam in eis requiesceret. In quibus enim requiescere dicitur spiritus tuus, hos in se requiescere facit.'
[83] *conf.* 1.1 (CCL 27, 1. Trans. Chadwick, 3): 'fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te'.

here to rest: rest embodies our deepest longing which can be achieved only as a result of God's action and gift.[84]

Rest goes together with the notion of weight (*pondus*), defined not as 'that which leads us downwards', but rather as 'that which leads us towards our intended place (*locus*)':

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. They are acted on by their respective weights; they seek their own place. Oil poured under water is drawn up to the surface on top of the water. Water poured on top of oil sinks below the oil. They are acted on by their respective densities, they seek their own place.[85]

It is here that Augustine erupts in one of his most well-known ejaculations: 'My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me.'[86] Love is the weight which leads us to our intended place, the place where we look for rest. The antinomy between inordinate longing (*cupiditas*) and love (*dilectio/caritas*) we have seen at work throughout the *De Trinitate* also plays a role in relation to rest and weight:

To whom can I expound, and with what words can I express, the weight of cupidity pulling us downwards into the precipitous abyss and the lifting up of charity given by your Spirit who was *borne above the waters*? To whom can I communicate this? How can I speak about it? For it is not about literal places where we sink down and rise up. This symbolic language contains a resemblance, but also a difference. It means our feelings and our loves. The impurity of our spirit flows downwards because of our love of anxieties, and the holiness which is yours draws us upwards in a love of freedom from anxiety. So we may lift up our heart and hold it to you, where your Spirit is *borne above the waters*, and we come to the supereminent resting-place when our soul has passed over *the waters that are without substance* (Psa 123.5).[87]

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[84] Cf. Vannier (1997), 164, n. 61: 'Augustin ouvre les *Confessions* par l'*inquietum cor* et les termine par le sabbat éternel, par le *quies in Deo*. . . . Dans le *De Genesi ad litteram* IV.8.16 il note également "Le poids du désir nous entraine là où, une fois parvenus, nous trouverons notre repos sans plus avoir rien à chercher" '. Cf. Vannier's whole analysis of the theme of *quies*, 164–172.

[85] *conf.* 13.10 (CCL 27, 246. Trans. Chadwick, 278): 'Corpus pondere suo nititur ad locum suum. Pondus non ad ima tantum est, sed ad locum suum. Ignis sursum tendit, deorsum lapis. Ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt. Oleum infra aquam fusum super aquam attollitur, aqua supra oleum fusa, infra oleum demergitur; ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt.'

[86] *conf.* 13.10 (CCL 27, 246 f. Trans. Chadwick, 278): 'Pondus meum amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror.'

[87] *conf.* 13.8 (CCL 27, 245. Trans. Chadwick, 277, modified):

Cui dicam, quomodo dicam de pondere cupiditatis in abruptam abyssum et de subleuatione caritatis per spiritum tuum, qui *superferebatur super aquas*? Cui dicam? Quomodo dicam? Neque enim loca sunt, quibus mergimur et emergimus. Quid similius et quid dissimilius? Affectus sunt, amores sunt, immunditia spiritus nostri defluens inferius amore curarum et sanctitas tui attollens nos superius amore securitatis, ut sursum cor habeamus ad te, ubi spiritus tuus

The final answer to the restless heart comes from God only, from his gift:

By the wretched restlessness of fallen spirits, manifesting their darkness as they are stripped naked of the garment of your light, you show how great a thing is the rational creature you have made. Whatever is less than you can never be sufficient to provide itself with the rest of contentment, and for this reason it is not even a source of contentment to itself. . . . In your gift we find our rest. There are you our joy. Our rest is our peace. . . . Things which are not in their intended position are restless. Once they are in their ordered position, they are at rest. 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. We climb *the ascent of the heart* (Psa 83.6), and sing *the song of steps* (Psa 119.1). Lit by your fire, your good fire, we grow red-hot and ascend, as we move upwards *to the peace of Jerusalem* (Psa 121.6). *For I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord* (Psa 121.1). There we will be brought to our place by a good will, so that we want nothing but to stay there for ever.[88]

Against this background, the threefold structure of our dependence on God, i.e. the threefold dynamism which constitutes our being and our goodness and underlies our ability and possibility of reaching our fulfilment, our rest, our happiness, is translated into the different realms of creation.[89] The generic triad of 'being, beauty and order' of the *De uera religione* (often expressed through the quotation from Wisdom 11.21 'measure, number and weight')[90]

superfertur super aquas, et ueniamus ad supereminentem requiem, cum pertransierit anima nostra aquas, quae sunt sine substantia.

[88]   *conf* 13.9–10 (CCL 27, 246 f. Trans. Chadwick, 277 f.):

Nam et in ipsa misera inquietudine defluentium spirituum et indicantium tenebras suas nudatas ueste luminis tui satis ostendis, quam magnam rationalem creaturam feceris, cui nullo modo sufficit ad beatam requiem, quidquid te minus est, ac per hoc nec ipsa sibi. . . . In dono tuo requiescimus: ibi te fruimur. Requies nostra locus noster. . . . Minus ordinata inquieta sunt: ordinantur et quiescunt. Pondus meum amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror. Dono tuo accendimur et sursum ferimur; inardescimus et imus. Ascendimus ascensiones in corde et cantamus canticum graduum. Igne tuo, igne tuo bono inardescimus et imus, quoniam sursum imus *ad pacem Hierusalem*, quoniam *iucundatus sum in his, qui dixerunt mihi: In domum Domini ibimus*. Ibi nos conlocabit uoluntas bona, ut nihil uelimus aliud quam permanere illic in aeternum.

[89]   Cf. Du Roy (1966), 422, who talks of 'les trois dimensions ontologiques de la créature qui la situent dans une triple dépendance par rapport à son Créateur'.

[90]   '*Mensura, numerus, pondus*'. Cf., for example, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1.xvi.26 (PL 34, 186); *Gn. litt.* 4.5 (CSEL 28/1, 101); and many other texts quoted and analysed by Du Roy (1966), 279–297. This triad is described by Vannier (1997), 128, as follows:

Par *mesure*, il désigne la détermination de l'être, son *modus* qu'il a reçu au moment de sa création et qui contient une certaine perfection. Par *nombre*, il renvoie à sa forme, au sens de l'*eidos* platonicien ou de la *species* augustinienne, forme qui est donnée par le Verbe à l'être humain, après sa conversion. Par *poids*, il dépeint la *formatio*, le lieu propre de chaque être, son *ordo* auquel il accède, en son accomplissement.

Du Roy (1966) also observes that 'à partir de 406–407, Augustin n'explicite plus guère la citation de *Sap* 11.21 par la création Trinitaire, sinon dans le livre 5 du *De ciuitate Dei*', quoted below.

is translated into the different realms of creation and becomes 'life, sensation, desire' in the animal realms and 'existence, knowledge and love, in rational beings, in the *Confessions*.[91] Thus we reach the point of transition between this Trinitarian understanding of creation and the doctrine of the image of God, which finds it most mature expression in the *De Trinitate*.

Before we go back to the *De Trinitate*, however, it is still necessary to gather some more elements of discernment for a better appreciation of the significance of Augustine's doctrine of creation, particularly with regards to its similarities and its differences with Plato's doctrine of participation and to some aspects of the teaching of Plotinus and Marius Victorinus on similar topics.

III. PLATONIC PARTICIPATION AND AUGUSTINE'S UNDERSTANDING OF CREATED BEING

An ideal starting point for a critical evaluation of Augustine's doctrine of creation is offered by the verdict pronounced on it by Etienne Gilson in his memorable monograph devoted to the thought of the great bishop. From the theological viewpoint, he finds it irreproachable: creation results from the free initiative and the personal work of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; it is produced *ex nihilo*, without any pre-existent matter; the world is not eternal and thus creation did not happen in history, but is the beginning of history.[92] However—he argues—as soon as Augustine tries to understand his faith, he does not escape the temptation of interpreting the 'existential'

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[91] *conf.* 13.12 (CCL 27, 247). For a summary of this declension, see the following text from *ciu. Dei* 5.11 (CCL 47, 141 f.):

Deus itaque summus et uerus cum uerbo suo et spiritu Sancto, quae tria unum sunt, deus unus omnipotens, creator et factor omnis animae atque omnis corporis, . . . a quo est (i) omnis modus (ii) omnis species (iii) omnis ordo; a quo est (i) mensura (ii) numerus (iii) pondus; a quo est (i) quidquid naturaliter est, (ii) cuiuscumque generis est, (iii) cuiuslibet aestimationis est; a quo sunt (i) semina formarum (ii) formae seminum (iii) motus seminum atque formarum; qui dedit et carni (i) originem (ii) pulchritudinem (iii) ualetudinem, (i) propagationis fecunditatem, (ii) membrorum dispositionem, (iii) salutem concordiae; qui et animae inrationali dedit (i) memoriam (ii) sensum (iii) adpetitum, rationali autem insuper (i) mentem, (ii) intellegentiam, (iii) uoluntatem; qui non solum caelum et terram, nec solum angelum et hominem, sed nec exigui et contemptibilis animantis uiscera nec auis pinnulam, nec herbae flosculum nec arboris folium sine suarum partium conuenientia et quadam ueluti pace dereliquit: nullo modo est credendus regna hominum eorumque dominationes et seruitutes a suae prouidentiae legibus alienas esse uoluisse.

[92] Gilson (1943), 264, quoting *conf.* 11.6 and 7 (CCL 27, 197 f.).

narrative of Scripture according to Plato's ontology.[93] In Scripture, the act of creation consists in the production of 'beings endowed with existence' (*existences*) without the help of any other cause by a God conceived himself as the supremely 'Existing being'. On the contrary, in Augustine

since being is reduced to 'essence' (*essentia)* creation also tends to be reduced to the relation between that which 'really is' and that which does not really deserve the name of being, that is, between that which is immutable and that which is changing, between the eternal and the temporal, that which is the same and that which is other, the One and the multiplicity. Metaphysically, these relations belong to the order of participation of beings to their Essences. This was their role in Plato and in Plotinus and Augustine experienced great difficulties in changing relations designed to link essences between them into relations of existence. In short, Augustine committed himself to the surely impossible task of interpreting creation in terms of participation.[94]

This can be seen at work particulary in the dissociation between creation and formation and in the nature of unformed matter.

Even though Gilson is aware that the distinction between creation and formation is not temporal, since they are simultaneous,[95] and that formation is never opposed to creation,[96] he is wary about this distinction. He is prepared to state quite emphatically that 'to reduce the Augustinian notion of creation to the Platonic notion of participation' would be 'to go too far', because 'Augustine's Platonism did not weaken nor limit the total character of the creative act'.[97] However, he sees the Platonic stamp in the distinction introduced into the *the effects* of the creative act between 'making' and 'perfecting'. Created matter needs to be perfected through formation and even though creating and perfecting are presented as simultaneous, this distinction is enough to betray the inevitable consequences of a notion of being which entails participation along the line of 'essence' rather than 'existence': only with some reservation being can be attributed to created realities which are and somehow are not at the same time. Gilson declares:

By creating matter, does God create being? Within an existential ontology, the answer can only be yes or no. Within a Christian existential ontology, it can only be yes. On the contrary, within an ontology of the essence, the answer is neither yes nor

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[93] Gilson (1943), 260–268.   [94] Ibid., 263, our translation.

[95] Ibid., 258, 264 f., 270.

[96] This Gilson argues against Gardeil (1927) who thought that Augustine reserved the notion of creation to unformed matter and the notion of formation to participation. In reality, Gilson (1943) argues that '*formare* is never opposed to *creare*' and that 'Augustine seems to have understood creation itself as a kind of formation' (266 f. n. 2; cf. also 268 n. 1).

[97] Gilson (1943), 265 f. By the expression '*total* character of the creative act' Gilson means 'completed', 'finished once for all', against an understanding of a creation still in the making, often underlying forms of historicism in the history of ideas, cf. O'Donovan (1986), 60–63.

no. . . . Here Augustine inherits all the difficulties inherent to the Platonic notion of matter understood as 'almost-not-being', but he adds to it a difficulty coming from Christianity which makes it even more redoutable: this 'almost-not-being' has being, since the creative act causes being and matter is created.[98]

What do we make of this verdict? To what extent does it lead to an understanding of creation which is non-biblical? The possible implications of this criticism on the doctrine of the image of God are to be taken very seriously.

It cannot be denied that Augustine's spontaneous way of understanding being does correspond at times to the picture portrayed by Gilson. Many of the texts from the *De uera religione* quoted above prove this point, but the same can be said with regards to later texts like the *City of God*:

For God is essence in a supreme degree—he supremely is—and he is therefore immutable. Hence he gave being to the creatures he made out of nothing: but it was not his own supreme being. To some he gave being in a higher degree, to some in a lower, and thus he arranged a scale of essences of various natures. . . . Thus to this highest being, from which all things that are derive their being, the only contrary nature is the non-being. Non-being is obviously contrary to being. It follows that no essence is contrary to God, that is to the supreme essence and the author of all essences.[99]

However, is Gilson right in thinking that this Platonic ontological framework slipped into Augustine's doctrine of creation almost inadvertently?[100] Three arguments against this view have already been established earlier in this book in the paragraph devoted to 'The nature of Augustine's Platonism' (ch. 3): that Augustine was perfectly capable of criticizing Plato's representation of the divine and of developing an ontology in conformity with the revelation of God's identity in the Incarnation, as we saw in the dialectic between God's name of 'being' and his name of 'forgiveness' (*misericordia*);[101] that he was interested especially in the ethical potential of the dynamic ontology of Plato and Plotinus; and finally, especially in the light of his Christology and of his treatment of philosophy in books 4 and 13 of the *De Trinitate*, that he would

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[98] Gilson (1943), 265. Our translation.

[99] *ciu. Dei* 12.2 (CCL 47, 357. Trans. Bettenson, 473):

Cum enim Deus summa essentia sit, hoc est summe sit, et ideo inmutabilis sit: rebus, quas ex nihilo creauit, esse dedit, sed non summe esse, sicut est ipse; et aliis dedit esse amplius, aliis minus, atque ita naturas essentiarum gradibus ordinauit . . . ; ac per hoc ei naturae, quae summe est, qua faciente sunt quaecumque sunt, contraria natura non est, nisi quae non est. Ei quippe, quod est, non esse contrarium est. Et propterea Deo, id est summae essentiae et auctori omnium qualiumcumque essentiarum, essentia nulla contraria est.

[100] Augustine would have given way to Platonism more than he was aware of, Gilson (1943), 262; cf. also p. 264: 'C'est bien la vérité qu'Augustin interroge, mais c'est Platon qui répond, en se christianisant juste autant qu'il faut pour qu'Augustin puisse platoniser à son aise.'

[101] Cf. *s*. 6.4 (CCL 41, 64).

constantly check his tendency towards a positive practical attitude towards philosophy against belief in Christ and the epistemological consequences of this belief. The time has come to verify whether these three principles throw any light on Augustine's ontology. Four texts shall be the guide for this discernment.

The first is the well-known *Quaestio* 46 '*De ideis*' of the *De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* we have met earlier. The formation of created unformed matter implies, as the verb expresses it, the references to 'forms' (*formae*). The *Quaestio* '*De ideiis*' seems to identify these forms with Plato's ideas. However, we have noticed earlier that instead of the proper Latin translation of the Greek word ἰδέαι into *formas* or *species*, Augustine chooses *rationes* (which corresponds rather to the Greek λόγοι), which stresses their role as principles of knowledge and intelligibility of beings. We are told that these reasons exist in the mind of the creator and that everything which exists, in whatever way it exists, participates in them. The critical question to be asked about these ideas concerns the kind of existence they have in the 'mind of the Creator' and consequently the nature of their causal role: purely exemplary or efficient as well (bearing in mind that in Plato they only have an exemplary role, while the efficient cause is exemplified by the Demiurge and the material cause is the pre-existent eternal and unformed matter)?[102] Before we answer this question with the help of two other texts, however, we need to notice one last thing in the *Quaestio de ideiis*, namely the way in which these reasons do work as principles of intelligibility of beings:

> Now among the things which have been created by God, the rational soul is the most excellent of all, and it is closest to God when it is pure. And in the measure that it has clung to him in love, in that measure, imbued in some way and illumined by him with light, intelligible light, the soul discerns—not with physical light, but with its own highest part in which lies its excellence, i.e., with its intelligence—those reasons whose vision brings to it full blessedness.[103]

The distinction between the Demiurge and the world of ideas in Plato's mythical account of the genesis of reality would make this passage difficult to understand in Platonic terms: for Augustine, the principles of intelligibility of that which exists are accessible only to those who adhere by charity *not* to

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[102] Plato, *Timaeus* 28a–30 (*Platonis Opera*, ed. Ioannes Burnet, Oxford: Clarendon, 1902, vol. IV, 28a–30).

[103] *diu. qu.* 46.2 (CCL 44A, 73. Trans. Mosher, 81):

> Sed anima rationalis inter eas res quae sunt a deo conditae, omnia superat; et deo proxima est, quando pura est; eique in quantum caritate cohaeserit, in tantum ab eo lumine illo intelligibili perfusa quodammodo et inlustrata cernit, non per corporeos oculos, sed per ipsius sui principale, quo excellit, id est per intellegentiam suam, istas rationes, quarum uisione fit beatissima.

these same principles (*rationes*), but to God. The significance of this detail will appear shortly. In the meantime, it is worth noticing how the inseparability between love and knowledge infuses its typical dynamic touch into the process of knowledge: 'in the measure that it has clung to him [God] in love, in that measure, imbued in some way and illumined by him with light, intelligible light, the soul discerns' ('eique [to God] in quantum caritate cohaeserit, in tantum ab eo lumine illo intellegibili perfusa quodammodo et illustrata cernit'). If the principle of correspondence between espistemology and ontology which postulates that the possibility of knowledge is a function of the similarity between the knowing subject and the object known is applied here, this might require some transformation of the character of immutability Augustine attributes to these reasons or ideas.[104] namely the attribution of a loving character to them (since Augustine does not talk about *amor* here— the equivalent of the Greek ἔρως—but about *caritas*). Two options are open here: either these ideas are distinct from God, in which case they can remain immutable, since it is loving adhesion to God which allows us to know them; or they are somehow identical with God, in which case, something of the reciprocity of charity needs to be attributed to them.

One of the *Tractates on the Gospel of John* resorts to the comparison of a craftsman, who first conceives the design of a chest in his mind and then makes the chest according to this design. The chest is perishable, but even if it is destroyed it can be reproduced exactly the same because its design is perpetuated in the mind of the craftsman, it is part of his own life: 'Pay attention then to the chest in the creative knowledge (*in arte*) and the chest in the product (*in opere*). The chest in the product is not life; the chest in the creative knowledge is life. For the soul of the craftsman, in which exist all these things before they are produced, has life.'[105] The identification between the design and the life of the craftsman paves the way for the identification between the formal or exemplary principle of created reality and the life of the creator:

So therefore, dearest brothers, because the wisdom of God, through which all these things were made, contains all things in accordance with his creative knowledge before he constructs all things, it follows that whatever things are made through this creative knowledge are not immediately life; but whatever has been made is life in him. You see the earth; there exists an earth in his creative knowledge. You see the sky; there

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[104] *diu. qu.* 46.2 (CCL 44/A, 71): 'Sunt namque ideae principales quaedam formae uel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quae ipsae formatae non sunt ac per hoc aeternae ac semper eodem modo sese habentes, quae diuina intellegentia continentur.'

[105] *Jo. eu. tr.* 1.17 (CCL 36, 10. Trans. Rettig, vol. 78, 57): 'Adtendite ergo arcam in arte, et arcam in opere. Arca in opere non est uita, arca in arte uita est; quia uiuit anima artificis, ubi sunt ista omnia antequam proferantur.'

exist a sky in his creative knowledge. You see the sun and the moon; these, too, exist in his creative knowledge. But externally they are bodies; in his creative knowledge they are life.[106]

Before we inquiry further into the meaning of this identification between reasons and God's life with the help of another passage, we must notice the epilogue of this treatise, which echos the end of the *Quaestio de ideiis*:

Let each person grasp as he can, as far as he can; and he who cannot grasp, let him nourish it in his heart that he may be able to. With what is he to nourish it? Let him nourish it with milk so that he may arrive at solid food. Let him not withdraw from Christ, born through flesh, until he arrives at Christ, born from the one Father, the Word, God with God, through whom all things were made. For that is life which in him is the light of men.[107]

Again, understanding is a matter of love, *nutriat cor*. We are dealing with metaphysical and epistemological notions, with the equivalent of Plato's eternal, immutable, self-identical ideas, and we are told that we need the milk of Christ's incarnation to know them, since it is the only way to be led to his inner-Trinitarian identity as the Word of the Father, as God in relation with God, through whom everything was created, in whom everything is life, who is our light. Is it not legitimate to wonder what kind of ontology underlies this epistemology? Are we still in the presence of Gilson's 'essential' ontology of participation? The description of ideas in the *Quaestio de ideiis* would have led us to think so; the epistemology associated to this last description relentlessly pulls us elsewhere.

  We shall not be surprised, then, to find a passage analogous to that which we have just left in book 4 of the *De Trinitate*, devoted to Christology.[108] This time there is no mention of Plato's ideas, but we are in the presence of the same ontology which underlies the doctrine of knowledge we have seen at work in

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[106] *Jo. eu. tr.* 1.17 (CCL 36, 10. Trans. Rettig, vol 78, 57):

Sic ergo, fratres carissimi, quia sapientia dei, per quam facta sunt omnia, secundum artem continet omnia, antequam fabricet omnia; hinc quae fiunt per ipsam artem, non continuo uita sunt, sed quidquid factum est, uita in illo est. Terram uides; est in arte terra: coelum uides; est in arte coelum: solem et lunam uides; sunt et ista in arte: sed foris corpora sunt, in arte uita sunt.

[107] *Jo. eu. tr.* 1.17 (CCL 36, 10. Trans. Rettig, vol. 78, 57):

Capiat quisque ut potest, in quantum potest: et qui non potest, nutriat cor, ut possit. Unde nutriat? De lacte nutriat, ut ad cibum perueniat. A Christo per carnem nato non recedat, donec perueniat ad Christum ab uno Patre natum, Verbum deum apud deum, per quod facta sunt omnia: quia illa uita est, quae in illo est lux hominum.

[108] *Trin.* 4.3 (162 f.).

the previous texts[109] and which also underlies the doctrine of the image of God. In the context of a soteriological comment on the Prologue of the Gospel of John, we are told that the Word is the 'the unchanging truth, in which all things are primordially and unchangingly together, not only things that are in the whole of this creation, but things that have been and will be; but there it is not a question of "have been" and "will be", there they simply are.'[110] The immutability (which does include the eternity and the self-identity) of Plato's ideas is here included in the immutability of truth, with a stress on the identification of this truth (we could say these ideas) not so much with the 'mind' of the Word, but with the Word himself, with his own life, as the text explains further:

and all things there are life and all are one, and indeed there is there but one 'one' and one life. For *all things were made through him* in such a way that *whatever has been made* in this world *was in him life*; and this life was not made, because *in the beginning* the Word was not made, but *the Word was, and the Word was with God, and whe Word was God, and all things were made through him*; and all things would not have been made through him unless he had been before all things and had not been made himself.[111]

The principles of intelligibility of created reality *are one thing* with the Word of the Father, they are *identified with his own life* and we are then told that this life is not any sort of life, like the life of our soul, but, and this is the crucial passage, *it is light*:

All things were made through him and without him was made nothing. So *what was made was* already *life in him*, and not any sort of life, but *the life was the light of men*, the light that is to say of rational minds, which distinguish men from animals and precisely make them men....But that *light of men* is what *life was, nor was it removed far from any one of us, for in it we live and move and are.*[112]

[109] But also the doctrine of knowledge of the *De Trinitate* examined earlier in this book.
[110] *Trin.* 4.3 (162. Trans. Hill, 154): 'incommutabilis ueritas ubi principaliter atque incommutabiliter sunt omnia simul, non solum quae nunc sunt in hac uniuersa creatura, uerum etiam quae fuerunt et quae futura sunt; ibi autem nec fuerunt nec futura sunt sed tantummodo sunt'.
[111] *Trin.* 4.3 (162 f. Trans. Hill, 154):

et omnia uita sunt et omnia unum sunt et magis unum est et una est uita. Sic enim omnia per ipsum facta sunt ut quidquid factum est in his, in illo uita sit; et facta non sit quia in principio non factum est uerbum, sed erat uerbum, et uerbum erat apud deum, et deus erat uerbum, et omnia per ipsum facta sunt; nec per ipsum omnia facta essent nisi ipsum esset ante omnia factumque non esset.

[112] *Trin.* 4.3 (163. Trans. Hill, 154):

Omnia enim per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil. Quod ergo factum est iam in illo uita erat, et non qualiscumque uita, sed uita erat lux hominum, lux utique rationalium mentium per quas homines a pecoribus differunt et ideo sunt homines....At illa uita lux hominum erat nec longe posita ab unoquoque nostrum; in illa enim uiuimus et mouemur et sumus.

Is there any trace left in this passage of the 'essential' ontology Gilson attributes to the bishop of Hippo? Are we in the presence of Plato's ontology disguised under Christian clothes? The efficient and the exemplary principles of creation are identified with the life of the Word of the Father and the same applies to the principle of intelligibility of creation, which is the enlightening action of this same Word. The Word here is not a simple cosmological principle, but the Word of the Prologue of the Gospel of John, the Word made known through the milk of the Incarnation, the Word who, in book 4 of the *De Trinitate* (the context of this passage) comes down to heal our blindness and to persuade us of how much God loves us. The Word is not an essence in which we participate more or less, but a person of the Trinity who creates and renews us in his own image, enlightens us to enable us to know everything in the light of the *personal* efficient and formal principle of created reality. Thus, the only proper way of talking about 'participation' in Augustine's ontology is explained at the end of this passage from the *De Trinitate*:

But *the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it* (Jn 1.5). The darkness is the foolish minds of men, blinded by depraved desires and unbelief. To cure these and make them well the Word through whom all things were made *became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1.14). Our enlightenment is to participate in the Word, that is, in the *life which is the light of men* (Jn 1.4). Yet we were absolutely incapable of such participation and quite unfit for it, so unclean were we through sin, so we had to be cleansed.[113]

The principle of intelligibility of creation and of knowledge of God (*illuminatio nostra*) are not ideas contained in the mind of God. The ontological status of created reality is not expressed here as the status of participated essences hierarchically dependent on a supreme essence. We participate in the life and in the light which are the Word of the Father insofar as we are the object of his creative and restoring salvific action, insofar as we are in relation with this same Word of God first through being, moving, and having life in him and then through his Incarnation. Our being is constituted by his creating and enlightening action through a process of conversion not because Augustine mistakes a biblical 'existential' ontology with Platonic participation

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[113] *Trin.* 4.4 (163. Trans. Hill, 154 f.):

Sed lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt. Tenebrae autem sunt stultae mentes hominum praua cupiditate atque infidelitate caecatae. Has ut curaret atque sanaret uerbum, per quod facta sunt omnia, caro factum est et habitauit in nobis. Inluminatio quippe nostra participatio uerbi est, illius scilicet uitae quae lux est hominum. Huic autem participationi prorsus inhabiles et minus idonei eramus propter immunditiam peccatorum; mundandi ergo eramus.

This passage follows immediately after the passages quoted just before it.

in supreme essence, but because biblical 'existential' ontology is understood within a proper Trinitarian relational framework.

This is what we are now able to appreciate as we go back to the *De Genesi ad litteram* and we examine more attentively the real basis of the doctrine of unformed matter and of creation understood in terms of 'creation, formation, enlightenment, conversion'. Here we need to call to mind the decisive passage at the beginning of this treatise where Augustine describes the formation of unformed matter.

In the *Quaestio de ideiis*, Augustine seemed to locate Platonic ideas in the mind of God, without specifying which kind of relations existed between them and the Word. The other texts we have seen so far clearly stated this identification between the exemplary principle of reality and the personal identity of the Word. In the *De Genesi ad litteram*, we are not told of many 'forms' (or ideas, or reasons), but only of one form: the 'form of the Word always adhering to the Father',[114] the 'form of the Word which always and unchangingly adheres to the Father',[115] 'the form which adheres eternally and unchangingly to the Father'.[116] As the exemplary principle of created reality, the Word is one form whose identifying character is a dynamic eternal movement of adhesion (*cohaerens*, *inhaerens*) to the Father. The aspect of the act of creation described as 'formation' is qualified as a 'call' (*reuocatio*) on the part of the Word and an 'imitation' on the part of creature. Through formation, the Word 'calls to himself the imperfection of the creation'[117] and 'through his being the Word implies his conferring perfection on creation by calling it back to himself, so that it may be given form by adhering to the creator'.[118] Through this same movement, it is when creation 'turns, everything in the way suited to its kind, to that which truly and always is, to the creator that is to say of its own being, that it really imitates the form of the Word which always and unchangingly adheres to the Father, and receives its own form, and becomes a perfect, complete creature',[119] 'so turning back and being formed creation imitates, every element in its own way, God the Word, that is the Son of God who always

[114] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 171, modified): 'formam Verbi semper Patri cohaerentis'.

[115] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 171): 'Verbi formam, semper atque incommutabiliter Patri cohaerentem'.

[116] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 172): 'formam sempiterne atque incommutabiliter inhaerentem Patri'.

[117] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 171, modified): 'reuocantis ad se imperfectionem creaturae'.

[118] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 172): 'per id autem quod Verbum est, insinuet perfectionem creaturae reuocatae ad eum, ut formaretur inhaerendo Creatori'.

[119] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 171): 'tunc imitatur Verbi formam, semper atque incommutabiliter Patri cohaerentem, cum et ipsa pro sui generis conuersione ad id quod uere ac semper est, id est ad creatorem suae substantiae, formam capit, et fit perfecta creatura'.

adheres to the Father',[120] creation 'imitates the form of the Word',[121] 'imitating in its own measure the form which adheres eternally and unchangingly to the Father'.[122] This imitation is not to be understood primarily as the counterpart of the creature to the call of God, since it concerns everything which is and has life, that is every kind of being, even those which are not endowed with knowledge and love and therefore freedom. Of course, with rational beings it also includes, in a way which needs to be qualified through the doctrine of the image of God, free adhesion to God, but as described here 'imitation' is the result of the dynamism breathed into creation which corresponds to the efficient and exemplary cause from which it has received being and form.

What kind of ontology does this text describe? What is 'to be', 'to exist' for Augustine? It is indeed a participation not in a statically conceived divine, perfect, immutable essence, but in a *being immutably and eternally related to another being with which it is one essence*:

By so turning back and being formed creation imitates, every element in its own way, God the Word, that is the Son of God who always adheres to the Father in complete likeness and equality of being, by which he and the Father are one.... His being the Word implies his conferring perfection on creation by calling it back to himself, so that it may be given form by adhering to the creator, and by imitating in its own measure the form which adheres eternally and unchangingly to the Father, and which instantly gets from him to be the same thing as he is.[123]

We are told of 'essence' in this text, of participation in it ('which instantly gets from him to be the same thing as he is') and indeed the necessity of a formation and a conversion might be interpreted as implying that created reality has less 'essence' then the 'supreme essence'. But is this explanation satisfactory? Does it capture the core of the *Trinitarian* metaphysics of creation Augustine is elaborating here? Does the movement of immutable and eternal adhesion of the Son towards the Father denote imperfection, lesser essence in the Son? Definitely not. On the contrary, precisely *the identity* between the Son and the Father, of the Image and the Exemplar breaks apart once for all Platonic

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[120] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 171): 'pro suo modo imitatur Deum Verbum, hoc est Dei Filium semper Patri cohaerentem'.

[121] Ibid.: 'imitatur hanc Verbi formam'.

[122] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8. Trans. Hill, 172): 'imitando formam sempiterne atque incommutabiliter inhaerentem Patri'.

[123] Ibid.:

In qua conuersione et formatione, quia pro suo modo imitatur Deum Verbum, hoc est Dei Filium semper Patri cohaerentem, plena similitudine et essentia pari, qua ipse et Pater unum sunt.... per id autem quod Verbum est, insinuet perfectionem creaturae reuocatae ad eum, ut formaretur inhaerendo Creatori, et pro suo genere imitando formam sempiterne atque incommutabiliter inhaerentem Patri, a quo statim hoc est quod ille.

and Plotinian ontology.[124] The likeness (*similitudo*) of all created reality to the creator and particularly the nature of rational beings as '*to* the image' (*ad imaginem*) are the expression of an understanding of being not just as 'essence', but as 'being towards' (*esse ad*); not any kind of 'being towards', but precisely and uniquely that kind of 'being in relation' which is the eternal movement of adhesion of the Son towards the Father (which presupposes the origin of the Son from the Father and their common gift, the Holy Spirit, described elsewhere in the *De Trinitate*) and in which we are called to participate not by the simple fact of existing, but by *being the object of Trinitarian action*, i.e. by being called into existence to be drawn towards the Father by the Son in the Holy Spirit, in creation and redemption. Of course, while the 'being towards' of the Son is eternal and equal to the Father, our 'being towards' begins in time and never reaches equality with God. But if we are created in the image of the Trinity and if the destiny and the vocation of the image is the enjoyment of the Trinity (*frui trinitate deo*)[125] this means that created being and particulary the being of the creatures capable of love and knowledge in dependence on God is somehow caught into Trinitarian relational life.

IV. THE IMAGE IN PLOTINUS AND MARIUS VICTORINUS

The discussion of the relation between Augustine's doctrine of creation and Plato's doctrine of participation has led us to mention one important difference between Augustin and Plotinus: whereas Plotinus 'conceives of the divine Mind as being eternally engendered by the One, yet still inferior to this Principle',[126] for Augustine the Son is the perfect image of the Father, equal to him in every respect.[127] Indeed, Plotinus' notion of psychic life in terms of genesis of the image, conversion, contemplation, and illumination (which corresponds to the generation of an inferior image) must have inspired Augustine one way or the other, probably through the intermediary of Marius Victorinus. Independently of whether or not Augustine had direct knowledge of Plotinus' works, the systematic comparison between the two would have to deal with the formidable problem of the notoriously difficult interpretation of the latter's philosophy. Instead, relying on the work of two

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[124] Cf. Sullivan (1963), 14.   [125] *Trin.* 1.18 (52).

[126] Sullivan (1963), 15, quoting *Enneads* V.1.6 (*Plotinus with an English Translation by A. H. Armstrong*, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, vol. V, 29–33).

[127] Cf. *diu. qu.* 74 (CCL 44/A, 213 f.) and *uera rel.* 43.81 (CCL 32, 241), quoted by Sullivan (1963), 14.

interpreters of Plotinus, Pierre Aubin, and Dominic J. O'Meara, some features only of Plotinus' doctrine of the image will be highlighted here which, by contrast, might help us to capture the originality of Augustine's own doctrine.

Aubin reckons that Plotinus' system can be interpreted as a description of the process of knowledge in which the Mind represents the highest, most perfect, immediate, and intuitive (in the sens of not discursive) form of knowledge, somehow hypostatized. If there is a 'god' in Plotinus, it is not the One, but the Mind, although the latter might simply be a transcendantal form of the self.[128] According to this hypothesis, privileged by Aubin and confirmed by many aspects of O'Meara's analysis of Plotinus' thought, Plotinian metaphysics might simply be the product of a deduction from our process of knowledge and a way of postulating the ultimate foundation of the possibility of knowledge in a principle (the One) which can be known only indirectly starting from the conditions of possibility and of fulfilment of knowledge. Thus conceived, the One plays the role of a unifying principle, of a source of universal sympathy which allows us to know everything and to climb from discursive to intuitive and ultimately to ineffable knowledge. Finally, postulating the existence of the One is a way of locating the end of knowledge somehow beyond knowledge itself.[129] Within this framework, the relation between Mind and Soul is the hypostatic translation of the relation between three degrees of knowledge: the lowest degree of practical dealings with bodily realities, the discursive reasoning and the intuitive knowledge.[130] Each degree of knowledge is the image of the superior; the highest, intuitive knowledge, is the image of the Mind in the Soul.

The most relevant aspect of this 'hypostatized' epistemology with regards to the doctrine of the image in Augustine is the type of relation wich exists between the image and its exemplar. According to Plotinian understanding of derivation, the notion of image is always linked to the idea of degradation and irradiation. Just as the farther light radiates away from its source, the more it loses its brilliance, so each degree of knowledge is the image of that which

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[128] Aubin (1953), 359: 'S'agit-il d'un Dieu véritable et personnel ou du moi transcendental? Là est l'énigme insoluble dont la solution nous dirait si Plotin est un mystique religieux ou un moniste panthéiste.' Cf. O'Meara (1993), 58 f.

[129] Aubin (1953), 372. This perspective makes Aubin's article particularly interesting: he reckons that the relation between Soul and Mind is the basis for Plotinus' elaboration of the relations between the Mind and the One, on the one hand, the Soul and the World, on the other hand. Thus, the four moments of psychic life result from a reflexion on the elements of psychic life and more precisely on the life of the middle Soul (i.e. the discursive reasoning) and of its intentionality (p. 359).

[130] These three degrees of knowledge are translated ontologically into the three parts of the soul, ibid., 351.

precedes it, but loses some of its intensity, of its clarity and especially of its comprehensiveness.[131] However, the other way round, it is always possible to climb from an inferior degree of knowledge towards the highest degree because each higher degree is contained potentially in the inferior one: for example, discursive reasoning is a potential form of intuitive knowledge and the passage from one to the other corresponds to the passage from potentiality to activity.[132]

The understanding of the relation between the image and its exemplar in terms of potentiality and activity can also be found in the author who certainly played a role of intermediary between Plotinus and Augustine, namely Marius Victorinus.[133]

With Marius Victorinus, Christian theology definitely breaks away from one essential feature of the Plotinian system, namely the postulate of a transcendent foundation of being and knowledge which is not himself being and cannot be known.[134] With Plotinus we have the triad of One, Mind, and Soul, where being can only be attributed to Mind and Soul insofar

[131] Ibid., 352 f.

[132] Ibid., 354. Cf. *Enneads* V.3.8 (*Plotinus with an English Translation by A. H. Armstrong*, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, vol. V, 94–101), quoted by Aubin (1953), 356.

[133] The omission of any mention whatsoever of Marius Victorinus' Trinitarian theology in Augustine's works is rather puzzling. Most of what is known about this brilliant African professor of rhetoric (born around 290 and who died sometime after 362) comes from Augustine's well-known admiring report of his conversion to Christianity (about the year 355) in *conf.* 8.3–10 (CCL 27, 114–120). In this same work, Augustine mentions some books of 'Platonists' translated into Latin by Victorinus he had read with great profit—*conf* 8.3 (CCL 27, 114)—and Aristotle's *Ten Categories*, a work he came across at about the age of 20—*Conf.* 4.28 (CCL 27, 54)—also translated by the Roman rhetorician, cf. Chadwick (1991), 69 n. 33. Victorinus, therefore, was far from being unknown to Augustine, who also praises the former's ability to make use of pagan culture (the spoils taken from the Egyptians) for the preaching of the Gospel—*Doctr.* ii.40.61 (CCL 32, 74 f.)—and makes use of his *Commentary to Galatians* for his own commentary to the same Pauline letter, Cipriani (1999), 535. Considering therefore Augustine's interest in Victorinus' philosophical translations and exegetical works, can he have neglected to read the latter's anti-'Arian' writings in defence of the *homoousios* written between 359 and 362, that is somewhat less than forty years before he himself embarked on the same task? The latest and most convincing explanation of this anomaly is given by Cipriani (2002) who argues that not only did Augustine not ignore the *Aduersus Arium* (*Adu. Ar.*) but also that a good deal of the argument of his *De Trinitate* can be understood in an anti-Victorinus polemical key. The high opinion Augustine had for the personality and the conversion of the philosopher might explain his great reserve when he felt obliged to be critical about his theology.

[134] Henry (1950), 48 f. observes that:

occasionally he [Marius Victorinus] denies to God, as Plotinus continually does to the One, all attributes of being, life, intelligence. But how could he consistently emphasize this total privation of ontological qualities, if the Father is *esse*, the Son *uiuere*, the Spirit *intelligere* and if all three share equally in these three properties of being? . . . No, Victorinus definitely calls God being and all that goes with it.

Cf. Hadot (1959), 440.

as the degradation of generation is stopped and reverted by a conversion which properly confers being.[135] On the contrary, Marius Victorinus builds his ontology through the triad of being, life, and knowledge, where being is attributed to the Father, life to the Son, and knowledge to the Holy Spirit, even though each person has a share in these three properties.

Marius Victorinus' understanding of the nature of the Trinity is elaborated through the analysis of the life of the soul,[136] in a way which echos what we have just seen in Plotinus. Descriptions of the inner-Trinitarian life are based on the life of the soul, admittedly because the latter is the image of the Trinity,[137] but also as a result of a continuity in being between the existence of the soul and that of the Trinity strongly reminiscent of the relations between Plotinian Soul and Mind. The same triad of being, life and knowledge can be found both in the Trinity and in the soul.[138] These three elements express the Trinitarian life because they somehow coincide with each other while being irreducible to each other. A particular ontology is at work here: being is essentially double, it is and it manifests itself, and this self-manifestation is a unique movement which takes two forms, life and knowledge. It is indeed characteristic of Victorinus' system that there is only one generation and that the distinction between the Son and the Holy Spirit depends on the different orientations of this unique movement: the Word goes outwards towards life and the Holy Spirit inwards, towards self-knowledge.

Marius Victorinus' doctrine of the image intervenes at the jonction between being and its self-manifestation. The image is intrinsec to the definition of being, it is 'being in the act of living and knowing itself'.[139] This double aspect of the nature of being is at work in the Trinity in the relation between the Father and the Logos, and in the relation between the Logos and the soul. Thus, the soul is the image of the Logos because it reproduces exactly this movement: it is not just a triad of being, life and knowledge. It is (i) being

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[135] Cf. Aubin (1953), 363: 'C'est à l'intensité de la conversion que se juge l'intensité de l'être: plus la conversion est totale, pous l'être est parfait.'

[136] Hadot (1953), 421: 'C'est la définition de l'âme qui nous permet de concevoir ce mouvement substantiel de l'être qu'est le Logos, Fils de Dieu.'

[137] *Adu. Ar.* 1.20.3 (CSEL 83/1, 85–88).

[138] *Adu. Ar.* 1.63.7 (CSEL 83/1, 165):

Si istud est, anima nostra *iuxta imaginem* est dei et domini Iesu Christi. Si enim Christus uita et λόγος est, imago est dei, in qua imagine perspicitur pater deus, hoc est quod est esse in uita. Hoc est enim imago, ut dictum. Et si est Christus uita, quod est autem uiuere hoc est λόγος, ipsa autem uita hoc est quod est esse, hoc autem quod esse pater est et, si rursus ipsa uita hoc est quod intellegere, id autem est sanctus spiritus, et tria ista sunt omnia et in unoquoque tria et unum tria et omnino ὁμοούσια. Si igitur anima, secundum quod anima est, et animae esse et uiuere et intellegere, tria ergo, superioris triados anima est, ut imago imaginis.

[139] Hadot (1953), 412.

and (ii) 'being in the act of living and knowing itself'.[140] With regards to Augustine's doctrine of the image, two features of the teaching of Marius Victorinus on the image are of particular interest.

First of all, just as in the inner-Trinitarian life the Word is the expression of the Father, that is 'being in the act of living and knowing itself',[141] so the soul, which is the image of the Word, seems to be the expression of the Logos. In fact, since the image is intrinsic to the nature of being (every being is inseparably its being and its image), the image becomes the manifestation of the essence, which means that the soul is somehow the spreading of the being of the Logos.[142] Thus, Hadot considers the soul as 'the proper reflection of the Logos, a kind of permanent manifestation of the Logos in the sensible world',[143] somehow the 'matter' of the Logos,[144] and Bell declares that the image 'is the immediate and direct revelation of the Trinity in the soul'.[145] Is it not legitimate, then, to wonder whether Marius Victorinus does not 'blur the distinction between the creature and the Creator?'[146]

Related to this first point, there is a second feature of Marius Victorinus' doctrine of the image which is worth noticing: the passage from being to image (that is from being to its expression in its 'consubstantial' life and knowledge) consists in the passage from potentiality to actuality. Indeed, life and knowledge already exist at the potential level of being, but 'with the begetting of the Logos, i.e. by defining itself as life and as thought, the being of the soul reveals that it was potential life and thought already.'[147] Moreover, the logos (or image), whether the Logos God or the logos of the soul, is the source of its own movement; this passage from potentiality to actuality, whether in the generation of the Logos or in the production of the soul in the image of the Logos, is an act of self-positioning, self-definition.[148]

Therefore, both with Plotinus and Marius Victorinus, we are left wondering whether we are not in the presence of a continuity of being between God and

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[140] Ibid., 414, quoting *Adu. Ar.* 1.63.24 (CSEL 83/1, 165): 'Et sicuti pater esse est, filius autem duo, sed in motu et in actu, sic anima in eo quod anima ut potentia patrica, uiuificatio autem et intellegentia in motu.'

[141] In fact, even though being is more especially attributed to the Father, life to the Son and knowledge to the Holy Spirit, the three properties belong to each of the persons, cf. Hadot (1953), 413 and 427.

[142] Ibid., 441.

[143] Ibid., 421, quoting *Adu. Ar.* 3.1.10 (CSEL 83/1, 191): 'Ut enim dei λόγος imago est, ita et τοῦ λόγου anima'.

[144] Hadot (1953), 423: 'if, following the image of God which is the Logos, an image of the image is manifested in the soul, this soul in turn radiates a last reflection of divinity in the sensible world … it is somehow the matter of the Logos', quoting *Adu. Ar.* 1.64.1 (CSEL 83/1, 166 f.).

[145] Bell (1985), 42.   [146] Ibid., 40.   [147] Hadot (1953), 429.

[148] Hadot (1953), 421 f., quoting *Adu. Ar.* 1.27.3 (CSEL 83/1, 101) and 1.42.5 (CSEL 83/1, 130). Cf. also p. 416 ff.

the soul which is at odds with the doctrine of the creation out of nothing and the radical difference between generation and creation established in orthodox Christian theology in reaction to Arius' doctrine. Much more scholarly work is required to look closely into this issues and probably to give a fairer account of the doctrine of Marius Victorinus than it can be done here. This swift overview of the thought of these two authors, however, is enough to appreciate better some the Christian orthodoxy of Augustine's approach to the doctrine of the image of God and to ontology.

First of all, neither the inner-Trinitarian relation between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit nor the relation between the image and the exemplar is understood by Augustine in terms of the passage from potentiality to actuality.[149] Thus, the dynamic notion of creation does not blur the distinction between creator and creature nor makes creation integral to the process of God's own self-manifestation.

Then, Marius Victorinus does integrate in his thought an orthodox confession of the mystery of the Trinity, but instead of elaborating, like Augustine, a Trinitarian ontology based on this confession, he deduces his understanding of divine substance from the life of the soul, just as Plotinus seemed to hypostatize the process of knowledge. We have here the fundamental difference between them and Augustine. Marius Victorinus tries to explain how God's being works. Augustine too, at times, does try to understand the nature of generation or the difference between generation and procession through the analysis of the process of knowledge,[150] but his doctrines of creation and of the image of God play an altogether different role. On the basis of Christology and of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, his starting point is the revealed nature of the personal relation between the Son eternally adhering to the Father and the Holy Spirit who is their common gift. A Trinitarian notion of creation characterized by the action and the dynamic presence of God the Trinity, first of all draws a sharp and uncompromising barrier between creator and creature by fully endorsing the doctrine of creation out of nothing. Then the distinction between creation and formation and the understanding of the latter as an 'imitation' of the eternal movement of adhesion of the Son to the Father, are not the result of an autonomous conversion to the principle

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[149] Hadot (1953), 429: 'Pour lui [Augustin], la génération se ramène à une pure relation, sans qu'il y ait passage de la puissance à l'acte. Il y aura sans doute dans l'âme passage de l'implicite à l'explicite, de l'*habitus* à son opération, mais on ne passe jamais de l'être pur à la détermination, de la puissance pure à son actuation.'

[150] *Trin.* 15.48–50 (529–532). Cipriani (2002) argues that behind these attempts to conceptualize the distinction between generation and procession through the analogy of the process of knowledge there might be a positive polemical intention against Marius Victorinus (271 and 308–311).

whence everything flows, like the passage from potentiality to actuality. On the contrary, they are the result of a call (*uocatio, reuocatio*) and a formation, that is of the personal action of the Son through the Holy Spirit to lead creation to its rest (*requies*) in the Father.[151] This aspect becomes clearer when it is seen at work in the doctrine of the image of God in the *De Trinitate*, to which we can know turn.

V. THE IMAGE IN THE *DE TRINITATE*

Right from its first appearance in the *De Trinitate*, the theme of the image of God is associated with the pursuit for happiness which can only be found in the relation to God the Trinity: 'For the fullness of our happiness, beyond which there is none else, is this: to enjoy God the Trinity in whose image we were made.'[152] Then, the theme seems to be absent in the rest of the first half of the treatise, except for the passage of book 7 where it is solemnly inaugurated, even though in an apparently fortuitous way. Towards the end of this book, while pursuing his criticism of logical and ontological categories applied to the Trinity, Augustine focuses on the use of 'person' for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. His final censure of the use of this concept in Trinitarian theology is sealed by a review of the way Scripture refers to God's tri-unity.[153] When talking about God, Scripture uses sometimes both singular and plural pronouns and sometimes only plural pronouns. However, if the plural is attested in Scripture in connection with relative names like Father and Son, we never find the plural of non-relative names (like person) applied to God, i.e. we never find Father, Son and Holy Spirit designated as three 'something(s)' in the way we do when talking about three 'persons'.

Now, one of the scriptural passages talking about God in the plural listed in course of this argument, is the well-known sentence of Genesis '*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*'.[154] Rather unexpectedly, instead of the simple discussion on the significance of this sentence for Trinitarian vocabulary, we meet a catechesis on the meaning of the image of God which in fact anticipates and very effectively sums up everything Augustine is going to say on the same topic in books 12 to 14 and more generally in the second

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[151] Cf. Hadot (1953), 440 who argues that for Marius Victorinus the doctrine of the soul, image of the Logos, remains a chapter of general ontology or cosmology. This explains the abyss separating him from Augustine: 'De Victorinus à Augustin, il y a toute la distance qui sépare l'âme antique de moi moderne.'

[152] 1.18 (52. Trans. Hill, 77): 'Hoc est enim plenum gaudium nostrum quo amplius non est, frui trinitate deo ad cuius imaginem facti sumus.'

[153] 7.12 (265 ff.).   [154] Gen. 1:26.

half of the *De Trinitate*. According to this catechesis, we are not simply created in the image of the Son, but of the whole Trinity. The reason for this assertion, of course, is not just the tenuous textual argument that 'let *us* make' and '*our* image' are in the plural, although this point certainly plays a role in his claim. On the contrary, the refusal to confine the model for the image to the Son alone depends on the same reasons put forward to deny the attribution of the theophanies of the Old Testament to the Son alone in the first four books of the *De Trinitate*. The Son's equality with the Father means that he is equally invisible by nature and cannot therefore be an 'image' properly speaking any more than the Father or the Holy Spirit. Scripture says that we are created in the *image* of God precisely to stress the distinction between simple likeness (*similitudo*) and equality with God. Only the Son is 'equal to' (i.e. *imago*) God; we are only 'in the image' (*ad imaginem*) of God. Furthermore, the main reason for the assertion that we are 'to the image' of the Trinity simply is that God *is* Trinity.[155] If the book of Genesis uses the plural 'the reason must be that it was the image of the Trinity that was being made in man, and this is how man would be the image of the one true God, since the Trinity itself is the one true God'.[156]

A curious detail to be noticed is the way the theme of the image of God literally encloses book 8, with a mention just before its beginning[157] and just after its end,[158] but no mention at all in book 8 itself, even though its content is unmistakably recognizable in this book as well. It is not a coincidence if this book dwells on the issue of how the mind (*animus*) knows, how it has access to justice and how it can be called good. Knowledge of the mind (*animus*) 'because we ourselves also have it'[159] announces the finding that this same mind (*mens*) knows itself in the very act of wanting to know itself;[160] the ontological goodness of our mind (*animus*) derived from the art (*ars*) by which it was made—i.e. the truth and the goodness of God—even before it becomes good through conversion, announces the theme of the image 'capable' of God[161] and the anti-Manichaean stance on the fundamental goodness of creation it presupposes.

Then, when the theme of image of God explicitly comes to the surface again at the beginning of book 9,[162] at first it seems to refer only to some sort of formal equivalent in us to the 'uni-threeness' of the Trinity. In book 12, however, this formal approach is paired with the same relational aspect of the image hinted at in book 1: 'a triad has to be discovered in the whole

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[155] 7.12 (266): 'Deus autem trinitas'.
[156] 12.7 (361. Trans. Hill, 325): 'nisi quia trinitatis imago fiebat in homine ut hoc modo esset homo imago unius ueri dei quia ipsa trinitas unus uerus deus est'.
[157] 7.12 (265 ff.).   [158] 9.2 (294).   [159] 8.9 (279).   [160] 10.5–6 (317–320).
[161] Cf. 8.5 (273 f.); 14.6 (429); 11 (436); 15 (443).   [162] 9.2 (294).

nature of the mind in such a way that … only in that part which is concerned with the contemplation of the eternal things can one find something that is not only a triad but also the image of God'.[163] From this moment onwards, it becomes evident that the aim of the patient and sustained unfolding of triadic structures or patterns in the human mind and in its activity of will and knowledge, is not only nor primarily the detection of the most perfect triad from a formal viewpoint, but the exploration of the situation of created beings with regards to their creator and of its epistemological consequences. Augustine does not look for *an* image of God, but for *the* image of God.

Having outlined the way in which the image of God appears in the *De Trinitate*, we can now embark on a more analytical inquiry into its theological meaning, starting from the following question inspired by our previous chapter devoted to the study of this same theme in Augustine's other works: is the doctrine of the image an attempt to 'hypostatize' the process of knowledge or the life of the soul, an attempt, that is, to understand how God's being work based on the presupposition of a continuity between human being and God's being? One line of the argument of the second half of the *De Trinitate* seems to point in this direction with, at times, surprising similarities to the teaching of Marius Victorinus. To resort to the distinction between the 'image-exemplar' and the 'image-relation' we introduced in the first paragraph of this chapter, the line of the argument we are referring to corresponds to the former. The analysis of the 'image-exemplar' shall therefore serve as our introduction to this topic.

i. The 'image-exemplar'

The assertion of Scripture that God is our creator and that he made us in his image means that something, in what we are, must reflect the identity of our maker. Augustine's favourite way of exploring the relation of exemplarity between the image and the Trinity consists in looking at the human self in the light of the formal aspects of the confession of the mystery of the Trinity summed up at the beginning of the book 9, namely the unity of an equal essence and the triad of persons related to each other.[164]

Thus, we encounter a real unity of essence when the triad of 'lover, what is being loved and love' conjured up at the end of book 8,[165] is applied to

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[163] 12.4 (358. Trans. Hill, 323, modified): 'In tota natura mentis ita trinitatem reperiri opus est ut … in eo solo quod ad contemplationem pertinet aeternorum, non solum trinitas sed etiam imago dei [inueniatur].'

[164] 9.1 (293): 'trinitatem relatarum ad inuicem personarum et unitatem aequalis essentiae'.

[165] 8.14 (290 f.): 'amans, quod amatur et amor'.

the mind (that is, to 'self'): the loving mind (*mens amans*) and self-love are 'one spirit, not two beings but one being; and yet they are two ... and these are called two things relatively to one another'.[166] However, on the basis of the inseparability between knowledge and love Augustine postulates, nothing can be loved which is not also known. The mind loves itself only because it simultaneously knows itself,[167] thus producing the following triad: 'mind (loving itself), self-knowledge and self-love', that is three elements posited relatively to each other and yet constituting only one substance.[168] This triad meets the ontological requirements of equality, consubstantiality, inseparability belonging to the orthodox confession of the unity of the Trinity,[169] even though, whereas self-knowledge and self-love are relative terms (*ad aliquid*), the mind is an absolute term (*ad se*).[170] Thus, in the course of book 10, almost incidentally, a new element is introduced, self-memory and, by the end of the same book, we discover that it has replaced the mind to form a new triad: 'memory, intelligence and will'.[171] The elements of this triad are relative to each other in a perfectly symmetrical way.[172] However, Augustine does not compare the triad of 'mind, self-knowledge and self-love' with 'self-memory, self-knowledge and self-love' to argue for a greater formal suitability of the latter over against the former as an analogy for the mystery of the Trinity and, in book 15, he mentions both triads almost indifferently as if they were in fact equivalent.[173]

The 'image-exemplar' line of inquiry becomes more explicit in book 11, where Augustine seems intent on detecting more easily intelligible triads in the 'exterior man' with a view to making the too abstract triad of the mind more intelligible. Again, the triads of 'the thing we see, the actual sight and the conscious intention' (*res, intentio animi et uisio*)[174] and 'memory, internal sight and will' (*memoria, interna uisio et uoluntas*)[175] are checked against the formal characteristics of the confession of the Trinitarian mystery and found more or less satisfactory;[176] in the course of the argument, however, Augustine's main interest shifts elsewhere and the 'image-exemplar' line becomes increasingly

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[166] 9.2 (295. Trans. Hill, 272): 'unus spiritus, nec essentiae duae sed una; et tamen duo ... relatiue ad inuicem dicuntur'.

[167] 9.3 (295 f.).

[168] 9.5 (298): 'et si relatiue dicuntur ad inuicem, in sua tamen sunt singula quaeque substantia'. Therefore Augustine does not leave behind the triad of love of book 8 to replace it with a new one. In reality, we are still in the triad of love, even though, on the basis of the inseparability between knowledge and love, Augustine shows that it necessarily includes self-knowledge as well.

[169] 9.8 (300 f.).

[170] In Trinitarian terms, this triad would correspond to 'God, the Son and the Holy Spirit'.

[171] 10.17 (329 f.): *memoria, intelligentia, uoluntas*.   [172] 10.18 (330 f.).

[173] 15.12 (475 ff.).   [174] 11.2 (334 ff.).   [175] 11.7 (341 ff.).

[176] 9.5 (297 f.) and 9.7 (299 f.).

less relevant to the substance of his argument. In books 12 to 14, the theme of the image of God comes to the fore again, but it is no more focused on the formal relation of exemplarity between creator and creature, which is kept alive only through sometimes awkward summaries at the end of each of these books.[177] Even more so, book 14 is entirely devoted to the relational and dynamic aspects of the doctrine of the image of God ('image-relation'), through the description of our renewal through knowledge of God (*in agnitione dei*). Only in book 15 does the 'image-exemplar' line definitely take the upper hand, combined with the theme of wisdom. There is no need to reproduce the detail of Augustine's argument here, but only to sum up its conclusions: some characteristics of the exemplar can be traced back through the mirror represented by the image of God in us. In particular, the inner-life of the Trinity can be expressed in the same way as the inner-life of the mind, namely in the light of the triad of 'mind, self-knowledge and self-love':[178]

So there we have a trinity, namely wisdom and its knowledge of itself and its love of itself. We found a similar trinity in man, namely the mind, and the knowledge it knows itself with, and the love it loves itself with.[179]

Two surprising features of this outcome must be noticed.

The long argument unwound through books 9 to 14 had highlighted three main triads: (i) mind, self-knowledge, and self-love;[180] (ii) self-memory, self-knowledge, and self-love;[181] finally (iii) memory, knowledge, and love of God.[182] Only with the third triad the relational aspect of the image of God in the soul (the 'image-relation') had reached its fullest outcome: 'This trinity of the mind is not the image of God because the mind remembers and understands and loves itself, but because it is also able to remember and understand and love him by whom it was made.'[183] Not only, Augustine had argued, the second triad of self-memory, self-knowledge, and self-love is not yet the full expression of the image of God in us, but as long as we remain at this stage access to wisdom, that is to full likeness with God, is inhibited: if the soul does not turn towards memory, knowledge, and love *of God*, 'even though it remembers and understands and loves *itself*, it is foolish'.[184] Is it not surprising,

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[177] Cf. 12.25 (379 f.) and 13.26 (418 ff.).   [178] Williams (1993), 131, and (1999), 850.
[179] 15.10 (474. Trans. Hill, 402 f.):

Ecce ergo trinitas, sapientia scilicet et notitia sui et dilectio sui. Sic enim et in homine inuenimus trinitatem, id est mentem et notitiam qua se nouit et dilectionem qua se diligit.

[180] 9.5 (298).   [181] 10.19 (332).   [182] 14.15 (442 f.).
[183] 14.15 (442 f. Trans. Hill, 383): 'Haec igitur trinitas mentis non propterea dei est imago quia sui meminit mens et intellegit ac diligit se, sed quia potest etiam meminisse et intellegere et amare a quo facta est.' Translation modified.
[184] 14.15 (443. Trans. Hill, 383): 'cum sui meminit seque intellegit ac diligit, stulta est'.

then, to find that, from the point of view of exemplarity, Augustine deems the second triad more suitable to express our likeness with God than the third triad?[185]

However, the outcome of the line of exemplarity in book 15 presents an even more mystifying aspect. One of the driving motives behind the passage from the first to the second triad was precisely the latter's greater conformity to the formal aspects of the confession of the mystery of the Trinity: with regards to the first triad, Augustine had noticed that whereas self-knowledge and self-love are relative terms, 'mind' is an absolute term, which meant that, in terms of the mystery of the Trinity, it would have to be rendered not as 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit', but as '*God*, Son and Holy Spirit'; this is why, in the course of book 10 he had elaborated the second triad of memory, intelligence and will,[186] three elements, that is, perfectly symmetrical with each other and thus indeed corresponding to the exact formal portrait of the relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[187] Why, then, when the time finally came to lead the exemplary line to its outcome in book 15, Augustine chose the less suitable of these triads from the formal viewpoint, namely 'the mind, and the knowledge it knows itself with, and the love it loves itself with'?[188]

If the exemplary approach to the theme of the image of God had been Augustine's main tool in the *De Trinitate* to lead his reader to the knowledge of the Trinity, such inconsistency in his argument would be utterly unjustifiable and in the end rather disappointing. As it is, however, nothing more than this somehow casual attitude with regards to the very formal requirements he had set for himself proves their marginal significance in the unfolding of his doctrine of the image of God. In a nutshell, Augustine did not rely in the search for something in us which 'looks like' the Trinity (image-exemplar) to work out his theological epistemology. On the contrary, however extensively spread throughout the second half of the *De Trinitate* it might be, the exemplary line of enquiry was nothing more than a subsidiary facet of a much larger and deeper approach to the theme of the image of God with regards to knowledge of the Trinity, focused on the dynamic and relational (that is Trinitarian) ontology, anthropology, and epistemology this scriptural doctrine enshrines (i.e. the 'image-relation').

Coming back to the argument of book 15, no sooner has the exemplary cause of the image been located in God as supreme Wisdom,[189] in his self-knowledge and in his self-love, than Augustine criticizes it: whereas the triad of mind, self-knowledge, and self love is *in* us (*in homine*), the Trinity is not

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[185] Cf. Sullivan (1963), 136–142.   [186] 10.17 (329 f.).   [187] 10.18 (330 f.).

[188] 15.10 (474. Trans. Hill, 403): 'mentem et notitiam qua se nouit et dilectionem qua se diligit'.

[189] In virtue of God's simplicity, the attribute of wisdom is identical with that of God's being.

in God, but *is* God.[190] Then, memory, intelligence, and will cannot be distributed to each of the three persons respectively, because each of the persons of the Trinity remembers, knows, and loves.[191] Finally, in a virtually apophatic mood, Augustine resorts to God's incomprehensibility to argue for the radical difference between our knowledge, or wisdom, and God's wisdom: in him everything is present at the same time, in him there is no past, present, or future and things are not thought individually.[192]

However, more daring even than the exemplary parallelism between the formal aspects of unity and threeness of the confession of faith in the Trinity and our mind, is the other experiment Augustine undertakes in book 9 and pushes further in book 15, in a tentative and apologetic tone which clearly betrays his awareness of taking very innovative paths. While pursuing an investigation on the inseparability of knowledge and love which plays a crucial role in the development of his Trinitarian epistemology, he observes that knowledge of eternal reasons entails the generation of an inner word;[193] that love (*amor*) plays an essential role in this generation;[194] and that this word matches mind exactly, it is equal and identical to mind.[195] A question betrays his interest for the promising analogical potential of this point with a view to the illustration of the inner Trinitarian generation and procession: 'Why does self-love not result in the generation of a word as well?'[196] The issue related to generations of one sort or another surfaces in the investigation of triads of senses and memory in book 11[197] only to disappear until book 15. There, it is tested not only for the illustration of the begetting of word[198] and for the distinction between generation and procession[199] but also for a possible analogy of the *filioque* discernible in the will proceeding from knowledge,[200] and even for the Incarnation.[201]

The interest of this experiment, however, and the excitement it awakens in Augustine—somehow betrayed by its sheer recurrence[202]—is tempered by a keen awareness of its limitations when envisaged under the viewpoint of God's simplicity and immutability (that is of God's unknowability). The Father does not know through his Word, but both he and the Son know immutably all things together (*omnia simul*), even though 'the one by begetting, the other

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[190] 15.11 (475) and 15.42 f. (519 ff.).   [191] 15.12 (475 ff.).   [192] 15.13 (477 ff.).
[193] 9.9–12 (301–304).   [194] 9.13–15 (304–307).   [195] 9.16 (307 f.).
[196] 9.17 f. (308 f.).   [197] 11.3 (336 f.); 9 (344 f.); 11 (347 f.); 12 (348 f.).
[198] 15.15–20 (480–489).   [199] 15.48 (529 f.).
[200] 15.50 (531 ff.): 'uoluntas procedens de cognitione'.   [201] 15.20 (486–489).
[202] The *De Trinitate* ends with the tentative evocation of the possible analogy for the distinction between generation and procession and even for the *filioque*—15.48–50 (529–533)—and gives the impression that Augustine could go on indefinitely, making new attempts as soon as he has criticized the inadequacy of those he has just finished relating, in a characteristic wave-like pattern typical of most of book 15.

by being born'.[203] Our possibility of lying or being wrong also demonstrates a radical difference between our word and God's Word: the identity in God of being and knowledge,[204] and the fact that God knows everything through his own perfection—God does not know things which exist, but things exist because God knows them[205]—means that his Word is always true,[206] that is 'like the Father and equal to him in all things, God from God, light from light, wisdom from wisdom, being from being'.[207]

It is as if Augustine could not refrain himself from being irresistibly drawn towards the daring potential of this line of enquiry, and yet at the same time he would not allow himself to be carried away by it. More eloquently than many other examples, this tension illustrates both the interest of the philosopher in him for an approach to the mystery of the Trinity like that of Marius Victorinus and yet at the same time the inflexible wariness of the theologian towards its dangers. Nothing more that his tentative and profusely apologetic experimental enquiry into the analogy between the process of knowledge and the distinction between generation and procession came dangerously near to Marius Victorinus' (and indeed Plotinus') tendency to hypostatize the process of knowledge. A modest exploration of the line of exemplarity clearly subsidiary to the relational nature of the image of God is one thing; quite another is an attempt to decode the inner-life of the Trinity that is no more directly driven by soteriology and is no more rigorously within the limits of God's self-revelation in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Was this not the limit not to be overstepped the Cappadocian Fathers uncompromisingly upheld against Eunomius, sarcastically expressed by Gregory of Nazianzus in the following sentence: 'What then is procession? Do you tell me what is the unbegottenness of the Father, and I will explain to you the physiology of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and we shall both of us be frenzy-stricken for prying into the mystery of God.'[208]

And yet, at the same time, who would too sternly censure Augustine's candour in these explorations or resist his excitement at the intellectual enjoyment drawn from their discovery, especially when one realizes how unfailingly he himself kept them within the limits of the following humble acknowledgment: 'every time I wanted to bring out some comparative illustration of this point in that created reality which we are...I found that no adequate expression

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[203] 15.23 (496 f. Trans. Hill, 415) 'ille gignendo, ille nascendo'.   [204] 15.24 (498).
[205] 15.22 (495).   [206] 15.24 (498).
[207] 15.23 (496. Trans. Hill, 415): 'per omnia patri similis et aequalis, deus de deo, lumen de lumine, sapientia de sapientia, essentia de essentia'.
[208] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations* 31.8 (PG 36, 142). Cf. also 29.3 (PG 36, 78): 'And when did the Holy Spirit proceed? When the Son was, not proceeding but, begotten beyond the sphere of time, and above the grasp of reason.'

followed whatever understanding I came to'?[209] Augustine's Western posterity might have benefited from inheriting not only the great African bishop's inexhaustible intellectual inquisitiveness, but also the limits within which he consistently kept it by never forfeiting the principle of God's unknowability, which the doctrine of the Trinity is meant to uphold in the first place. Far from circumventing this principle, the doctrine of the image of God was yet another way of restating God's unknowability and the Trinitarian epistemology it entails from the viewpoint of our relation with God, as we are going to see next.

ii. The 'image-relation'

Just as we have detected two ways of approaching the theme of the image of God, so we can single out two ways in which Augustine approaches the theme of wisdom: (i) wisdom seen as God's main attribute from a rather

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[209] 15.45 (524. Trans. Hill, 430): 'quotienscumque in ea creatura quae nos sumus aliquid illi rei simile ostendere uolui, ... in ipso intellectu conatum me senserim magis habuisse quam effectum'. Against our interpretation of the subsidiary role played by the exemplary line of inquiry in the *De Trinitate* and of its outcome in book 15, see in particular Daniels (1977), from which we quote. For Daniels, in the *De Trinitate* 'there are two discourses but only one argument based on the principle of faith seeking understanding' (p. 43). Unusually, he locates the first discourse in books 1 to 14 and the second in book 15: 'The purpose of the first discourse (books 1–14) is to move the believer's attention to the position of understanding ... and to receive illumination' (p. 50). This is achieved through an elaborate theory of natural signs: 'Without a theory of natural signs there could be no relation between faith and the understanding ... The theory aims at restoring the significative power of created things to refer to the Creator. It serves to establish the mirror in which the divine Trinity is seen in an enigma' (p. 51). Therefore, the first discourse starts with Trinitarian vestiges of created things, moves from them to vestiges in the outer man, then finds the image of God in the inner man and thus reaches the second discourse of book 15 where the reader, having been prepared 'for grasping by the understanding', can receive 'by illumination what is held by faith' (p. 51). What happens in book 15 is explained as follows (p. 51):

the believer [is given] the means wherewith to perform his own creative act whereby he might participate in the divine Art as he returns to the memory and knowledge of the creator. ... In this act the true word of the mind is born, whereby the birth of the Eternal Word of God by which all things were made and are preserved in the original goodness of creation is gazed upon by the mind, and understood 'if we are able' and 'as much as we are able', for no face to face contemplation is possible in this life.

Despite its many perceptive insights, our main criticism to this argument is that—except for a passing mention (p. 50)—it misses the theological epistemology of Augustine's treatise: salvific knowledge of God the Trinity is not reached at the end of an analogical ascent, but through Christ's Incarnation in the Holy Spirit. Moreover, as we have argued, Augustine does not think that in the Old Testament God made himself known through creation because creation has an intrinsic capacity to signify him. His point is rather that, being the Lord of creation, God has the power to use creation to reveal his will to creatures: theophanies are miracles, cf. 3.19 (146).

formal viewpoint, associated with the 'image-exemplar'; (ii) wisdom seen as the highest form of knowledge of God, associated with the 'image-relation'.

In books 6 to 7, for the formal discussion concerning the way in which attributes must be predicated of God in a proper Trinitarian way, the chosen attribute is wisdom even though, in virtue of God's simplicity (i.e. the identity, in God, between to be and to be something), any other attribute could have been suitable for this discussion. Book 15 presents a similar way of approaching the theme of wisdom: through an elaborate and somehow artificial exercise, Augustine starts by reducing God's 'many attributes to a manageably small number';[210] having chosen three attributes, he first states that 'one and the same thing is being said, whether you say God is eternal or immortal or incorruptible or unchangeable; and again whether you say he is living or understanding, which is the same as wise, the same thing is being said. He has not acquired the wisdom he is wise with, but he is himself wisdom';[211] he then makes an apparently random choice: 'We reduce those twelve names to this small number of three, but perhaps in the same way we can reduce these three to just one of them'[212] and focuses on wisdom; he then wonders, not without a touch of irony, 'What manner of argument is left then, indeed what force or power of intellect, what liveliness of reason, what needle-sharp thought can show how this one thing, "wisdom", not to mention all others with which God is called, is also a trinity?';[213] and finally he brings this search to a resolution in the way we have met above: 'So there we have a trinity, namely wisdom and its knowledge of itself and its love of itself. We found a similar trinity in man, namely the mind, and the knowledge it knows itself with, and the love he loves himself with.'[214]

On the contrary, in book 14, wisdom is presented in an entirely different way, as the highest, the proper, the integral form of knowledge: 'Now it is wisdom's turn to be discussed: . . . man's wisdom, true wisdom of course which is in accordance with God and is in fact the true and principal worship of

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[210] 15.7 (468. Trans. Hill, 400): 'Redigamus itaque prius haec plurima ad aliquam paucitatem.'

[211] 15.7 (469. Trans. Hill, 400): 'Vna ergo eademque res dicitur siue dicatur aeternus deus siue immortalis siue incorruptibilis siue immutabilis, itemque cum dicitur uiuens et intellegens quod est utique sapiens, hoc idem dicitur. Non enim percepit sapientiam quia esset sapiens, sed ipse sapientia est.'

[212] 15.9 (471. Trans. Hill, 401): 'Redigimus quidem illa duodecim in istam paucitatem trium, sed eo modo forsitan possumus et haec tria in unum aliquid horum.'

[213] Ibid.: 'Quis itaque disputandi modus, quaenam tandem uis intellegendi atque potentia, quae uiuacitas rationis, quae acies cogitationis ostendet, ut alia iam taceam, hoc unum quod sapientia dicitur deus quomodo sit trinitas?'

[214] 15.10 (474. Trans. Hill, 402 f.): 'Ecce ergo trinitas, sapientia scilicet et notitia sui et dilectio sui. Sic enim et in homine inuenimus trinitatem, id est mentem et notitiam qua se nouit et dilectionem qua se diligit.'

him.…God himself is supreme wisdom; but the worship of God is man's wisdom.'[215] Wisdom is no more envisaged as an attribute of God from a formal viewpoint, but as the way we enter into a relation with God, which does entail knowledge, but also worship. The sentence just quoted could be rendered as follows: 'We know God as he should be known by worshipping him; we worship God by knowing him as he should be known'. This approach to the theme of wisdom explains the role the doctrine of the image of God fulfils with regards to theological epistemology, particularly from the viewpoint of relation (what we have called the 'image-relation'), brought to its resolution in book 14. To be 'in the image of God' expresses the same truth as to be a 'philosopher', that is 'a lover of wisdom'.[216]

The correct understanding of the way in which the theme of wisdom and that of the 'image-relation' are linked to each other is pivotal for the grasping of Augustine's theological epistemology. First of all, the image must correspond to something which is eternal is us.[217] Even though no justification is provided here, it is easy to guess it from the rest of the *De Trinitate* and in particular from the following sentence of book 1: 'For the fullness of our happiness, beyond which there is none else, is this: to enjoy God the Trinity in whose image we were made.'[218] The image is not just instrumental to attaining knowledge of God, but it is that through which we are going to enjoy God the Trinity eternally in the life to come. Now, that which is eternal in us, that which in us calls for this eternal enjoyment of God, that in which God's image can therefore be located is our rationality, first envisaged in general terms[219] and then in a more specific manner: the soul is made in the image of God 'with reference to its capacity to use reason and understanding in order to understand and gaze upon God'.[220] Familiarity with Augustine's epistemology immediately alerts us with regards to the (apparent) absence of love in this statement and invites us to look for the link between this assertion and the next stage of the discussion, the necessity of which is simply taken for granted.

[215] 14.1 (421).

[216] 14.2 (423). Book 14 is open and closed by a discussion on what it really means to be a philosopher.

[217] 14.4 (426. Trans. Hill, 372): 'It is intolerable to suppose that while the soul is by nature immortal and from the moment of its creation never thereafter ceases to exist, its very best attribute or possession should not last out its immortality. And was anything better created in its nature than its being made to the image of its creator?'

[218] 1.18 (52).

[219] 14.6 (428. Trans. Hill, 374): 'What we have to find in the soul of man, that is in the rational or intellectual soul, is an image of the creator which is immortally engrained in the soul's immortality.'

[220] Ibid.: 'secundum hoc facta est ad imaginem dei quod uti ratione atque intellectu ad intellegendum et conspiciendum deum potest'.

In fact, at this point, without any justification, just as if it was a self-evident truth, Augustine states: 'let us search in this image of God [i.e. in the possibility of using reason to know God] for some triad specific to it'.[221]

Is there really any self-evidence at all in the assertion that for something in us to be an image of God it must have a triadic structure? Of course, one of the main characteristics of Augustine's doctrine of the image is exemplarity, but are we not entitled to question the theological legitimacy of such a material understanding of the similarity between the exemplar and the image? After all, he himself had declared that 'what we love is not what any triad is but the Trinity that God is … what we love in the Trinity is what God is'?[222] This is why we can legitimately wonder to what extent this 'quest for triads' does not in fact play a specifically theological role, that is to what extent it does not encapsulate some really objective theological truths other than a somehow unsophisticated notion of exemplarity between creator and creatures. The assumption we are going to test is the following: *Augustine's self-imposed necessity to find a triadic structure in our rationality corresponding to the image of God is in fact a way of exploring and representing the criteria rationality has to meet to become that through which God can be known.* This assumption is confirmed by the way the argument in unfolded in book 14. No sooner has this question been asked, than we have a long section which recapitulates the argument of books 10 to 13.[223] This section is delimited by the recurrence of an identical declaration at its beginning, in its middle, and at its end, which claims that a *capacity* for God can be located in human soul even before we actually *participate* in his wisdom:

(i) it is with reference to its capacity to use reason and understanding in order to understand and gaze upon God that it was made to the image of God. … Although it is a great nature, it could be spoiled because it is not the greatest; and although it could be spoiled because it is not the greatest, yet because it is capable of the greatest nature and can participate in it, it is a great nature still;[224]

(ii) even when it has lost its participation in him it still remains the image of God, even though worn out and distorted. It is his image insofar as it is capable of him and

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[221] 14.6 (429).

[222] 8.8 (278 f. Trans. Hill, 248, modified): 'An uero diligimus non quod omnis trinitas sed quod trinitas deus?'

[223] 14.6–15 (428–443), with an explicit cross-reference to book 10, cf. 14.6 (429).

[224] 14.6 (428. Trans. Hill, 374, modified):

secundum hoc facta est ad imaginem dei quod uti ratione atque intellectu ad intellegendum et conspiciendum deum potest. … Quamquam enim magna natura sit, tamen uitiari potuit quia summa non est; et quamquam uitiari potuerit quia summa non est, tamen quia summae naturae capax est et esse particeps potest, magna natura est.

can participate in him; indeed it cannot achieve so great a good except by being his image;[225]

(iii) let it worship the uncreated God, by whom it was created with a capacity for him and able to participate in him.[226]

These passages declare that the image of God remains even when the relation with God is broken; they call this basic image a 'capacity' to know God (*potest nosse*) or even a capacity for God himself (*capax Dei*); they state that it is possible to envisage the mind in itself even before it becomes participant (*particeps*) in God.[227] Many a commentator has felt entitled to infer from these statements that Augustine 'draws a definite line of demarcation between those divine operations which belong to nature and those which pertain to supernature. . . . The Bishop is keenly aware of the distinction between natural and supernatural operations in man'[228] and clearly distinguishes some operations which 'are not those which pertain to God's inhabitation of the soul and his supernatural workings but are those which are natural'.[229] The aim of these statements is to affirm the existence of a 'permanent trinity in the mind of man', a 'natural and indestructible Trinitarian image in the mind',[230] a 'natural and permanent Trinitarian image left to man after sin',[231] which is the potential basis for the actual remembering, knowing, and loving of God[232] and for the reformed image with God as object.[233] 'The activation of this perpetual trinity adds nothing really to the original likeness, but can only diminish it, if it is perverse.'[234] In short, the 'capacity' would somehow correspond to the scholastic disctinction between nature and supernature,[235]

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[225] 14.11 (436. Trans. Hill, 379):

etsi amissa dei participatione obsoletam atque deformem dei tamen imaginem permanere. Eo quippe ipso imago eius est quo eius capax est eiusque esse particeps potest, quod tam magnum bonum nisi per hoc quod imago eius est non potest.

[226] 14.15 (443. Trans. Hill, 383, modified):

colat deum non factum cuius ab eo capax facta est et cuius esse particeps potest.

[227] A similar and even more unambiguous formulation of the same point is to be found in book 15.39 (516. Trans. Hill, 426):

Anyone who has a lively intuition of these three [memory, understanding and will], as divinely established in the nature of his mind (*naturaliter diuinitus instituta*) and of how great a thing it is that his mind has that by which even the eternal and unchanging nature can be recalled, beheld and desired—it is recalled by memory, beheld by intelligence and embraced by love—has thereby found the image of that supreme Trinity.

[228] Grabowski (1954), 161 and 159.   [229] Ibid., 162.

[230] Sullivan (1963), 141.   [231] Ibid., 143.   [232] Ibid.

[233] Ibid., 145.   [234] Ibid., 147.

[235] Brachtendorf (1998) ascribes 'the character of being an image of God to the mind in its natural stage as opposed to a stage of moral perfection' (p. 44) as part of a wider claim that 'the idea of a hermeneutical priority of knowledge [over faith] can be employed as a key to the structure of Augustine's *De Trinitate*' (p. 35). His argument can be summed up as follows: first,

it could be interpreted in the sense of a relative epistemological autonomy and would even represent a created basis for the knowledge of God by grace. Is this the case?

As we were saying, these three declarations on 'capacity-participation' surround a summary of Augustine's argument in books 10 to 13, where the triadic structure of the mind had been located in the triad of 'self-memory, self-knowledge and self-love'. This summary, however, makes clear that this triad is not simply meant to express our similarity with God ('image-exemplar'), but *it is an attempt to work out what to be rational means for beings created in the image of God*, who are not simply 'like God', but more radically coming from God, dependent on God, and destined to find their fulfilment in the knowledge of God the Trinity ('image-relation'). Moreover, this triad expresses the actual state of our rationality and especially its failures caused by its sinfulness, its illness, its blindness etc.

'the belief that God is Trinitarian presupposes an understanding of the term "trinity" which is, like any understanding, provided by an implicit knowledge' (p. 41). This implicit knowledge of the notion of 'trinity' necessary to believe in the mystery of the Trinity 'stems from a natural acquaintance, not with God, but with ourselves' (p. 36). 'In its basic self-awareness, the human mind is, has always been, and will always be completely transparent to itself. Here, the mind is perpetually in touch, so to speak, with the trinity that it itself is. Thus, self-acquaintance is the persisting source of our pre-knowledge of trinity' (p. 44). This first difficulty of this account lies in the interpretation of book 8 it relies upon. Brachtendorf (p. 37 f.) argues for the necessity of pre-knowledge of the Trinity from the examples of pre-knowledge of other objects of belief given in *Trin.* 8.7 f. (276 f.), where Augustine declares that, in the case of the mystery of the Incarnation, we believe because we know what a virgin is and what it is to be born or, in the case of resurrection, we know what it is to die and to live etc., in the same way we need to know what a 'trinity' is in order to know and love the Trinity: 'The belief that God is Trinitarian as well as love of the Trinitarian God require an understanding of the meaning of "trinity"' (Brachtendorf, p. 41). Our textual analysis of Augustine's argument in book 8 has led us to exactly the opposite conclusion: knowledge of the objects of belief of 8.7 f. (276 f.) is given as an example precisely of what knowledge of the Trinity is not. It is meant to introduce the explanation that we do not know the Trinity from a likeness (*ex parilitate rei*), as if there were many such trinities and we had experience of some of them and thus we could believe according to standard of likeness impressed on us or in terms of specific and generic notions. Indeed, when we say and believe that there is a Trinity, we know what a Trinity is, because we know what it is 'to be three': but this is not what we love, 8.8 (278 f.). Thus book 8 is devoted precisely to establishing the unique epistemological status of charity with regards to the knowledge of the Trinity (see chapter 8 of the present monograph). The epistemological role of charity and of love in general is not sufficiently taken into account in Brachtendorf's argument and explains some of the differences between his account of Augustine's epistemology and ours. Then, Brachtendorf's identification of the image of God with the formal aspects of self-acquaintance (or self-awareness) does not pay enough attention to what we have called here the line of 'image-relation'. A clear grasp of the primary relational and dynamical (that is, Trinitarian) character of the image of God is essential to give justice to the breadth of factors intervening in the process of knowledge—and especially of its inseparability from love—and to avoid the misleading identification of the distinction 'capacity-participation' with the delimitation of a 'natural stage' in the character of the image. For a similar critical account of Brachtendorf's interpretation of the *De Trinitate*, see Madec (2000), 69–71.

Thus in book 14 the necessity of having a triadic structure, that is to be 'self-memory, self-knowledge and self-love', is explained to us. First of all it means that for our rationality to function properly and to fulfil its dynamism (i) our mind must be present to itself, which corresponds to self-memory[236] and (ii) we must love ourselves properly in order to know ourselves properly, since love and knowledge are inseparable ('self-knowledge' and 'self-love'). Then, the necessity for our mind to have a triadic structure and to be spontaneously aware of this is a way of describing the actual sinful and dysfunctional state of our rationality and to explain why we are not only unable to know God, but also to know ourselves and everything else adequately. Here we find a very good summary of books 10 to 12, namely: (i) even if we never cease to be self-memory (that is self-knowledge), we are no more aware of this, because we do not know that we know ourselves;[237] (ii) this is caused by the corruption of our love (covetousness as opposed to charity), seeing that love and knowledge are inseparable and mutually conditionning.[238]

But the triadic structure of our mind is also a way of explaining how the image goes from the 'capacity' described in the terms we have just seen to 'participation' in God. In other words, talk of triadic structure of our mind is instrumental to exploring *how we come to knowledge of God*, how we become wise. This is the object of the most significant passage of book 14 with regards to the theme of the image-relation:

[236] 14.7 (429. Trans. Hill, 375): 'The mind knows nothing so well as what is present to it, and nothing is more present to the mind than itself'; 14.8 (431 f. Trans. Hill, 375 f.): 'But when it [the mind] is not thinking about itself, it is indeed not in its own view, nor is its gaze being formed from itself, and yet it still knows itself by being somehow its own memory' and 14.8 (432. Trans. Hill, 376): the mind 'was already known to itself in the way that things are known which are contained in the memory even when they are not being thought about'.

[237] 14.8 (430. Trans. Hill, 375): 'What do we know, if we do not know what is in our own mind, seeing that whatever we know we can only know it with the mind?'; 14.8 (431. Trans. Hill, 375 f.): 'how it [the mind] can not be in its own view when it is not thinking about itself, seeing that it can never be without itself, as though it were one thing and its view another, I cannot really fathom'; 14.9 (434. Trans. Hill, 377) 'we do not know that we know' and 'anyone who is unable to see these things even when he is reminded of them ad has his attention drawn to them, is suffering from great blindness of heart and sunk very deep in the darkness of ignorance, and needs very special aid from God to be able to attain true wisdom.'

[238] Cf. the example of the child who cannot think himself because of covetousness in 14.7 (429 f.) and 14.18 (445 f. Trans. Hill, 384 f.):

The human mind is so constructed that it never does not remember itself, never does not understand itself, never does not love itself. . . . The man who knows how to love himself loves God; and the man who does not love God, even though he loves himself, which is innate in him by nature, can still be said quite reasonably to hate himself. . . . By forsaking the one above itself with regard to whom alone it [the mind] could keep its strength and enjoy him as its light . . . it became weak and dark, with the result that it was miserably dragged down from itself to things that are not what it is and are lower than itself by loves that it cannot master and confusions it can see no way out of.

This triad of the mind is not the image of God because the mind remembers and understands and loves itself, but because it is also able to remember and understand and love him by whom it was made. And when it does this it becomes wise. If it does not do it, then even though it remembers and understands and loves itself, it is foolish. Let it then remember its God to whose image it was made, and understand and love him. To put in a word, let it worship the uncreated God, by whom it was created with a capacity for him and able to participate in him.[239]

The argument of book 14 leading to this passage had already unravelled some aspects of the complexity of the process of knowledge. For Augustine, already in general epistemological terms, that is with regards to objects we would normally consider within our reach,[240] no real knowledge is possible unless we love ourselves properly through the right hierarchy between using and enjoying (*uti* and *frui*) and unless we are aware of ourselves and of our actual condition of sinfulness. On the basis of such an ethically (and theologically) loaded epistemology, Augustine then leads his reader even further in counter-intuitional grounds when he develops at length the strain imposed on the definition of knowledge when the 'object' becomes even more pervasive both ontologically and ethically, that is when the 'object' is he by whom we have been created (*a quo facta est*), in whom we have life, movement and being,[241] who is truth as he is our light and our good,[242] who is the very basis of our ability to know and love, who is more intimate to ourselves that we ourselves are,[243] more known to ourselves than we ourselves are;[244] in whom alone we are destined to find happiness, wisdom, eternal life, in short the fulfilment of what we have been created for (*ad imaginem eius*). The triad of memory, knowledge, and love and everything it entails has been devised precisely to prepare the reader to grasp the whole scope of the answer to the question of how do we know such a God:

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[239] 14.15 (442 f. Trans. Hill, 383, modified):

Haec igitur trinitas mentis non propterea dei est imago quia sui meminit mens et intellegit ac diligit se, sed quia potest etiam meminisse et intellegere et amare a quo facta est. Quod cum facit sapiens ipsa fit. Si autem non facit, etiam cum sui meminit seque intellegit ac diligit, stulta est. Meminerit itaque dei sui ad cuius imaginem facta est eumque intellegat atque diligat. Quod ut breuius dicam, colat deum non factum cuius ab eo capax facta est et cuius esse particeps potest.

[240] Of course, in the light of what we have just said, for Augustine no object can straight-forwardly be said to be 'within the reach of our knowledge' independently from our relation with God, that is from the necessity to be enlightened by God and for our ability to know to be restored through the conversion of our love from covetousness to charity through Christ's salvific action.

[241] 14.16 (443 f.).   [242] 8.2–5 (269–274).
[243] *conf.* 3.11 (CCL 27, 33).   [244] 8.12 (286).

(i) to know this God is first of all *to 'remember' him*, that is to become aware that he is at the very source of our being, that he is our light and our good, even when we turn away from him and we become blind to this truth which should be more evident to us than everything else;

(ii) to know him is *to love him* and love ourselves in him, since knowledge and love are inseparable, since he is love and since love comes with its own evidence which is irreducible to any other thing known;[245]

(iii) to know him we need *to be rescued from the sinful condition* which prevents us not only from knowing him, but even from knowing ourselves and from the right knowledge and enjoyment of everything else.

This is the real purpose of the triad of 'memory, knowledge and love', as we are about to see in more detail. This also is the meaning of the claim of the passage we have quoted above[246] that even if we remember, know, and love ourselves, our mind is nonetheless foolish (*stulta*) or, as he says elsewhere, worn away, almost nothing, faint, distorted,[247] ill, dark,[248] etc.: indeed, even if in principle 'self-memory, self-knowledge and self-love' are never lost because this constitutes our rationality and our being, in fact sin has made it unavalaible to us. Finally, this is what Augustine means when he identifies knowledge of God with participation in God's wisdom,[249] that is God's self-knowledge, and he identifies it with worship. Far from placing ourselves in a neutral position, knowledge of God, more than any other human activity, requires the full thankful and humble acknowledgement of our total dependence on God. The remainder of book 14 is devoted precisely to illustrating this dependence on God in more detail, particularly with regards to memory and love of God.

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[245] Cf. the argument of book 8.   [246] 14.15 (442 f.).
[247] 14.6 (428).   [248] 14.18 (446).
[249] 14.15 (442 f. Trans. Hill, 383):

It is after all written, *Behold the worship of God is wisdom* (Jb 28.28). In this way it will be wise not with its own light but by sharing in that supreme light, and it will reign in happiness where it reigns eternal. For this is called man's wisdom in such a way that it is also God's. Only then is it true wisdom; if it is merely human it is hollow. I do not mean it is God's wisdom in the sense of the wisdom by which he is wise; he is not wise by sharing in himself, as the mind is by sharing in God. But I mean it in the same sense as we call God's justice not only that by which he is himself just but also that which he gives to man when he *justifies the godless* (Rom 4.5). This is the justice the apostle sets before us when he says of some people, *Not knowing the justice of God and wishing to establish their own, they did not submit to the justice of God* (Rom 10.3). In the same way it could be said of some people, 'Not knowing the wisdom of God and wishing to establish their own, they did not submit to the wisdom of God'.

When we meet someone who claims we know him even though we do not remember him, either we have not completely forgotten him and then, through the help of his indications, we are led to discover that his memory is still present in us; or we have completely forgotten him and the only alternative we are left with is to decide whether to believe him or not.[250] With regards to the state of happiness we lost because of original sin, indeed no memory of it is left in us and we can only believe what Scripture says about it.[251] On the contrary, with regards to God, the situation is similar to the case of self-knowledge: we are no more aware that we do remember, know and love ourselves, i.e. that we *are* self-knowledge (*se nosse*), even though this cannot be lost since it constitutes our being. In the same way, we cannot possibly have lost all memory of God because in him we have life, movement, and being:

For in him we live and move and are (Acts 17.27).... We really ought to take his words in terms of the mind which was made to God's image; this is a more excellent way, being intelligible instead of merely visible. What, after all, is not in God, of whom it is divinely written, *for from him and through him and in him are all things* (Rom 11.36)? So of course if all things are in him, what can things that live live in and things that move move in but in him in whom they are? And yet not all men are with him in the way meant when the psalmist says to him, *I am always with you* (Psa 73.23), nor is he with all men in the way meant when we say 'The Lord be with you'. It is man's great misfortune not to be with him without whom he cannot be. Obviously he is not without him in whom he is; and yet if he fails to remember and understand and love him, he is not with him.[252]

Just as we live in God even if we are unaware of this, so memory of God cannot be lost. When this memory is actualized, then not only do we carry on living *in him*, but also we start living *with him*, that is we enter into a covenantal relation with him. Needless to say, the actualization of this memory is not a passage from potentiality to actuality, but needs renewal, reformation, that

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[250] 14.17 (444 f.).

[251] 14.21 (449 f. Trans. Hill, 387): it 'was once and is no more, and the mind has totally forgotten it and therefore cannot even be reminded of it. But it believes the trustworthy documents of its God about it, written by his prophets, when they tell about the bliss of paradise and make known through historical tradition man's first good and first evil.' Cf. also 9.5 (317 f.).

[252] 14.16 (443 f. Trans. Hill, 383):

In illo enim uiuimus et mouemur et sumus. ... Secundum mentem quae facta est ad eius imaginem debet hoc accipi excellentiore quodam eodemque non uisibili sed intellegibili modo. Nam quid non est in ipso de quo diuine scriptum est: *Quoniam ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia*? Proinde si in ipso sunt omnia, in quo tandem possunt uiuere quae uiuunt et moueri quae mouentur nisi in quo sunt? Non tamen omnes cum illo sunt eo modo quo ei dictum est: *Ego semper tecum*, nec ipse cum omnibus eo modo quo dicimus: "Dominus uobiscum". Magna itaque hominis miseria est cum illo non esse sine quo non potest esse. In quo enim est procul dubio sine illo non est, et tamen si eius non meminit eumque non intellegit neque diligit, cum illo non est.

is the positive redeeming action of the Son and the Holy Spirit, resurrection and Pentecost: in short it is a miracle. We are reminded of God when we are converted to him: 'They are reminded of him and are converted to the Lord, which is like their coming to life again by remembering the life they had forgotten.'[253] The passive of these verbs, 'to be reminded of him' and 'to be converted to him' should not go unnoticed, as in the following passage:

The mind does however remember its God. He always is; it is not the case that he was and is not, or is and was not, but just as he never will not be, so he never was not. And he is all of him everywhere, and therefore the mind lives and moves and is in him, and for this reason is able to remember him. Not that it remembers him because it knew him in Adam, or anywhere else before the life of this body, or when it was first made in order to be inserted into this body. It does not remember any of these things at all; whichever of these may be the case, it has been erased by oblivion. Yet it is reminded to be converted to the Lord, as though to the light by which it went on being touched in some fashion even when it turned away from him.[254]

Then, once again, Augustine comes back to the essential epistemological role of love in book 14 too: we are converted to God and are reminded of him by being rescued from covetousness[255] through the conversion of our love to charity. The right form of love, therefore, is the key to the possibility of knowing God properly. Only through love we discover God present in us, we are reminded of him, we are converted to him, we are enabled to know him and by the same token to love, remember, and know ourselves and to find the right relation with reality in general (that is the right articulation between using and enjoying) which allows us to know it properly.

It is against the background of love, as always with Augustine, that the right relation between 'capacity' and 'participation' (*capax—particeps*) can be properly understood and that the misleading framework of nature and supernature superimposed on his thought by the commentators mentioned above can be avoided. Even though we never cease to be self-love, self-knowledge, and self-memory, separation from God reverses the dynamism of our created being:

[253] 14.17 (445. Trans. Hill, 384): 'Commemoratae uero conuertuntur ad dominum tamquam reuiuiscentes reminiscendo uitam cuius eas habebat obliuio.'

[254] 14.21 (450. Trans. Hill, 387, modified):

Domini autem dei sui reminiscitur. Ille quippe semper est, nec fuit et non est, nec est et non fuit, sed sicut numquam non erit ita numquam non erat. Et ubique totus est, propter quod ista in illo et uiuit et mouetur et est, et ideo eius reminisci potest. Non quia hoc recordatur quod eum nouerat in Adam aut alibi alicubi ante huius corporis uitam aut cum primum facta est ut insereretur huic corpori; nihil enim horum omnino reminiscitur; quidquid horum est obliuione deletum est. Sed commemoratur ut conuertatur ad dominum, tamquam ad eam lucem qua etiam cum ab illo auerteretur quodam modo tangebatur.

[255] 14.22 (451): 'Qui uero commemorati conuertuntur ad dominum ab ea deformitate qua per cupiditates saeculares conformabantur huic saeculo reformantur.'

'The man who knows how to love himself loves God; and the man who does not love God, even though he loves himself, which is innate in him by nature, can still be said quite reasonably to hate himself when he does what is against his own interest.'[256] This situation is caused by sin[257] and therefore can only be re-established by God's salvific action: 'But when the mind loves God, and consequently as has been said remembers and understands him, it can rightly be commanded to love its neighbour as itself. For now it loves itself with a straight, not a twisted love, now that it loves God; for participating in him results not merely in its being that image, but also in its being renewed so as to be no longer old, and restored so as to be no longer defaced, and beatified so as to be no longer unhappy.'[258] The Christology, the soteriology and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit of the *De Trinitate* flow together in the last part of book 14, where the Trinitarian action of renewal and reformation of the image of God in us is developed through making explicit the fundamental dynamic nature of the image of God. This dynamic nature of the image of God, in particular, is the other factor which needs to be adequately grasped if we wish to understand properly the relation between 'capacity' and 'participation'.

   This key feature of the image of the Trinity in us is summed up by this assertion: 'it is image in such a way as to be "to the image"' ('ita imago est ut ad imaginem sit').[259] Such a fundamentally dynamic notion of the image of God (which Latin language very effectively conveys through the *ad* plus the accusative) does not flow from the necessary renewal or reformation entailed by the reality of sin, but from Augustine's doctrine of creation. Even though the theme of 'creation, conversion, formation and perfection' is not explicitly taken up here, it is easily recognizable in this dynamism breathed into human nature in the very act of creation; the image is not something equal to God in us which can be calmly possessed and enjoyed, but rather something which sets us in motion:

man is said to be 'to the image' because of the disparity of his likeness to God, and 'to our image' to show that man is the image of the Trinity; not equal to the Trinity as the Son is equal to the Father, but approaching it as has been said by a certain likeness,

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[256] 14.18 (445 f. Trans. Hill, 384): 'Qui ergo se diligere nouit deum diligit; qui uero non diligit deum etiam si se diligit, quod ei naturaliter inditum est, tamen non inconuenienter odisse se dicitur cum id agit.'

[257] 14.21 (449).

[258] 14.18 (446. Trans. Hill, 385, modified): 'Cum autem deum diligit mens et sicut dictum est consequenter eius meminit eumque intellegit, recte illi de proximo suo praecipitur ut eum sicut se diligat. Iam enim se non peruerse sed recte diligit cum deum diligit cuius participatione imago illa non solum est, uerum etiam ex uetustate renouatur, ex deformitate reformatur, ex infelicitate beatificatur.'

[259] 7.12 (266).

as one can talk of a certain proximity between things distant from each other, not proximity of place but of a sort if imitation.[260]

The link between this passage and the first book of the *De Genesi ad litteram* we have seen above is unmistakable: we are in the image of God insofar as we 'enter upon' (*accedens*) likeness with God through *imitatio*, that is the very same movement of adhesion to God of the Word both from all eternity and in his Incarnation, his mediatory role and his sacrifice ('ut formaretur inhaerendo Creatori').[261] We have seen how God, through his Word, summons created reality into a movement of conversion, of adhesion to God and how this summon is continual and continually constitutive of our being. This is precisely what the *De Trinitate* expresses through its dynamic approach to the image of God: creatures of the Creator revealed in the incarnate Christ and in his Holy Spirit, we are constituted by a threefold fundamental dependence on him and we are continuously called to fulfil our existence through adhesion to God the Father, through God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This relation is exemplified by the way the image of God stretches towards its intended aim. This way is constituted by memory, knowledge, and love, in their fundamental inseparability. Thus, Augustine states that: 'We said about the nature of the human mind that if it is all contemplating truth it is the image of God. . . . Now the more it reaches out toward what is eternal, the more it is formed thereby to the image of God.'[262] Here we have an echo of the *formatio* we have seen in Augustine's earlier works, applied to the image of God. The formation of the image results from a stretching (*extensio*) towards the contemplation of 'that which is eternal', that is the vision of God.

The same dynamism of the image of God is formulated in terms of love: 'For man's true honour is God's image and likeness in him, but it can only be preserved when facing him from whom its impression is received. And so the less love he has for what is his very own the more closely can he cling to God.'[263] Again here, just as in the threefold dependence on God spelt out

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[260] 7.12 (267. Trans. Hill, 231):

propter imparem . . . similitudinem dictus est homo ad imaginem, et ideo *nostram* ut imago trinitatis esset homo, non trinitati aequalis sicut filius patri, sed accedens ut dictum est quadam similitudine sicut in distantibus significatur quaedam uicinitas non loci sed cuiusdam imitationis.

[261] *Gn. litt.* 1.4 (CSEL 28/1, 8).

[262] 12.10 (364 f. Trans. Hill, 328): 'De natura humanae mentis diximus quia et si tota contempletur ueritatem, imago dei est . . . Et . . . quantumcumque se extenderit in id quod aeternum est tanto magis inde formatur ad imaginem dei.' The same idea of *extensio* can be found in 9.1 (292 f.).

[263] 12.16 (370. Trans. Hill, 331): 'Honor enim hominis uerus est imago et similitudo dei quae non custoditur nisi ad ipsum a quo imprimitur. Tanto magis itaque inhaeretur deo quanto minus diligitur proprium.' Cf. Williams (1990), 319: 'the image is preserved only when it exists

in Augustine's earlier works, the dynamic nature of the image is not only located in its growth, in its fulfilment or in its renewal, but already in its preservation (*custoditur*). The very existence of the image of God is constituted by a movement going from the creative act of God to the vision of God: *ad ipsum a quo imprimitur.* This movement is constituted by love (*dilectio*) and, because of the consequences of sin, it requires the overcoming of covetousness.

Thus, both ontologically and ethically, we are in the image of God, that is, we are inscribed in a dynamic relation with the Lord who constantly keeps us in being and calls us both to fulfil our nature (ontological level) and to overcome the consequences of our sinful state through becoming himself the object of our knowledge and love (ethical level). The same Lord who rescues us from the tendency towards nothingness resulting from our contingent created nature, also rescues us from our covetousness resulting from our sinful condition.

At the end of this chapter devoted to the image of God, one last observation needs to be made concerning the meaning of this theme in a treatise devoted to the Trinity. Characterizing the human being as a creature in the image of God the Trinity makes Father, Son, and Holy Spirit its essential and indispensable defining 'factor', so to speak. In Augustinian terms, just as it is impossible to envisage epistemology apart from God, so it is impossible to define our identity without God or to consider the image *of God* as a property handed over to us which could be, even simply in principle, managed in isolation from its source.[264] Here we reach the final and decisive meaning of the capacity of God (*capax dei*) we have been so keen to put under the right light. This 'capacity' is not a proviso destined to preserve an independent, if reduced, space for human initiative, but a necessary clause to state that however defining a 'factor' God might be in the definition of what we are, he is so as the

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ad ipsum (following the better reading here, instead of the banal alternative *ab ipso*) *a quo imprimitur*'.

[264] Bourassa (1978) apparently reaches a similar conclusion when he declares that Trinitarian revelation in the economy leads to 'ontological' salvation on the basis of an intrinsic relation between divine Trinity and the structure of the soul made in the image of God, that is, made to know God in his Word and love in the communion of the Holy Spirit (p. 409; see also pp. 382 f., 392, and 405 f.). However, it is difficult to disentangle this conclusion from previous declarations in the same article, such as 'il s'agit . . . de faire surgir, au centre de la conscience, comme principe de toute recherche, l'experience religieuse primordiale, l'experience de Dieu au fond du coeur, "plus intime à moi que moi-même", principe et terme du salut' (p. 380) and 'la voie d'analogie . . . est la base epistemologiquement et moralement ou religieusement nécessaire de toute connaissance de Dieu ici-bas, cette connaissance déjà octroyée à l'âme, de par sa création même à l'image de Dieu, pour lui donner la possibilité de se tourner vers Dieu et de le reconnaître dans la foi pour s'acheminer ainsi vers la vision face à face' (p. 381 f.). If Bourassa's conclusion had to be understood in the light of these two sentences, then his interpretation of the image of God in Augustine would be diametrically opposed to ours.

Lord, that is through his grace.[265] For this reason, rather than image 'of God', it would be more appropriate to talk of image 'from (and obviously "towards") God'.

Through the theme of the image 'from and towards God', Augustine demonstrates how the dynamism inscribed in us by creation is based precisely on the incommensurable gap existing between the teleological character of our created nature and the absolutely transcendent, gracious and in the end eschatological nature of this same God-given goal. This very 'capacity' corresponds to our dependence on God not only for our existence, but for the possibility of our knowing and loving and reaching the fulfilment of that for which we were created. We can say that the image is a fundamental threefold dependence of creature on the creator (this is its 'capacity') and reaches its fulfilment when this dependence in being, knowledge, and love becomes conscious and is converted into worship, i.e. ac-knowledged, thankful dependence (this is its 'participation'). At heart, the acknowledgement of this dependence consists in love, in *dilectio*. But love is inseparable from knowledge, and therefore worship coincides with remembering or rather, in *being reminded of God* and in being given, in Christ through the Holy Spirit, the possibility of *knowing* and *loving* God.

In a nutshell, the theme of the image of God allows Augustine to place the too narrow and potentially misleading epistemological question into a proper theological framework, that is a framework where the unique character of the 'object' known and of the ontological dependence of the knowing subject on this 'object' are fully taken into account, together with the actual condition of the knowing subject, which is not a condition of neutrality, or integrity, or objectivity, or of self-possession, but, to use just a couple of Augustine's favourite analogies, is a condition of *infirmitas* and of deep self-alienation.

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[265] Cf. 14.23 (455): 'Tantum autem facit quantum diuinitus adiuuatur Dei quippe sententia est: Sine me nihil potestis facere. In quo prouectu et accessu tenentem mediatoris fidem cum dies uitae huius ultimus quemque compererit, perducendus ad deum quem coluit et ab eo perficiendus excipietur ab angelis sanctis, incorruptibile corpus in fine saeculi non ad poenam sed ad gloriam recepturus', but of course this is an all-pervading theme.

Conclusion: The Primacy of Love

'All this has been said, and if it has been repeated rather often in various ways, this only means that we become all the more familiar with it.'[1] This aspect of Augustine's pedagogy could not but have an effect on our combination of sequential and analytical renderings of the content and purpose of the *De Trinitate* and also of something at least of its distinctive rhetorical ambition not only to teach, but also delight and persuade the reader.[2]

'But we must put some limits to repetition', Augustine adds, not however to bring his treatise to an end, but to get to the heart of the matter, that is to lead his reader 'to perceive the essence of truth'.[3] This declaration, located in the exact middle of the *De Trinitate*, captures the deepest aspiration of the treatise, namely, not just to establish human possibility of knowing God, but to discover how *actually* God makes himself known to the believer. 'To perceive the essence of truth': once again, the abstract formulation should not lead us astray. A trait of Augustine's style we have become familiar with is that abstract terms always hide a theological meaning. In this case, we are reminded of the identity between knowledge and vision Augustine presupposes. Truth, that is God the Trinity, is something we are called to see (*cernere*): this is explicitly declared in the same book, this time in straightforward theological terms: 'You do see the Trinity if you see charity':[4] hence the decisive role of love in this vision, i.e. in knowledge of God; hence also the conclusion of our investigation: *love comes first*.

Love comes first because the inner life of the Trinity is a life of love (*dilectio*) and the substantial unity of the Trinity is a unity of love. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son dwell in each other. This primacy of love in the understanding of inner Trinitarian life is the 'starting point' theologians have been so anxious to identify in Augustine's *De Trinitate* and the real explanation

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[1] 8.1 (268. Trans. Hill, 241): 'Dicta sunt haec, et si saepius uersando repetantur, familiarius quidem innotescunt.'

[2] Cf. *doc. Chr.* 4.xii.27 (CCL 32, 135): 'Dixit enim quidam eloquens, ut uerum dixit, ita dicere debere eloquentem, ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat. Deinde addidit: "Docere necessitatis est, delectare suauitatis, flectere uictoriae" ' (quotation from Cicero, *Orator* 21.69).

[3] 8.1 (268).

[4] 8.12 (287. Trans. Hill, 253): 'Immo uero uides Trinitatem si caritatem uides'.

of the *filioque*: because he is the common charity through which Father and Son love each other and are united to each other, although proceeding principally from the Father, the Holy Spirit derivatively proceeds from the Son as well.[5]

Love comes first in Christology and soteriology: the Incarnation is not simply a union between divine and human natures. It is rather the act through which the Son extends his personal union of love with the Father in the Holy Spirit to the human nature he assumes. Love only exists in loving, as Augustine establishes in book 8.[6] Therefore, the love which unites the Son to the Father from all eternity becomes Christ's love by actually informing his whole life, by being 'translated', so to speak, in all his deeds, words, and in his obedience even unto death on a cross. Just as it is the essence of his mediation, so love is at the heart of his sacrifice. Christ's death on the cross is acceptable to his Father because it is the ultimate seal of his justice, i.e. of his love for the Father in the Holy Spirit, and restores for humanity the possibility of becoming again, in Christ, a sacrifice acceptable to the Father, again in the Holy Spirit.[7]

The Son's Spirit becomes Christ's Spirit and, after his resurrection, he is sent to constitute us believers in Christ. This corresponds to the Spirit's inner Trinitarian identity. Just as he unites the Father and the Son, so he joins us to Christ and to each other, through a unity of love. Faith in Christ only becomes operative through love: a leitmotiv throughout the treatise. That which is heard, promised, and commanded must become an object of love if we are to live according to the inner man. Only through love does knowledge of Christ's humanity become knowledge of God. Only to the lover is vision of the Father granted in the life to come. The eloquence of the Incarnation and of Christ's sacrifice, that is the persuasion entailed by the 'how much' (*quantum*) he loved us and 'in what state' (*quales*) were those he so loved, heals our pride and our despair and converts our covetousness into charity. This means that this eloquence 'speaks' to us only as love actually transforms us.[8] Finally, love proves to be the highest expression of God's grace: either it is from God (*ex deo*), the gift of God (*donum dei*), or is not love at all. The passages of book 8 where Augustine identifies the love out of which we love our neighbour with the love-Holy Spirit need to be read in the light of this fundamental gracious character of the Holy Spirit and of his action. Love is free, it is a grace, because the Holy Spirit is given in such a way that he gives himself *as God*. Love never becomes our possession. The Holy Spirit remains the Lord in his self-gift. Discovery of our ability to love entails the acknowledgment of our dependence on God. Gift means presence of the Giver.[9]

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[5] Cf. chs 6 and 7.   [6] Cf. ch. 8.   [7] Cf. ch. 4.

[8] Cf. ibid.   [9] Cf. chs 5 and 6.

No surprise, therefore, if *love comes first* from the epistemological point of view as well. Since the will is never neutral, we are either moving away from God or we discover that we have been snatched away from this aversion, from the devil's power, from the blindness of our covetousness and pride, from the bleakness of our despair and granted the grace of conversion, of moving towards God through the charity poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. The novelty, the strangeness, the gracious character of this love is such that it becomes the most eloquent indication of the renewal brought about by Christ's salvation and of its Trinitarian character. The apparently odd theme of 'love for love' is to be understood in this context: since love is 'from God', we only love 'out of God'; we only love in the love-Holy Spirit through which the Father and the Son love each other, enjoy (*frui*) each other. Here Augustine sets forth his mature version of the relation between using and enjoying (*uti* and *frui*): neighbour and even the self can be 'enjoyed' in God, insofar as they are loved out of God. This also explains how love opens the door to knowledge of God the Trinity. Love itself is known to the believer more certainly than the very object of his love, 'he knows the love he loves with better than the brother he loves'.[10] Hence the boldest of Augustine's assertions concerning knowledge of God: 'He can already have God better known to him than his brother, certainly better known because more present, better known because more inward to him, better known because more sure'. God *is* love and is known at the highest possible degree because he is the most interior thing, he is the most present thing, he is the most certain thing. This love is both the form we know—so to speak—and that through which this form 'trans-forms' and 'in-forms' us: 'Embrace love which is God, and embrace God with love.'[11]

Love comes first to the point that such talk makes sense only once it has become a *reality* already. Augustine's *De Trinitate* is not destined for people who need to be converted, to be persuaded to love God. His reader has to be someone who already knows, already sees, already loves out of God's love, i.e. *propter deum*, 'because of God', in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. 'I will help you to see that you see it',[12] that is 'I will help you to become aware of the fact that you actually already see God.'

Seeing love, seeing God, does not only mean, of course, becoming aware of the novelty of the brotherly love, we have become capable of by grace. The

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[10] 8.12 (286. Trans. Hill, 253): 'magis enim nouit dilectionem qua diligit quam fratrem quem diligit'.

[11] Ibid.: 'Ecce iam potest notiorem deum habere quam fratrem, plane notiorem quia prae-sentiorem, notiorem quia interiorem, notiorem quia certiorem. Amplectere dilectionem deum et dilectione amplectere deum.'

[12] Ibid.: 'Commonebo si potero ut uidere te uideas.'

vision of love refers above all to Christ's identity and salvific role. Christ's identity, deeds, words, and death on the cross are 'eloquent': they allow us 'to see' how much God loved us. They are the object of the science of faith, which through Christ's Incarnation, mediation, and sacrifice is identical— even though still only through a mirror—to the wisdom of the eternal vision or contemplation of the Father in the life to come. Then, of course, the identity between 'seeing' the Trinity and 'seeing' charity also refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the very love of the Father and the Son. This is the meaning of 'You do see the Trinity if you see charity'.[13]

Then, *love comes first* because, from the vantage point of love, Augustine detects and powerfully describes the epistemological consequences of human sinfulness, thus unmasking the fundamental deficiency of received theories of knowledge. Any pretension to independent philosophical enterprise— 'philosophizing without Christ'[14]—overlooks the crucial condition of knowledge: love. Knowledge is either impaired by covetousness or freed and thus made possible by God's graciously given love. There is no distinction, for Augustine, between natural and supernatural levels of knowledge, no possibility for reason of carving out a field where it could fulfil its role autonomously. His epistemology rests on the impossibility of neutrality for the will, neither turning itself towards God nor averting itself away from him, but simply ignoring both options. Charity stands in the end as the only condition for an harmonious cognitive life. Only charity restores knowledge and enables philosophers to yield to the injunction which resumes philosophical enterprise as a whole, namely 'Know thyself'.[15]

Finally, *love comes first* in Augustine's dynamic approach to the image of God: creatures of the Creator revealed in the incarnate Christ and in his Holy Spirit, we are constituted by a threefold fundamental dependence on him and we are continuously called to fulfil our existence through adhesion to God the Father, through God the Son in God the Holy Spirit, i.e. through the knowledge made possible by love. This dynamism, therefore, coincides with love. The image—i.e. our fundamental threefold dependence on our creator— reaches its fulfilment when this dependence in being, knowledge, and love becomes conscious and is converted into worship, i.e. ac-knowledged, thankful dependence. At heart, the acknowledgement of this dependence consists in love, in *dilectio*. But love is inseparable from knowledge, and therefore worship can be described as remembering or rather, as being reminded of God, as being converted to God and as being given, in Christ through the Holy Spirit, the possibility of loving and knowing God, though faith in this side of the

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[13] 8.12 (287).　　[14] 13.24 (416).　　[15] Cf. chs 3, 9, and 10.

eschatology and finally through vision and enjoyment of the Father in the life to come.[16]

A lesson should be drawn from this conclusion as to the way Augustine in general and the *De Trinitate* in particular should be read. The principle of unity and coherence of works dealing with Christian doctrine should always be looked for in the *conexio mysteriorum* first. Anthropology or epistemology can fulfil the role of organizing principles for the analysis of a doctrinal treatise such as the *De Trinitate* only if they are approached in a distinctive Christian way. The Christian approach to anthropology or epistemology starts by looking away from ourselves and concentrating on Christ's salvation, his Holy Spirit, and the Father's invisibility, their equal divinity and their consubstantiality, i.e. the doctrine of the Trinity and its corollary represented by the doctrine of revelation. On the contrary, we are always guaranteed to misunderstand patristic literature when we take the opposite stand, selecting only the aspects of doctrine we find more congenial to anthropological and epistemological concerns determined in an independent way. Our analysis of the *De Trinitate* has avoided 'analogical', 'anagogical', 'psychological' reductive readings of the treatise—while not failing to list some of its analogical, anagogical, and psychological aspects—because it has tried to adhere as faithfully as possible to its subject-matter, God the Trinity, in the way Augustine summarizes it:

When we say and believe that there is a Trinity, we know what a triad is because we know what three are. But this is not what we love. . . . What we love is not what any trinity is but the Trinity that God is. So what we love in the Trinity is what God is. But we have never seen or known another God, because God is one, he alone is God whom we love by believing, even though we have not yet seen him.[17]

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[16] Cf. ch. 11.
[17] 8.8 (278 f. Trans. Hill, 248):

Cum ergo dicimus et credimus esse trinitatem, nouimus quid sit trinitas quia nouimus quid sint tria; sed hoc non diligimus. . . . An uero diligimus non quod omnis trinitas sed quod trinitas deus? Hoc ergo diligimus in trinitate, quod deus est. Sed deum nullum alium uidimus aut nouimus quia unus est deus, ille solus quem nondum uidimus et credendo diligimus.

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