From the Circular Soul to the Cracked Self:

A Genetic Historiography of Augustine’s Anthropology from Cassiciacum to the Confessiones

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# Table of Contents

Introduction and Chapter Précis ............................................. 4

Part I   Circular Soul, Salvific Contemplation and the Defect of Action ............................................. 33

   Chapter 1   The Circular Soul in Contemplation: The Cassiciacum Project and Augustine’s Early Anthropology (386-387) ............................................. 34

   Chapter 2   Temporal Soul, Fallen Bodies and the Defect of Action (Milan through Thagaste, 387-391) ............................................. 72

   Summary Conclusions for Part I ............................................. 112

Part II  Augustine’s Discovery of Redemptive Action ............................................. 115

   Chapter 3   Augustine’s Invention of the Heart: Standing with Jesus between Plato and the Stoa (391-394) ............................................. 118

   Chapter 4   The Anthropology of Grace: Stoic Compatibilism, Psychology of the Passions and Grace Irresistible (394-396) ............................................. 174

   Summary Conclusions for Part II ............................................. 228

Part III  The Cracked Self and Beyond: Augustine’s Anthropology in the Confessiones  ............................................. 232

   Chapter 5   Mirror of Fallen Nature: Commendatio to Action and its Perversion in Confessiones I ............................................. 235

   Chapter 6   Augustine’s Account of Contemplation: Perverse and Redemptive Ascents in the Confessiones ............................................. 293

   Summary Conclusions for Part III ............................................. 382

Conclusion ............................................. 386

Abbreviations and Editions of Ancient Texts ............................................. 392

Bibliography of Secondary Literature ............................................. 401

Abstract ............................................. 440

Samenvatting ............................................. 446
Introduction

This is a book about Augustine of Hippo’s conceptions of the human person – both theoretical and applied – and the philosophical resources he called upon to construct (and reconstruct) them. But it is more about Augustine than about his sources.

I will engage in highly technical analyses of antique philosophies when they promise to elucidate Augustine’s philosophical anthropology. Those analyses may require detours along the way. But my primary goal is always to understand the winsome, imposing and, often, profound thought of Augustine. Clarifying his philosophical coordinates and the landscape over which he traveled constitutes my best method for tracking his movement through a confusing terrain. The reader must pass judgment on the expedition and its method’s success retrospectively, based on the number and clarity of sightings along the way. My embarking hope is that we will observe Augustine active in settings often neglected by contemporary scholarship and thus come to a new appreciation of him.

I choose the metaphorics of migratory travel advisedly in speaking of Augustine’s anthropology. Indeed, the metaphor is submerged within my chosen title. I don’t think Augustine would object. For Augustine’s thought is always moving. His concepts change throughout his life, but never in a merely haphazard or erratic fashion. Rather, Augustine perseveres in searching, and thus traveling conceptually, for clearer and ever more adequate ways of understanding the nature and destiny of human beings before their Creator.
Conceptual tourism is not recommended in this region. The terrain of Augustine’s chosen expedition is rough, and the indigenous flora thick enough to ensure sweat and strain. But for the hearty, philosophically trained adventurer, our journey will wind along the varying peaks and troughs of two thematic ridges, which may provide rewarding vistas.

First Thematic Focus:

Augustine’s Theoretical Anthropology from the Circular Soul to the Cracked Self

At the level of theoretically formulated conceptions, the general trajectory of Augustine’s anthropological reflections may be characterized as a journey from early affirmations of a quasi-divine soul trapped within a fragmenting body to his mature discovery of a more integral self, which paradoxically acknowledges a fragmentation of soul.

The youthful philosopher, in searching for an adequate metaphor, describes the soul, one’s true self, as somehow akin to the immaterial point governing a circle, the best of bodily figures (*an. quant. 11.18-12.21*).¹ Fifteen years later the now wizened bishop speaks to a crowd in Carthage. Reflecting upon the oft-dismal fate of our heartfelt aspirations to do what is good and the light those failures cast upon the reality of the self, he finds a rather different metaphor appropriate.

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¹ *an. quant.* serves as a hinge text in our historical schematic. It is composed immediately in the wake of Augustine’s catechism and baptism, and thus bears the characteristics of both his Cassiciacum period and his post-catechetical alterations. Consequently, portions of this text will be used to describe both his Cassiciacum speculations and the significant modifications prompted by his reception of the faith from Ambrose.
We, with our good intentions, have all been fired in the kiln of life. And we have emerged cracked (en. Ps. 99.11). The journey has taken a toll. How is it, one may wonder, that Augustine’s thought spanned the terrain from the circular soul to the cracked self? This question of Augustine’s changing theoretical depiction of human being and its constituents provides a focal orientation over the course of our expedition.

Second Thematic Focus:

Augustine’s Prescriptive Anthropology from Platonic Pedagogy to Ecclesial Mystagogy

As Augustine travelled along the philosophical terrain, his gaze was far from disinterested. Each new vista, every significant alteration in his theoretical conception of human being, instantly inspired a new plan of development aimed at achieving human blessedness.

From the beginning, Augustine entwined his reflections on the structure and nature of the soul with descriptions of the happy life and prescriptive schemes for achieving it. As his conception of human being broadens and deepens, so does his applied program for human development. Theoretical anthropology provides a conceptual backdrop for askesis, and askesis always functions as an applied anthropology in Augustine. Indeed, this is a truism applicable to any ancient philosopher or theologian.² But the instability, creativity and discernable lines of

² More on the accompanying methodology below. The apt coupling, however, of anthropological conceptions and prescriptive schemes for attaining blessedness are rooted in Hadot’s work, especially his investigation of the relation between forms of discourse and forms of life in Hadot, Pierre. 1995. Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault. Malden, MA: Blackwell., pp. 49-70. Note also Foucault’s works playing the “know yourself” theme of ancient thought off the “take
development in Augustine’s thought concerning the human being make his applied programs of human formation peculiarly interesting movements to reconnoiter.

The remnants of Augustine’s applied anthropologies speckle the ridge. His first, roughly Platonizing attempt to build a pedagogical ascent enabled a purely cognitive vision. But that was before receiving catechism and mystagogic orations from Ambrose. In time, Augustine’s migration carried him as far as an expansive, ecclesial program for human formation, which I will describe as a mystagogic gradus. So Augustine’s ever developing estimation of the means for attaining blessedness will command a goodly share of our attention.

One Thematic Environ Avoided: Origin and Fall of the Soul

Several decades ago, a few brave adventurers set up camp at one point near the beginning of Augustine’s trail. They toiled long and hard to clear the ground. Today a vast settlement has grown up around their studies of a peculiar subtheme in Augustine’s thought – the Plotinian idea of the preexistent soul fallen into bodies.3

Today an unwitting traveler could easily be swallowed up within this single complex of questions and proceed no further.

Since we aim to trace a goodly portion of Augustine’s anthropological journey, I have chosen to skirt the edges of this settlement and focus no more than necessary on the narrower question of the origin and fall of the soul. A handful of considerations motivate my selective engagement.

First, Augustine never explicitly decides on the issue of the soul’s origin. Indeed, he toys with the idea, making selective use of it, and we will duly note the fact. But I personally find arguments for Augustine secretly holding a conviction that he publically disclaimed to be highly improbable. Augustine’s imposing personality and rhetorical tenacity make me think his real beliefs probably made it out of his mouth. Much more likely, on my reading, is that early in his journey Augustine tended to incorporate and manipulate images from Plotinus, the deeper implications of which he did not yet fully grasp. My argument for this reading will occupy part of chapters one and two.

Second, I think the question has received much greater clarity in recent years through Ronnie Rombs’ differentiation of three possible meanings that “fall of the soul” language could take in Augustine’s various works. Ontological, cosmogonic and moral aspects are fully capable of being differentiated. Any contribution I could make would

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be ancillary at this point. Even Roland Teske, a venerable personage to all in the settlement, pays tribute to the greater utility of Romb’s conceptual distinctions.5

Finally, despite the expansive, promising title of O’Connell’s seminal work,6 the question of the origin and fall of soul actually constitutes a background to Augustine’s anthropology and contributes rather modestly to Augustine’s full theory of the human being as found in this present life. Just as Augustine found himself constrained to look elsewhere in order to produce a theory of human being suited to the specific teachings of Jesus and Paul, so our efforts to trace Augustine’s conceptual journey necessitate venturing into vicinities scarcely related to the soul’s origin and fall. And there we will find Augustine frequenting different philosophical environs. So new territory beckons.

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My Travel Compass: Genetic Research Method

Trailing Augustine’s migration through his ancient terrain requires an interpretive compass and a few trustworthy conceptual tools. My primary interpretive compass has been the intention to produce a *genetic account* of his anthropology. In other words, I’ve followed Augustine’s anthropological thought with the specific issue of internal development in mind and sought answers to a few pertinent questions.

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8 The deep roots of this genetic research method, like all research in the humanities, reach back to the work of Wilhelm Dilthey in clarifying the methodological differences between the natural and human sciences. In particular, by distinguishing a mutually interactive, structural triad of human life as constituted by the play between experience (*Erlebnis*), expression (*Ausdruck*), and understanding (*Verstehen*), Dilthey emphasized that humans come to know themselves primarily through the detour of self-expressions rather than through introspection. These self-expressions, including textual expressions, are also accessible to others. Since persons’ self-knowledge always arises through expression and reflexive understanding of expression, Dilthey provided a theoretical rationale for historians to search out an evolution of thought within the historical personages they would understand. For helpful discussions of his hermeneutical theories and their application to theological historiography confer, Geest, Paul van. 2005. “*Omnis scriptura legi debet eo spiritu quo facto est*: On the Hermeneutics of Wilhelm Dilthey and Albert Deblaere” in Faesen, Rob, and Albert Deblaere. 2005. *Albert Deblaere, S.J., 1916-1994: Essays on Mystical Literature.* Leuven: Peeters. Also, cf. Grondin, Jean. 1994. *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics.* Yale Studies in Hermeneutics. New Haven: Yale University Press.
First, how and why does Augustine’s anthropology sequentially change from one specific form to the next over time? Second, which resources does he call upon – both from within his own prior thought and from external sources – to produce the novel form? And, finally, what philosophical dynamics press him to respond in this manner?

Of course, producing a genetic account of a person’s thought requires adherence to strict chronological parameters in traversing the textual terrain diachronically. Chronological sequence points true north. When one begins traveling under this directive, it is shocking how many Augustinian travel guides seem oblivious to the possibility of conceptual change over time. But for this journey, I’ve insisted that no later texts be evoked for explanatory purposes without very clear lines of continuity stretching from earlier texts within the period under discussion.

So my primary method consists simply in close readings of Augustine’s texts, in chronological order, while focusing on the philosophical and theological concepts involved. Of course, I use historical and philological tools in ways that scholars of antique thought have come to expect from each other. My doggedly conceptual focus constitutes the primary difference from literary-critical, sociological, history of religions, and biographical approaches to Augustine’s work.10

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9 Robert Piercey has provided a helpful analysis of genetic approaches to historical philosophy as appropriately focused on large totality pictures (like Augustine’s “anthropology”). Of course, arguments and theories are important. But they don’t really change. They simply succeed or fail. So the genetic philosopher does philosophy historically by focusing on the big pictures, which do evolve, often intergenerationally, and rarely stand or fall based on any one argument or theory within them. Piercey, Robert. 2003. “Doing Philosophy Historically” in Review of Metaphysics 56:4, pp. 779-800.

10 The researcher in the humanities, according to Dilthey’s model, moves from expressions, in this case literary, back to the experiences and understandings inherently intertwined with them. But the experiences and understandings, themselves, possess many aspects. The historical philosopher will focus on the concepts and world-pictures
Cartographic Legend:

Prescriptive Anthropology as Mystagogy and as Spiritual Exercise

Map making has always been essential to successful exploratory expeditions. And a few questions tend to challenge cartographers in symbolically distinguishing the changes in terrain for prospective travelers. How does one name the places visited? Does one label all the locations with their indigenous names? Or does one use the exonyms of the traveler’s native tongue to represent salient features of the map’s thematic focus?

In leaving a map of Augustine’s anthropological migrations, the symbolization and labeling of his prescriptive anthropology presents a special set of challenges. For Augustine starts out engaged in a broadly Platonic program of prescriptive anthropology. It is well described as a Varronian-Platonic way of life with a Christian twist. But Augustine ends with a very different program of human development in place, one more properly known to the ecclesial locals as mystagogy. The continuities between the programs are real, but the distinctions are also vitally important.

From beginning to end I will describe the constituent therapeutic modalities employed, irrespective of the specific form of life pursued, as spiritual exercises or asksesis or an ascetic program. These specific therapeutic modalities form a generic, overarching continuity between Augustine’s various prescriptive anthropological programs even as his chosen form of life evolves. But the term more indigenous to late ancient Christianity, mystagogy, I will reserve for the peculiarity of Augustine’s later

within those understandings and implicit within the associated experiences. Sociological, literary, religious and biographical approaches simply search out different aspects within the understandings and experiences.
program as constituting a complete form of life. A word about these cartographic labels seems in order.

*Spiritual Exercise and Askesis:*

*Cartographic Symbols for Therapeutic Modalities in Prescriptive Anthropology*

The language of spiritual exercise and its rough equivalents (“technologies of the self,” or “techniques of subjection,”11 “askesis,”12 “therapeutic argumentation,”13 “aretegenic interpretations and practices”14) has experienced a renaissance of late among philosophers, largely due to its utility in uncovering dimensions of philosophical practice once quickly passed over as theoretically uninteresting or logically suspect. A few pioneering scholars are to be thanked for this renewed focus on spiritual exercise.15

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14 Charry, Ellen T. 1997. *By the Renewing of your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*. New York: Oxford University Press. seems to be unaware of the philosophical category of spiritual exercise and the uses Hadot, Foucault and others have found for it. But her approach to Christian doctrine as intentionally aretegenic certainly shares a strong, if hidden, kinship with spiritual exercise.


Among these retrievals, it is to Pierre Hadot’s careful distinctions that I owe my primary conceptual debts. In his works, Hadot develops and displays the fruits of the ancient notion of ascēsis and its Latin equivalent, exercitatio animi.

Spiritual exercises, on Hadot’s telling, are regular practices of diverse variety that are aimed at transforming the subject in order to fully inhabit a school’s chosen form of life. These exercises may be physical, discursive or intuitive so long as the primary intention is the modification or transformation of the practicing subject. The ultimate aim is to find the self as no more or less than a part of the whole, which is universal reason.16

Two emphases are key. First, properly speaking, a spiritual exercise is always a regular practice as part of a form of life. Hadot’s insistence upon practice reaches back to a foundational distinction, articulated in his 1983 inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, between forms of life and forms of discourse. Every school of ancient philosophy is founded upon the choice of a way of life. For the Greek and Roman philosophers, the form of life is philosophy proper.

Nonetheless, peculiar forms of discourse were central to the philosophical forms of life. Among the Platonists, submission to the dialectic (and later, commentary upon Plato’s texts) was central to their way of life. Percussive dialectic and public taciturnity detailed philological readings of the primary texts that unveil therapeutic argumentation at work.

Offering a valuable typology of approaches to spiritual exercise in these seminal writers, cf. Antonaccio, Maria. 1998. “Contemporary Forms of Askesis and the Return of Spiritual Exercises” in Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics 18, pp.69-92
among the Stoics was indispensable. But the form of discourse was always a part of or subsequent to the primarily philosophical choice for a form of life.

Second, all spiritual exercises have as their primary aim to transform our vision of the world and to reshape the personality. However, the particular world-vision and personality shape sought will be relative to the school’s chosen form of life. Hadot’s second key emphasis fixes its beam upon the intentional movement involved in the practice of a spiritual exercise. This is the golden thread. Naming a particular discourse, practice or intuitive reconfiguration of thought as a spiritual exercise is primarily a judgment concerning its direction or trajectory. Often elements intellective, imaginative and appetitive are fused in the lived practice and the textual vestiges bequeathed. But this fusion is also typical of any number of “thought experiments” employed for ends well guarded from self-transformation.

Hadot distinguishes four basic types of spiritual exercise. First are disciplines of attention, or learning to live well. These primarily consist in being mindfully in control of one’s thoughts, feelings, and interpretations at the present moment. Second, disciplines of meditation involve memorization and reflection upon the school’s maxims as a preparation for applying these to everyday life situations. Third, intellectual exercises teach one to dialogue and read. These include such exercises as reading philosophical works, writing as examination of conscience, listening, dialectic, and exegesis of authoritative texts. Fourth, bodily disciplines designed to temper the body

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for philosophical rigors and to create or break habits also play a role in shaping the self to fit within the school’s form of life.\textsuperscript{20}

The very breadth and multiformity of Hadot’s concept of spiritual exercises, particularly as subservient to a larger choice of life, enhances its usefulness in comparative studies. A broad variety of subspecies of exercises, mined from the works of diverse schools, may be related to each other within the overarching genre of spiritual exercise. The utility of spiritual exercise as a “bridge concept” for interreligious comparative studies has recently been demonstrated.\textsuperscript{21} Studying Augustine’s diachronic development genetically involves comparing the various synchronic slices of Augustine’s thought with each other. In order to relate Augustine’s early Platonizing program with his later ecclesial program, Hadot’s conception of spiritual exercise has proved a usefully broad term for naming the specific practices involved.\textsuperscript{22}


**Mystagogy:**

*Cartographic Symbol for the Ecclesial Form of Life in Prescriptive Anthropology*

Mystagogy constitutes a mode of induction into a precisely ecclesial form of life entailing its own subspecies of spiritual exercises. As such it would correspond to Hadot’s generic category of a form of life, more than to any particular spiritual exercise or askesis used in service of that way of life. Allow me to clarify.

Like the concept of spiritual exercise, mystagogy has proved useful of late as an organizing descriptor for several peculiarly ecclesial practices and discourses across a broad field of theological subdisciplines. In many ways, the rediscovery of mystagogy within theological circles can be traced to the influence of Karl Rahner’s thought as that shaped Vatican II and subsequent theologizing.

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In the narrowest sense, mystagogy refers to liturgical initiation into the sacraments. In the 4th and 5th centuries, mystagogical orations emerged as the Church Fathers delivered sermons either just prior to the Easter vigil to those formally enrolled for baptism, or to neophytes and the assembled faithful during the Easter Octave following baptism. These teachings were designed to invite the baptized into a deeper spiritual and intellectual apprehension of the rites they had recently undergone. However, this specifically liturgical sense of mystagogy only reflects one subset of the current retrieval effort.

The generalized sense of mystagogy, so inspirational to Rahner, has been more interesting to retrieve. Mystagogy, in this properly expansive sense, is conceived as leading an initiate into a deeper understanding of himself and all his experiences as attaining meaning in relation to the divine secret. After all, the sacraments were not crafted to be self-referential, but to point toward the initiate’s relatedness to God in Christ. As such, the mystagogue’s craft was not purely cognitive, but entailed

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27 The liturgically focused works on mystagogy appeal, without exception, to the quandaries of practice surrounding the call for reintroducing mystagogy in the R.C.I.A. of 1972 (and again in 1988).

28 Chrysostom’s orations particularly focus on moral activity, and the need for moral development to correspond with the mysteries encountered.

accompanying the initiate through a process of transformation involving the whole personality and advanced by fostering attentiveness to the ways in which self and world are intimately related to God.  

Thus mystagogy, though entailing distinct moments of theological instruction, in its broader role serves a maieutic function. As a midwife for the understanding, the mystagogue leads the initiate to birth a deeper understanding of the experience already partially inaugurated. In Dilthean terms, the formal problem mystagogy addresses is the residual disconnection between experience, expression and understanding, which thus leaves the person unbalanced and conflicted. The mystagogue would help the initiate close those gaps by articulating or providing a means of expression to deepen experience of life before God and by correcting interpretations of self and world that diminish or inhibit further experience of the divine secret.

As accompanied induction into a specifically religious form of life, mystagogy provides the overarching frame and direction for an ecclesial subspecies of therapeutic modalities or spiritual exercises.

Therefore, the primary question is what aspects does Augustine distinguish in the transformation process and what specific practices, or spiritual exercises, are appropriate to each stage? While Augustine’s earliest form of prescriptive

30 This expansive reading of mystagogy has inspired a research agenda for spirituality, and now guides the patristic research conducted by the Centrum voor Patristisch Onderzoek (http://www.patristiek.eu/centrum.htm). For a paradigm of this broader reading of mystagogy at work in historical theology and spirituality, cf. Geest, Paul van. forthcoming. “Seeing that for Monks the Life of Antony is a Sufficient Pattern of Discipline...”: Athanasius as Mystagogue in his Vita Antonii” in Geest, Paul van. 2010. Athanasius of Alexandria: His Search for the Christian Doctrine of God, his Desert Asceticism and Significance. Church History and Religious Culture, vol. 90. Leiden: Brill. My heart-felt thanks to prof. dr. Paul van Geest for introducing this concept to me and graciously sharing this article prior to publication.
anthropology follows a fairly generic Platonist approach, one feature emerges which remains constant in Augustine’s prescriptive schemas.

The submerged metaphor of spiritual growth as steps (gradus) on a ladder stretching from initiation to consummation proves remarkably stable. The content of the gradus – where the first metaphoric rung begins and the last rung reaches – changes dramatically from Cassiciacum to the Confessiones. But the ladder itself possesses lasting utility. So attention to schematic ladders for spiritual growth will prove helpful for determining aspects in Augustine’s prescriptive anthropology.

Second, as Augustine’s form of life progressively morphs into a more distinctively ecclesial mode, attention to his use of allegorical interpretation provides another methodological tool. We possess no mystagogic oration in which allegorical interpretation plays an unimportant role. Indeed, Augustine’s staged migration from a broadly Platonic prescriptive anthropology to one rooted in Christian mystagogy leaves specific spiritual exercises as signposts along the way. In particular, the primary vehicle of spiritual exercise shifts from a dialectical and exegetical pedagogy in liberal disciplines to induction by means of scriptural interpretation culminating in allegorical readings. This transition in characteristic spiritual exercises corresponds to a broader migration in Augustine’s conception of the human person and the form of life Augustine self-consciously pursues.

A Novel Tool in the Travel Pack: Detecting Submerged Conceptual Metaphors

I also employ one set of conceptual tools in my close readings that might require some explanation. Namely, in examining Augustine’s developing concepts I keep my eyes peeled for submerged conceptual metaphors. And a theoretical commitment, not
universally shared by Augustinian scholars, drives my peculiar mode of probing Augustine’s philosophical concepts for submerged metaphors.

Metaphor theory has provided a particularly versatile tool for scholarly expeditions in recent years. In employing this conceptual apparatus, I would locate myself within the tradition that extends outward from the seminal works of Max Black31 and Mary Hesse32 on “conceptual metaphor.”33 This idea has been quite fruitful across a number of disciplines. As such, the line of influence extends through its adaptation and employment in wide-ranging fields such as hermeneutics,34 cosmology,35 symbolic anthropology,36 theology,37 philosophy of science,38 and medieval studies.39

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Basically, this approach contends that metaphors are not fully translatable into literal language but do special conceptual work of their own. In fact, conceptual metaphors can be constitutive of thought. The most abstract of thinkers often begins with simple mental images from which she will elucidate her thought and construct her arguments. These conceptual metaphors are generative of new theoretical insights. For instance, when a sociologist begins to think of social groupings as organisms instead of viewing them as information systems, a new range of possible connections is opened up. Likewise, in the same choice of metaphors other connections become intuitively implausible. So the submerged orienting metaphor or root metaphor, to use Pepper’s term,\textsuperscript{40} may actually produce and guide abstract thought.

Of course, my project does not aim to produce a lexicon of Augustinian conceptual metaphors. So the tool will not be on display for its own sake. But Augustine’s deeply metaphorical account of the self as a spatial clearing, personal attention as turning or stretching within that space, and learning as eating – to name only a few – supply ample rationale for reading with an eye to submerged metaphors and their possible role in his developing thought.

\textit{Characteristic Pathfinding Methods}

In tracking developments in Augustine’s anthropology, I’ve found a few interpretive strategies to aid in keeping the trail from growing cold.

First, I have read with an eye for the internal tensions and contradictions within Augustine’s own philosophical and theological discourses. Often enough the internal contradictions stem from combining tenents from diverse, even conflicting, \textsuperscript{40}Pepper, Stephen. C. 1942. \textit{World Hypotheses}. Berkeley: University of California.
philosophical patrimonies. Thus they provide clues to explain why his theoretical path suddenly deviates in a novel anthropological direction. The tensions between Middle and Neo-Platonist concepts prove helpful in tracing Augustine’s very early developments. Later, interplay between Stoic and Platonist concepts on the one hand, and Pauline utilizations on the other bring other tensions to the surface. We will attend to the fault lines and how Augustine negotiates them in his travels.

Second, I’ve paid attention to how Augustine reads authoritative texts in terms of each other and thus produces novel understandings. Along this journey, we find him engaged in producing interpenetrating readings of Stoic, Middle and Neo-Platonist anthropological theories in terms of Christian scripture and simultaneously reading Christian scripture in terms of Stoic and Platonist theories.

Third, I have found Augustine impossible to track without attending to his use of allegorical interpretation. Very much in opposition to my protestant evangelical instincts of scriptural interpretation, I have taken pains to seriously attend to Augustine’s allegorical readings of the scriptures as a foundation for theological and philosophical work. So my focus on ideas should not be construed as pressing Augustine into a narrowly propositionalist mold. Instead, I’ve found that Augustine’s allegorical interpretation produces a proliferation of conceptual metaphors that orient his descriptions of human becoming. Such dynamics are evident in each stage, but become stark and pervasive especially in his *Confessions*. Thus this strategy will become especially evident in chapters five and six.
**A Methodological caveat lector**

Finally, to properly discern Augustine’s trail, the traveler must maintain an attentive eye both concerning whence Augustine’s philosophical ideas hail and with respect to Augustine’s relative competence in using and transforming them. In this genetic project, I have striven to acknowledge the broader (if occasionally thinner) philosophical resources available to and employed by Augustine.

Specifically, Stoic psychologies of action and passion play a much larger role in Augustine’s thought than generally recognized. And Augustine’s usage betrays a much more detailed understanding of underlying issues than heretofore acknowledged. Nonetheless, we find no overt endorsement of their philosophical system. Only the trained eye will notice his indebtedness. Conversely, Augustine’s period of greatest enthusiasm for Plotinian philosophy turns out to be the period when he understands the distinctive nuances of it least.

Consequently we should be careful to distinguish overt enthusiasm for a philosophy from competence within it. The two states, in Augustine’s case, tend to hold...

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an inverse relationship. As soon as Augustine approaches mastery of a philosophical system, he finds it lacking in some way and thus travels on.

Précis of Chapters: An Overview of our Itinerary

Chapter One

In chapter one, we begin with Augustine’s grateful discovery of Plotinian non-bodily substance, and his rather truncated understanding of it. At this point, Augustine’s partial understanding produces a “two worlds” ontological theory wherein only sensible and intelligible are clearly distinguished. Mutability at this point is lumped in with sensibility. Having imbibed the mythic presentation of Plotinus, Augustine conceives the body primarily as an encumbering hindrance to the soul. The soul is preexistent, divine or structurally inviolable and designed only for contemplation.

But two internal tensions are immediately evident. First, the soul seems to change with time, but Augustine cannot admit the temporality of soul lest it become mutable and sensible within his two worlds theory. Second, Augustine’s attempt to provide a philosophical demonstration of the soul’s immortality manifests an odd admixture of incompatible Middle-Platonic and Neo-Platonic axioms. As a result, Augustine performs a terribly important, non-Plotinian modification wherein the lower soul proves ontologically more stable than the higher soul.

At this stage, Augustine’s program of askesis or applied anthropology consists in a thoroughly cognitive account of blessedness achieved through contemplation. His prescriptive program for achieving blessedness begins with a thorough study of the liberal disciplines and rises from there to the contemplation of intelligible reality.
Chapter Two

In chapter two, Augustine's catechism supplies him with a key distinction embedded in the Nicene formula, which he uses to produce his three-tiered ontological schema. Soul is now explicitly named as creature. Within his newly differentiated view, mutability and sensibility are distinguished so that temporality (i.e. mutability in time without accompanying mutability in space) becomes the distinguishing mark of soul. Soon after Augustine sets himself to interpreting Genesis' opening pages and, thereby, comes to describe created human beings as a prelapsarian body-soul complex. The key distinction moves from a simple body-soul opposition to a sharp contrast between soulish and spiritual modes of existence within that complex human entity.

The original creation of God turns out to be a soulish state of human existence that correlates to the lower functions of soul. Subsequent illumination by God elevated these primordial humans to spiritual existence in Paradise from which their fall constituted a relapse to their original soulish state. In distinctively Augustinian fashion, the lower functions turn out more ontologically stable than the higher.

In examining this bottom up state of existence, Augustine finds both action and contemplation as inverse possibilities of human intentio. Thereby Augustine lifts his first key anthropological concept from the Roman Stoics and uses it to describe how the soul twists from contemplation to action and thus falls. Temporal mutation, distinguished from its potential in ontological mutability, turns out to be an epiphenomenon of intentional action. Experientially the soul registers temporality as affective mutation consequent upon intentional action through bodies. Likewise, a
cognitive stain in the form of turbulent mental images named phantasms now plagues the soul fallen through action.

Augustine’s applied anthropology at this stage consists of a program to uproot memorial phantasms and grow toward intelligible contemplation. But the earlier resources for ascent in the liberal disciplines have been largely replaced by the milk and meat of Christian scripture and its transmission within the church’s teaching.

Chapter Three
In chapter three, we trace Augustine’s first philosophical concept of the heart as it emerges entwined with his first positive account of intentional action. His reading of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount necessitated both. The Platonists offered no viable psychology of action and passion to adapt, so Augustine turns to Stoic accounts. Therein Augustine describes the heart as the totality of present self-awareness that produces the intentio previously found underlying human action and contemplation. The heart, as wholly present, must be distinguished from two other psychic totality concepts: mens and memoria. Likewise, the heart (as well as mens and memoria) may legitimately be analysed into differentiated acts of intellect, volition and affect.

Augustine’s applied anthropology at this stage focuses on producing the purity of heart to which Jesus admonishes. Having grafted the heart onto his earlier Stoicising notion of intentio, Augustine adapts a little more of the Stoic thought. Purity of heart in action comes through a Christian adaptation of the Stoic spiritual exercise of προσοχή. The Stoics’ exercise centered on retaining precepts in mind and referring every action to the end of fulfilling precept. Purity of heart follows from retaining Jesus’ precepts and referring every action to a peculiar end. But now Augustine integrates his Stoicising
exercise with his earlier Platonizing ontological backdrop. We refer all intentional actions to eternal rather than temporal ends.

**Chapter Four**

In chapter four we follow Augustine in his exegesis of Paul and observe his supremely intricate reading of Stoic psychology of action and passion in terms of Paul and Paul in terms of the Stoic theories. Therein, Augustine finds a human body-soul complex so thoroughly integrated that only a transformed, resurrected body can fully overcome internal division within the soul. In the present, the human being labors under a disintegrated capacity for assent and dissent. Two laws, or sets of normative propositional content, and two simultaneous yet contradictory capacities to assent or dissent stir within the human person. The self has cracked.

Augustine’s shocking conclusion while reading Paul is that only an act of God can render one direction of assent and its propositional content stronger than its internal opponent within the person. A new doctrine of election, rather than an applied program for askesis, emerges from this anthropological realization. Only the congruent call of God, in keeping with wholly unmerited election, can turn a person and set him on the path to blessedness.
Chapter Five

In the Confessiones, soon after his elevation as bishop, Augustine presents his first mature synthesis of his Paulinizing Stoic psychology of action and his (originally) Platonizing penchant for contemplation. Chapter five focuses on Augustine's analytic depiction of the lower soul as the root of human action presented in Confessiones I. The Roman Stoics, responding to a complex history of internal debate, transcendentalized the old Stoic doctrine of ὁἴκείωσις and thereby conceptualized a underlying threefold commendatio to bodily preservation, interpersonal association and knowledge. They, likewise, reasserted its old Stoic twin doctrine of διαστροφή as peruersio in two forms: first hand error in judgment rooted in deceitfulness of appearances and a social echoing of verbalized misjudgments.

Augustine incorporates the Roman Stoic account of commendatio and peruersio with a handful of crucial alterations. Because the corruption of sin precedes individual experience in this life, no temporal-developmental distinction exists between commendatio and peruersio in Augustine's account. Confessiones I describes the sequential emergence of a threefold commendatio already perverted by sin. The first form of peruersio is completely subsumed by the corruption of nature in Augustine's thought. However, the second form of peruersio by social echoing is employed to describe the social perversion perpetrated by late Roman schools, the remnants of the cursus honorum, heretical religious teaching and the pretensions of pagan philosophy. These perverting factors are presented specifically as parodies of an ecclesially based program of human formation intimated allegorically in the hexaemeron.
Chapter Six

Augustine’s correlative account of contemplation envisions a distinctive form of ecclesially indigenous contemplation rising from scripture and marked off from a presumptive form of contemplation in pagan philosophy. Two key distinctions enable this differentiation in modes of contemplation. First, the direction of epistemic mediation differs in the two forms of contemplation. Second, the two directions correspond to differing sources of capacity for contemplation – pagans rise by the ingenium of their lower soul, Christians by the power of grace infused. Augustine’s conceptual source for these distinctions is a creative use of Rom. 1:20 found consistent in his interactions with pagan philosophy.

On Augustine’s mature account, two features characterize pagan contemplation. First, it produces epistemic certainty but not salvation, because salvation requires in addition to certainty a transformation in the impulses to action. Second, pagan Platonists systematically ignore and evade the roots of action within their soul, yet the impulse to act specifically prevents their capacity for ongoing contemplation and keeps them from a fuller salvation.

Christian contemplation does not exist as an isolated or stand alone phenomenon. But, as one pole within the larger ecclesial program of human transformation, contemplation can be theoretically (though not practically) isolated through a maneuver of conceptual precision.

In Confessiones XIII, Augustine’s practice as a mystagogue comes to the surface and situates Christian contemplation in its appropriate place. The whole program of ecclesial formation, or mystagogy, comprises a rhythmic alteration between irreducibly active and contemplative therapies and is allegorically intimated through a reading of
the hexaemeron in *Confessiones XIII*. The literary structure of *Confessiones I-VII* consists of sequential parodies of the hexaemeral program. The hexaemeral literary structure verifies that the Platonist ascents of *Confessiones VII* are intended as parodies not paradigms of contemplation.

Having cleared the interpretive pathway, Christian contemplation emerges as a patterned descent to the scriptures that results in being lifted by God’s grace to a full-souled (upper and lower soul) focus on God. The very aspects of scripture despised by the Platonists function to transform the whole human person. Specifically, divine agency in time reveals the possibility of morally good downward causality, named humble love. Likewise, the verbal manifestation of love in humble speech proves especially effective for transforming the otherwise neglected impulses to action.

The descending and rising of contemplation through scripture reveals the following pattern. First, one submits to a multilayered mediation of God through the scriptures and of the scriptures with all creatures through God’s spirit. Second, affective engagement draws the whole soul (not just the intellective aspect) into interaction with scripture and God. Third, ascending distinctions ensue carrying the devoted practitioner through a process of differentiating sensible from intelligible, temporal dispensations from God’s underlying eternal plan, and finally the interplay of unity and trinity in God and self. Fourth, in the process of contemplation, past memories as cordial distractions are temporarily obliterated. Fifth, this allows a complete focus on God with the heart or the totality of present awareness. As distinguished from the partial engagement of intellectual vision, Augustine describes this total focus of awareness (intellective, desiderative, affective together) in terms of the heart touching. In the process of this total engagement of the soul with God, the perverse mediatory direction
of Rom. 1:20 is reversed. God’s spirit now mediates interaction with creatures. The Christian transformation of contemplation and action find fruition in a doxological orientation of the grace-integrated self.
Part I

The Circular Soul, Salvific Contemplation and the Defect of Action
Chapter 1

The Circular Soul in Contemplation:

The Cassiciacum Project and Augustine’s Early Anthropology

Biographical Bridge

In September 386, an erstwhile professor of rhetoric withdrew, with a small group of friends, family and students in attendance, to a small villa called Cassiciacum northeast of Milan. Augustine was suffering from a chronic lung ailment and, ostensibly, this condition had forced his retirement from the chair of rhetoric in Milan.

Beneath the surface, however, spiritual aspirations and philosophical perplexities drove him on. His mind still swirled with the inchoate insights gained through an encounter with “quosdam Platonicorum libros (conf.VII.9.13)”\(^\text{42}\) and the introverting ascent those texts set in motion. Of course, what exactly Augustine understood from his first readings in Platonist philosophy remains a topic of fruitful discussion today.\(^\text{43}\) But a focus upon the writings produced during his Cassiciacum stay,
just months following this encounter, shows a rather clumsy and sporadic use of Neo-
Platonist concepts in comparison with his more refined and self-conscious adaptations
of later years. Although he has thoroughly internalized a few key concepts from Plotinus
and Porphyry, Augustine’s philosophical method in his early period can only be

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141). Developing a similar thesis in Harnack’s wake, see, Becker, Hans. 1908. *Augustin
1908. *Augustins geistige Entwicklung in den ersten Jahren nach seiner "Bekehrung", 386-
391.* Berlin. The most hyperbolic example of this thesis, and consequently the one most
often noted, is the work of Alfaric, Prosper, and Augustine. 1918. *L’évolution
intellectuelle de Saint Augustin: [Vol.] 1, Du Manicheisme au Neoplatonisme.*

The most celebrated early rebuttal to Alfaric is Boyer, Charles. 1920. *Christianisme et

However, it was Courcelle, Pierre Paul. 1950. *Recherches sur les Confessions de
saint Augustin.* Paris: E. de Bocard., ch. 3 &4, who unearthed, largely through a study of
Ambrose’s extant sermons, a Milan saturated with an explicitly Christian Neo-Platonism
and thus highlighted the anachronistic state of the question. Augustine could not have
conceptualized an opposition between Platonist philosophy *per se* and Christianity.
With only slight hyperbole, one might say that in Milan, the Catholic Church was the
institutional home of Neo-Platonic philosophy.

Corroborating studies soon followed in the wake of Courcelle, cf. Solignac, Aimé.
1955. "Nouveaux parallèles entre saint Ambroise et Plotin" *Archives de philosophie* 19,
pp.148-156. One found further reliance of Ambrose on Plato’s *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, cf.
études latines* 34, pp. 202-220.

More recently, a contingent of scholars has returned to *conf. VII* with the more
elemental question of genre. For example, O’Connell, Robert J. 1996. *Images of
conversion in St. Augustine’s Confessions.* New York: Fordham University Press., ch.2 and
Cary, Phillip. 2000. *Augustine’s invention of the inner self: the legacy of a Christian
Platonist.* Oxford: Oxford University Press., ch.3 argue that reading *conf. VII* as narrative,
and thus appropriately critiqued in terms of a historical criterion of chronological
accuracy, is simply a confusion of genre. There are no narrative details in this book, only
a report on the conceptual meaning of “certain texts of the Platonists.” The only
historical claim *per se* is that these books caused Augustine to turn inward and that,
upon looking up from within, he saw the intelligible light who is God. The rest of *conf.
VII* is an exposition, from the view point of Bishop Augustine’s deeper learning, of the
meaning inherent in those texts. Truth, not the chronology of a convert’s cogitations, is
Augustine’s aim. For learned, and chastened, reassertion of the plausibility of historical
described as eclectic and inconsistent.\textsuperscript{44} Given the fact that Augustine’s first encounter with philosophy is through Cicero’s mediation, eclecticism would seem predictable.\textsuperscript{45} Indeed, what we find in his earliest writings is an experimental approach as he tries on new ideas and walks a mile or so in them.\textsuperscript{46}

While Augustine’s eclecticism is marked by retention of significant dimensions of other philosophical doctrines\textsuperscript{47}, scholarship has tended to affirm the obvious.

Augustine’s primary philosophical debt in this period is to Neo-Platonism.\textsuperscript{48} But the question remains, what exactly did Augustine internalize through his first reading of the \textit{libri Platonicorum}?  

\textsuperscript{44} According to O’Connell, R.J. 1970. “De Libero Arbitrio I Revisited” \textit{Augustinian Studies} \textbf{1}:49-68, Augustine experiments with and then abandons a Stoic approach to ethical description rooted in a dogmatically ‘deontological’ account of virtue. Of course, the anachronism of describing Stoic ethics as ‘deontological’ is manifest. But the Stoic influences on Augustine’s ethics actually come in a later period and at a deeper level than O’Connell supposes. Cf. van Geest, Paul. 2004. “Stoic Against His Will?: Augustine on the Good Life in \textit{De beata vita} and the \textit{Praeceptum}” pp.533-550 in \textit{Mélanges offerts à T.J. van Bavel à l’occasion de son 80e anniversaire, Leuven} for an account of the purduring residue of Stoic strains in Augustine’s ethical thought. Also, cf. the analysis offered in chapters 3-5 below.


\textsuperscript{46} Late in life Augustine will speak of himself as one who learned by writing (\textit{trin. III,prol.1}).


\textsuperscript{48} E.g., \textit{uera rel. 7}, \textit{ita si hanc uiam illi uiri nobiscum rursus agere potuissent, uiderent profecto, cuius auctoritate faciliss consuleretur hominibus, et paucis mutatis uerbis atque sententis christiani fierent, sicut plerique recentiorum nostrorumque temporum Platonici fecerunt.}
By Augustine’s own analysis in Conf. V. 10.19, his underlying problem in turning to God was his incapacity to think of non-bodily substance. Consequently, young Augustine’s thought was bound by phantasms of a rarified, bodily substance spread out throughout the cosmos and beyond. Without a clear conception of immaterial existence, Augustine was powerless to conceive God’s mode of presence to himself and the broader creation.

In the work of Plotinus and Porphory, Augustine encountered a conception of substantial immateriality driven by the need to articulate a notion of the integral omnipresence of the intelligible to the sensible world through its participation therein (Enn. IV.2; VI.4-5; VI.9). Indeed, the capacity to be fully present everywhere (totus ubique) is a distinctive characteristic of things intelligible (ep.4.2). Bodily entities, in contrast, can only be present by spatial extension and proximity. Thus bodies always are greater in the whole than in each part (imm. an. 25). From Ambrose and his circle,

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49 Cf. conf.V.25, quod si possem spiritalem substantiam cogitare, statim machinamenta illa omnia soluerentur et abicerentur ex animo meo: sed non poteram.

50 Note the similarity to the Stoic account of universal logos. Augustine, however, explicitly rejects the pantheistic implications and seeks in vain to attach a transcendent dimension to his formulation.

51 See Brown, Peter Robert Lamont. 1967. Augustine of Hippo; A Biography. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.79-100, for a compelling account of the significance this discovery held for Augustine. Of course, the North African church had not yet found either need or resources for thinking of God in non-materialist terms. The especially startling figure in this regard is Tertullian who argued more Stoicorum that God must be a body to exist (adu. Prax. 7; carn. Chr. 9). Such a patrimony left Augustine defenseless against the Manichees.

52 Augustine’s earliest usage of this phrase comes in mor. I.19, soon after his catechism. However, the Neo-Platonic concept is already operative, with the catch phrase in ep. 4.2. Note also within a decade, Simpl. 2.6; conf. I.3; VI.4. For very late usage, cf. ciu. I.29; VII.30; XVI.5; trin. XIV.21.

53 Cf. Augustine’s later description for Jerome of what he means by “corpus” in Ep. 166.4 and note the continuity with earlier accounts such as quant. an. 4.6, c. ep. Man. 16.20, etc… For an attempt to make these descriptions of corporeality accessible to contemporary thought, see chapter one of Hölscher, Ludger. 1986. The Reality of the
Augustine has now learned to exclude all characteristics of corporeality when thinking of God and the soul (animaduerti enim et saepe in sacerdotis nostri et aliquando in sermonibus tuis, cum de deo cogitaretur, nihil omnino corporis esse cogitandum, neque cum de anima, beata u. 4). As intelligible being, therefore, God is everywhere (ubique deus est, ord. II.10)

This distinction provides a new optic for Augustine (ord. I.32). At this point he conceives of a binary universe – a “two worlds” theory\(^{54}\), if you will – and begins to interpret the world according to his fundamental distinction between things sensible and intelligible ( Acad. I.22; ord. I.32; II.27; sol. I.8; II.6; ep.3.2-3; ep. 4.1; imm. an. 10; lib. arb. II.12; cf. also ep. 13.2-4 in next period).

While at Cassiciacum, Augustine continues his conversation with a close friend named Nebridius by means of epistles (ep. 3-14).\(^{55}\) It was due to Nebridius’ generosity in helping the grammarian Verecundus sustain his teaching load, that Augustine and his entourage were granted the use of Verecundus’ villa at Cassiciacum that autumn in 386 (conf. VIII.6.13; IX.3.5-6). So Augustine attempted to keep Nebridius abreast of his discoveries and insights in Nebridius’ absence.\(^{56}\)

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54 Cf. ord. I.11.32, “esse autem alium mundum ab istis oculis remotissimum, quem paucorum sanorum intellectus intuetur...” Later, in retr. I.3.2, Augustine makes clear that his affirmation of two worlds is rooted in a Platonizing reading strategy of the time. Cf. also Acad. III.19.42.


56 For an analysis of the consequent correspondence see Folliet, Georges. 1987. “La correspondance entre Augustin et Nébridius” in L’opera letteraria di Agostino tra
At the beginning of this correspondence, Augustine summarizes for Nebridius the skeletal outlines of his newly acquired vision of two worlds and the trajectory, as it were, to journey from this realm of false images to the true world of intelligibility (ep. 3.3-4). Augustine’s affectionate label for this train of thought is *illa ratiuncula* (ep. 3.3; 4.2) and he considers its import to lie primarily in a striking contrast and transvaluation of vision as intelligibility in juxtaposition to vision as a mode of sense perception (*mentem atque inteligentiam oculis et hoc vulgari aspectu esse meliorem*, ep. 4.2). The same conceptual outline is discernable beneath the surface of several Augustinian works of this period (esp. *mus. VI.2ff*).\(^57\)

A few features are worth drawing to the surface here. The argument always begins by establishing the distinction between body and soul, whether that distinction is construed as contrasting or parallel in nature (ep. 3.4; *beata u. 7-9*; *imm. an. 10-17*; *an. quant. 2*). Augustine then leads his interlocutor into an inquiry concerning the good of the lesser thing, namely body (*quid laudatur in corpore?*, ep. 3.4; cf. also *mus. VI.6*). Having received an initial answer (*nihil aliud uideo quam pulchritudinem*, ep. 3.4; cf. also *imm. an. 13*), Augustine seeks to analyze the constituents of the good named (*quid est corporis pulchritudo?*, ep. 3.4). The constituents of goodness in the bodily realm are always reducible, for Augustine, to number attempting unity in form. Thus he establishes his vision of the sensible world as mere

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\(^{57}\) Indeed, rising from things sensible to things intelligible marks the discursive trajectory of Augustine’s planned works on the liberal arts, outlined in *ord. II.12.35-19.51*, of which *mus.* provides the sole extant example of a basically complete work (*retr. I.3.1*).
copy of a deeper reality of intelligible forms, which are configurations of intelligible number (certe sensibilis mundus nescio cuius intellegibilis imago esse dicitur, ep. 3.3).

At this point, Augustine swings his interlocutor’s attention, as if on a hinge, toward non-bodily, intelligible substance. Where, he asks, is form or number better, where it is true or where it is false? (ubi uera melior, an ubi falsa?, ep.3.4; cf. also ord. II.42; mus. VI.2). By localizing the truth question, within a context controlled by a cosmological metaphors of exemplar and imitator, Augustine forces a wedge between bodily, sense realities and intelligible, non-bodily realities (ep. 3.4; ord. II.42). That very wedge incites a longing to escape from this illusionary world and attain a vision of things intelligible.

Indeed, the disjunction is intentional. At this point, Augustine considers the world of bodies and the world of intelligible number to stand in a relation of contrariety (ep. 3.2; ord. II.42). These worlds inversely mirror each other. Sensible bodies are infinitely divisible, but cannot be increased infinitely (ep. 3.2; cf. also the second half of imm. an. 12). Likewise, intelligible numbers are capable of infinite increase, but cannot be infinitely divided because the Monad is indivisible (ep.3.2). Regardless of the

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58 This description bears more resemblance to Middle Platonic thought as mediated by Cicero than it does to to Plotinus (esp. in Enn. I.8). In Acad. I., Cicero puts Antiochus’ double-archai physics into the mouth of Varro. The first arche is the active principle of form. The second arche, materia, is passive and comes with this description: sed subiectam putant omnibus sine una specie atque carentem omni illa qualitate... materiam quondam, e qua omnia expressa atque efficta sint, quae una omnia accipere posit omnibusque modis mutari atque ex omni parte, atque etiam interire, non in nihilum sed in suas partes, quae infinite secari ac dividī possint, cum sit nihil omnino in rerum natura minimum quod dividi nequeat... (Acad. I.27). Of course, Enn. II.4.7, 20-27 also describes the utter divisibility and continuity of ὄλη as entailing a rejection of any atomic theory of substrates. But Plotinus never suggests a limit to material increase, indeed size and quantity is a feature of form not matter on his analysis (Enn. II.8.15-19). Matter must be wholly indefinite to function as a substrate and this privation of every quality also makes it the root of evil (Enn. II.13-16).
subterfuge employed in desiring sensible things, all love is ultimately incited by the
Monad. No other desideratum exists (ergo et in discernendo et in conectendo unum uolo
et unum amo, sed cum discerno, purgatum, cum conecto, integrum uolo, ord. II.48).

When one asks where this world of exemplary number, form and unity is
accessed, the other side of the original distinction emerges. Only in the soul, and more
specifically within the soul’s mind and intelligence, does one encounter the non-bodily
exemplars (ep. 3.4). There alone is form true (sed in qua parte animi est ista ueritas? in
mente atque intellegentia., ep. 3.4).

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59 Cf. also conf. IV.24, this, the only other mention of the Monad (and Dyad) in
Augustine's oeuvre, occurs in his account of a lost piece of juvenilia, de pulchro et apto.
Of course, the Monad and Dyad as co-eval ontological first-principles harkens to
ancient accounts of both Pythagorean (cf., Porphyry's vita Pyth. 38) and Platonist origin
(on Aristotle's testimony, cf. Meta. I.VI.). The intermingling of Neo-Pythagorian and
Platonist thought among the Middle Platonists has been well studied, Merlan, P. 1967,
“The Old Academy,” “The Later Academy and Platonism,” and “The Pythagoreans” in
Armstrong, A. H. 1967. The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval
Platonists: A Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220. London: Duckworth, pp. 3ff; Kenney,
John Peter. 1991. Mystical Monotheism: A Study in Ancient Platonic Theology. Providence,

O’Connell admits in passing that Augustine’s peculiar number theory at this
Belknap Harvard: Cambridge, p. 191. The particular Platonist most likely inspiring
Augustine in pursuing this theme is Varro, cf. O’Donnell’s excursion on the liberales
Clarendon Press, v.2, pp.269-278.

60 Note Augustine’s later efforts in mus. VI.13 to synthesize this basically Plotinian
account of beauty as unity (cf. Enn. VI.7.32) with the Ciceronian notion of beauty as
symmetry of the parts (Tusc. IV.33).

61 This distinction between a higher and lower aspect of soul surely implies some
Plotinian or Porphyrian influence. However, one searches in vain for a settled sense in
Augustine’s early works that the higher soul itself constitutes the ontological hook by
which one might ascend through identifying with the higher soul instead of the lower
soul. Rather the intelligible content of the soul, as acquired or perhaps remembered
through liberal disciplines, constitutes the primary claim to eternal existence (sol. II.24;
imm. an. 7; ep. 7.2). Since God is Truth, the same truth internalized or awakened through
dialectic, contemplative knowledge of the eternal produces immortality of soul (beata u.
34; sol. II.24; imm. an. 7). So Augustine’s early ascetic theory will emphasize the
At this point, one can turn back and gaze from a new vista upon the sensible scaffolding ascended to reach this intelligible reality. Now the scaffolding is no longer helpful (... in mente atque intellectiva. quid huic adversatur? sensus., ep. 3.4). Rather, it casts its marring presence over the face of intelligible beauty. Indeed, sensation constitutes a temptation to action that must be resisted (resistendum ergo sensibus totis animi uribus liquet., ep. 3.4). Consequently, the twofold task of Augustine’s ascetic program at Cassiciacum emerges as the natural extension of his world-picture. The soul must first withdraw from sensation and the opinion rooted therein. Then the soul must learn to re-engage intelligible reality and find her delight within it (quid si sensibilia nimum delectant? fiat, ut non delectent. unde fit? consuetudine his carendi appetendique meliora., ep. 3.4). Herein is the basis for Augustine’s early ascetic program.

**Early Anthropological Formulations**

Before we consider his ascetic program, however, we need to observe how this cosmological dualism is reflected in his earliest anthropological formulations. Throughout the Cassiciacum period, Augustine views the body primarily as a hindrance to the soul’s discovery of things intelligible, especially God and the soul (sol. I.24; Acad. I.3; I.9; an. quant. 76). The body is a cage or cave within which the soul experiences travail (sol. acquisition of eternal truth through contemplation as the fruition of immortality in the soul. When searching for an ontological guarantor of the soul’s persistent being despite descent into foolishness, Augustine turns to a strategy of securing the lowest level of rational soul. Cf. discussion below.

I.24). The soul experiences the body as a dark prison (Acad. I.9) holding her back from the heavens whence she is derived (sol.1.24; Acad. I.9). Philosophy teaches her to despise things visible and touchable with the senses (Acad. I.3). Her objective is to escape from the body and the world of sense experience to which it ties her (an. quant. 76) and to return to her celestial home. Often this theme is read as indicative of young Augustine’s “conversion” to Neo-Platonism, but the notion of returning to the heavens closed Cicero’s Hortensius and does not require recourse to Plotinian influence.\(^62\)

**The Fall of the Soul**

What does seem to be Plotinian is Augustine’s corollary notion in this period of the non-corporeal soul’s fall into the body. In his exultant liberation from Manichean materialism, Augustine defines the human being as primarily a non-corporeal soul using a body (an. quant. 61). Since the soul’s origin is elsewhere and other, he feels constrained to surmise something concerning her mode of entry into the body. Of course, the soul’s origin was a topic of speculation in many circles, both pagan and Christian, of Augustine’s day. Only with the emergence of a clear conception of non-corporeal soul does her origin become a pressing question. Augustine’s Cassiciacum works are peppered with images of pre-existent soul falling into the body (cf. beata u. 2; ord. II.31; Acad. II.22; ep. 7.2-3).\(^63\)

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\(^63\) For a close reading of texts containing this notion in Augustine’s early works, see O’Connell, Robert J. 1968. *St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Man.* Cambridge:Belknap Harvard, esp. ch. 4. Many works assume and build upon O’Connell’s writings, the most notable is Cary, Phillip. 2000. *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a*
**Circularity of the Divine Soul**

The conceptual backdrop to the fall in Plotinus is a notion of soul as inherently divine. Prior to his catechism, Augustine assumes, or at least entertains the idea of, the divinity of the soul. Of course, divinity is read in the weaker ancient sense of immortality rooted in a structural inviolability. When the soul inquires after her own nature, she has to wonder if her nature is not some divine number that serves as the condition for the possibility of corporeal numerosity (*ord.* II.43).

During this period, Augustine tends to describe soul only in contrast to the body below her without making explicit contrasts between the soul and God. The soul’s relation to the body is best imagined in geometric terms. Soul is akin to the non-corporeal *signum* or *punctum* that governs corporeal circles and spheres (*an. quant.* 18-21). And that circular center point also functions to relate soul to the body’s motion. Just as a pivot or hinge remains unmoved in the motion of a door, and a joint remains stable while the limb travels round it, so the soul functions as the unmoved mover of the body.

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64 However, Augustine’s one attempt to actually explicate an argument for the immortality of the soul (*sol. and imm. an.*), by following Plotinus’ account, shows how clumsy and unreliable his understanding of this doctrine really is at this stage. Cf. discussion below.

(an. quant. 23). Other cumbersome yet traditional metaphors for governance are also employed in passing – the rider’s control of the horse (ord. II.18)⁶⁶ and a craftsperson bestowing form on body (imm. an. 24). But the primary impulse is to find some analogy for an incorporeal and structurally inviolable principle exercising governance over a bodily entity.⁶⁷ And for that purpose the geometric metaphor works best. The circular soul is constitutively higher than the fragmentations of body.⁶⁸ She cannot be divided spatially and thus is not subject to deterioration and death.

**Early Ambiguities concerning Time**

Augustine also exhibits a marked hesitancy to attribute temporality to the soul at this stage in his reflections. Since temporal mutability turns out to be the distinguishing mark of soul in Augustine’s mature thought, his hesitancy in this period to attribute temporality to soul surely bespeaks a quite different underlying ontology.⁶⁹ When pressed by Evodius, Augustine seems unable to address the essentially temporal nature of soul (an. quant. 28). Even when he is forced to acknowledge some degree of mutability as implicit in the soul’s growth in the powers of speech and reason, Augustine prefers to distance that growth from notions of temporality (an. quant. 28–

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⁶⁶ Of course, Plato initiated this image in slightly more complex form when he describe the tripartite soul as consisting of a charioteer (reason) driving two horses, the dark, ill-behaved horse of the appetites and a light, gentle horse signifying the spirited part of the soul (Phaedr. 246a-248e; 253c-256d).

⁶⁷ For the indivisibility of soul in Plotinus, cf. e.g. Enn. IV.4.18.

⁶⁸ The merits of circularity are also evident in how Augustine employs the Stoic figure of the circularity of virtue (an. quant 26). Augustine’s usage of this locus incorporates an allusion to Horace (sat. II.7.86). However, he certainly would have been familiar with occurrences in Cicero (De nat. deor. 2.10.45ff) and Seneca (ep.74.27).

⁶⁹ Cf. discussion of the soul’s temporal mutability in chapter 2 below.
Time and body are too closely intertwined for Augustine to name soul as temporal at this stage (**imm. an. 3**).

Congruent with his vision of the structurally inviolable soul governing the body, Augustine found it easy to affirm the soul’s moral self-sufficiency (** Acad I.3; I.11; ord. II.6-7; II.8**). The classic, Stoic image of the sage emerges at Cassiciacum – impervious to passion and morally self-established beyond fate’s fickle designs.\(^70\) The goods of fortune should be rejected and the world of bodies and sensation held in contempt (** Acad. I.3**). Through a full extirpation of the passions (** ord. II.8; Acad. I.11**), the sage can achieve continuous vision of God even now (** ord. II.6-7**).\(^71\)

When one begins to consider the method of moral growth, however, certain tensions and inconsistencies emerge in Augustine’s early thought. Augustine’s earliest writings intimate a program for healing of the soul through spiritual nutrition. The soul’s food is intellection of things and knowledge (** beata u. 8**) and the sick soul is discerned by its lack of appetite and inability to digest this food (** beata u. 9**). But does an inviolable, intrinsically immortal soul stand in need of nutrition? Further problems emerge. Are education and wise company to be despised because they are goods of fortune (** ep. 3.5**)? And, if continuous intellectual vision of God is possible now, would the Sage have any use for memory (** ord. II.7**)?

Indeed, a perceptive reader is forced to ask how globally Augustine takes his own affirmations of structural inviolability and immortality. Are these qualities really intrinsic to the soul ** per se**? Or, perhaps, these affirmations should be seen as limited to

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\(^70\) Of course, when Augustine again visits Stoic anthropology and ethics, his interactions are much more nuanced and critical in his incorporations. Cf. chapters 3-5 below.

unidirectional comparisons between soul and body useful for specific rhetorical circumstances. When thought of in contrast to the body, the soul is described as one and inviolable. But does the description carry over into other discursive contexts? These questions are never explicitly answered in this period, in large measure because Augustine’s thought concerning the soul is still inchoate, even conflicted.

The earliest works of Augustine embody a certain contradiction. The public voice of Augustine tends towards an almost blustery optimism concerning the incorporeal substance and immortality of the soul. But the compositions set in solitude betray much hand wringing over the possibility of proving or attaining to immortality (e.g., sol.; imm. an.).

**Muddled Plotinianism and the Bivalence of the Soul’s Being**

Augustine’s projected finale to his introspecting conversation with reason that began in *Soliloquia* exists only in the form of laconic epitomes of partially planned arguments published, against Augustine’s wishes, as *De immortalitate animae* (imm. an.). In this terse collection of notes, Augustine is clearly not at his best. Presumably, the *imm. an.* would have matched the rhetorical beauty of the *sol.*, had Augustine been left with the time necessary to clarify his thought and work it into a similar literary form.

Nonetheless, as we find it, the text of the *imm. an.* appears as a somewhat confused exposition of Plotinus’ positive argument in *Ennead IV.7.9-14.*

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72 Of course, the book was pirated and circulated in unfinished form. But even Augustine, in later years, notes the bewildering mixture of concepts at play in his own way, …*qui primo ratiocinationum contortione atque breuitate sic obscurus est, ut fatiget cum legitur etiam intentionem meam, uixque intellegatur a me ipso*, retr. I.5.1

The central claim of Plotinus, which Augustine would very much like to recapitulate, is this: The soul is necessarily everlasting because it possesses everlasting knowledge (Enn. IV.7.12, 8-12; imm. an. 1). Augustine would like to develop this argument, but he cannot. For Augustine lacks the nuanced understanding of how Plotinus’ ontology and epistemology intersect by which he could extend the argument.

Augustine’s misunderstanding is implicit in his opening words - *si alicubi est disciplina* – and immediately becomes manifest through his odd utilization of a premise of Stoic materialist ontology taken over by the Middle Platonist, Antiochus of Ascalon (imm. an. 1). So after opening with his key argument in nuce, Augustine introduces the Stoic cum Middle Platonist premise that for something to exist it must be somewhere – located in some place (*est autem alicubi disciplina; nam est et quicquid est, nusquam esse non potest., imm. an. 1*). Augustine encountered this principle in Cicero on the lips of the Platonist Varro (*nihil est enim quod non alicubi esse cogatur*, Cicero Acad. I.VI.24) and sought to use it to explicate a turn of phrase he found in Plotinus’ text (Enn. IV.7.9).

Afterall, the neophyte might think, they both derived from eminent Platonist philosophers.

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we will see, O’Connell clearly overestimates the degree of assent given to, or at least the understanding gained of, Plotinus’ most characteristic arguments.

74 Cf. the opening words, *si alicubi est disciplina nec esse nisi in eo quod uiuit potest et semper est neque quicquam, in quo quid semper est, potest esse non semper, semper uiuit, in quo est disciplina*, imm. an. 1.

75 For a helpful introduction to Antiochus’ thought as recovered through fragmentary evidence chiefly in Cicero and deftly resistant to having his swallowed up by Posidonius’ stature, see Dillon, John M. 1977. The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

76 Cary, Phillip. 2000. Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist. Oxford: Oxford University Press., ch. 7, is right to note the Stoic patrimony but misses the fact that it was passed on specifically as a Platonist teaching.
After arguing for a distinction between animating principle and things animated, Plotinus claims that on pain of infinite regress there must be some immutable and necessary life from which all living things derive their life (Enn. IV.7.9, 10-14). He has already alluded to the role of the world-soul in maintaining the beauty and order of the universe (Enn. IV.7.9, 3-6). Plotinus continues from his claim of a necessary life to localize the origin of all that is divine and blessed therein (Enn. IV.7.9, 13-18).

*From there, of course, all that is divine and blessed must be situated, living from itself and being from itself, being in the first order and living in the first order, having no part in change as regards being, neither coming into being nor being destroyed. For whence could it come into being? Or into what could it suffer destruction? (Enn. IV.7.9, 13-18, emphasis added)*

Augustine calls upon his prior knowledge of Platonic ontology, derived through Cicero’s Middle Platonic Varro, in order to make sense of Plotinus’ metaphorical localization of essential life (imm. an. 1). But the combination is doomed.

The mixture of a Stoicizing Middle Platonic axiom with a Plotinian axiom creates the following confusion. Augustine finds himself claiming both the necessary existence of *disciplina* because of its immutability (*item semper est*

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77 Incidentally, the emphasis on *disciplina* also points to Augustine’s attempt to integrate Varro and Plotinus in this infelicitous line of argument.
disciplina. nam quod est atque inmutabile est, semper sit necesse est) and the intrinsic dependence of said 'necessary' existence upon a mental place (est autem alicubi disciplina; nam est et quicquid est, nusquam esse non potest, imm. an. 1). The same illicit marriage of principles recurs a few chapters later (nusquam porro esse, quod est, uel, quod inmutabile est, non esse aliquando qui potest? imm. an. 5).

Apart from his admiration for Varro, the chief reason Augustine attempts such a paradoxical argument at this stage is his inability to grasp an Aristotelian detail of Plotinus' epistemology. Developing descriptions in Aristotle's de anima, Plotinus construes a formal identity between the knower and what is known. Augustine's misunderstanding causes him to literalize the inherently metaphorical use of localization in Plotinus' argument and read it in terms of Varro's dictum.

In contrast, Plotinus' confidence is rooted in a cognitive experience of an intelligible, higher soul that when purified of body and sense is obviously divine (Enn. IV.7.10). Knowing, in and of itself, secures immortality for the level of soul that knows immortal entities (Enn. III.8.5, 10ff). Identity of the intelligible soul with the intelligible world secures its divinity and immortality (Enn. III.8.5; V.1.2).

Augustine would very much like to share that confidence. But he cannot because he does not fully understand the 'excessive realism' of Plotinus' thought.\(^\text{78}\) When stripped down, Augustine is sure his soul knows eternal things

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\(^{78}\) For use of this term, and a sympathetic account of its underlying convictions, see the introduction of Merlan, Philip. 1960. From Platonism to Neoplatonism. The Hague: M.
but cannot grasp how that would make the soul itself eternal. The best reason
Augustine can muster is that the soul could not die while containing eternal
things (si enim manet aliquid inmutabile in animo, quod sine uitae esse non possit,
animo etiam uitae sempiterna maneat necesse est, imm. an. 5). And thus he tries to
make the immortal thing known a quality in the soul of the knower (at ut sedes
arti nulla sine uitae est, ita nec uitae cum ratione ullam nisi animae. nusquam porro
esse, quod est, imm. an. 5). Of course, very much contrary to Augustine’s intention
this move is conceptually Anti-Platonic and must soon be abandoned.79 Because
Augustine possesses an insufficient understanding of the philosophical basis for
formal realism in Plotinus, he cannot successfully secure immortality thereby.


79 The Anti-Platonic character of this move lies in destroying the exemplarist function of the forms by reducing them to mere thoughts, ontologically dependent on some intellect. Plato insisted that the forms or ideas were not thoughts, though thoughts could be about them (Parm. 132b-d). Of course, one stream of demiurgic theology in Hellenic Platonism made the forms ideas in the mind of the demiurge (Plutarch *de E apud Delphos* 392e-393b provides the earliest clear account among pagan Platonists, and Philo *Opif*. 16 provides a very clear earlier account). But no competent Platonist could dream of making them dependent on the soul. Cf. Dillon, John M. 1977. *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press., pp. 91-96 for an argument that the doctrine certainly extends at least to Antiochus of Ascalon.

But this very insufficiency in erudition provokes Augustine to develop a peculiar strategy for securing the being of soul that, in broad outlines, he will retain even after his philosophical learning increases. Augustine knows that the soul can become wiser or more foolish over time (imm. an. 7). It forgets and learns (imm. an. 6). And this dimunition and growth of the knowledge and goodness of soul also must constitute some loss and growth of being (imm. an. 12). For the soul is constitutively suspended between the heights of being in divine ratio and the abyss of nothingness, so any movement upward involves a growth in being and any declension involves a loss of being (imm. an. 12).

Plotinus too turns from his account of the obviously divine soul, in its purified and intelligible level, to discuss the descent of soul into bodies (Enn.IV.7.13).

In the process, both Plotinus and Augustine ask a question requiring a programmatic response. What prevents a soul that descends from what is supreme to what is lower and toward nothing from lapsing altogether into nothingness? (Enn.IV.7.12-13; imm. an. 12).

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80 Augustine formulates this observation in a rhetorical question – quae autem maior quam in contraria solet esse mutatio? et quis negat animum, ut omittam cetera, stultum alias, alias uero esse sapientem? (imm. an. 7). Ironically the answer to his second rhetorical question must be, “Plotinus,” the very philosopher Augustine would emulate in this undeveloped treatise. For Plotinus’ soul never descends fully.

Plotinus ties the indestructability of soul to the inalienability of its form (Enn.IV.7.12). Augustine resolutely follows suit (imm. an. 13-14). But the form of soul in question turns out to be radically different. And thus Augustine’s peculiar approach to securing the soul’s being becomes apparent.

Plotinus’ inalienable form is the undescended, intelligible soul (Enn. IV.7.13). This higher soul, itself intrinsically divine (Enn. V.8.10-11), cannot be deprived of form because it is always already one with the intelligible world of form (Enn. V.1.2-3). Higher soul cannot lose its form because in contemplative introversion it discovers that it simply is an expression of its individual form (Enn. V.7.1-3). Thus Plotinus secures the soul’s being by fastening it to an

82 Pieces of Plotinus’ polemical arguments, against the Stoics and Aristotle, for the substantial incorporeality of soul recur throughout Augustine’s text, albeit with varying degrees of comprehension demonstrated.

So for instance, Augustine provides a competent and succinct condensation of Plotinus’ argument against the Stoics (Enn. IV.7.2&4): nam prorsus, si tunc moritur animus, cum eum deserit uita, illa ipsa uita, quae hunc deserit, multo melius intelligitur animus, ut iam non sit animus, quicquid a uita deseritur, sed ea ipsa uita, quae deserit (imm. an. 16).

But Augustine’s refutation of those who take the soul to be a temperatio of the body (imm. an. 17) seems to emerge from a conflation of two Plotinian refutations (Enn. IV.7.8, 4&5). Plotinus first refutes the harmony thesis of the soul, stretching back to Simmias in the Phaedo (Enn. IV.7.8,4). Then Plotinus’ refutes Aristotle’s doctrine of entelechy (Enn. IV.7.8, 5). But Augustine lacks the philosophical erudition to distinguish these doctrines and his refutation of the soul as temperatio seems to mingle and confuse these historical positions (imm. an. 17). Likewise, Plotinus’ refutation of Stoic psychic corporealism argued from sensation (Enn. IV.7.7) appears at the very end of Augustine’s essay (imm. an. 25), again bleeding into fragments of Plotinus’ refutation of entelechy (Enn. IV.7.8, 5; imm. an. 25). To be fair, we do not have Victorinus’ translation. So we cannot be certain that the conflation was not delivered to Augustine ready made. But even if that were so, Augustine at this stage obviously lacked the philosophical erudition to notice the conflation of positions.

ontological hook from above, if you will (Enn. V.1.2-3). Soul is attached to
Intellect and can descend no further. Of course, Plotinus was always more
ambiguous concerning the fate of the lower soul as a principle of bodily
animation and action (Enn. V.I.10, 25ff). It may in fact descend to Hades for
punishment, even as the higher soul remains unmoved in contemplation. For
death simply severs higher and lower soul (Enn. I.1.11-12).

Augustine takes an opposite tack. He seeks to put a conceptual floor over
the basement of nothingness, as it were, thus securing the soul’s being from
below (imm. an. 14). Foolishness does indeed deprive the soul of her form to a
certain degree (quoniam specie aliqua sua privatur, dum stultus est..., imm. an.
13). So the heights of soul cannot be formally inviolable to Augustine as in
Plotinus. The form Augustine finds inalienable is one that subsists despite utter
descent into foolishness (imm. an. 14).84 This inviolable form establishes a mere
being of the rational soul as rational soul, now distinguished from being a happy
or wise or good rational soul (cf. an. quant. 72).85 It is the lower, not the higher,
soul which is the perduring, inviolable form of the human soul in Augustine’s thought. 86 And despite evolving descriptions of the lower soul, this remains the case at least through the Confessiones. 87

This irreducible form of rational soul – entailing also its substantial immateriality, circularity and structural inviolability – is simply given, whether by itself or a higher being Augustine cannot tell at this stage (imm. an. 18). 88 This basic form of soul, whereby it exists, lies outside its own power of volition and functions to prevent the soul from sliding into the ontological category beneath it.
- whether that be construed as body (*imm. an. 20-24*) or as merely vegetive and sensitive soul (*imm. an. 25*).89

So Augustine clearly has internalized, from Plotinus, a broad mythic vision of the soul’s incorporeal substantiality and constructed a two-worlds vision of reality based upon it.

However, Augustine’s grasp of the philosophical nuances supporting Plotinus’ assertions appears muddled. Augustine misreads Plotinus’ metaphorical use of spatial language because Augustine does not understand the epistemological underpinnings of Plotinus’ formally realist ontology as rooted in Aristotle’s identity theory of knowledge. To fill the conceptual gap, Augustine appeals to a Middle-Platonic axiom native to a materialist ontology. The result is confusion.

Augustine’s lack of philosophical erudition drives him to create a novel conceptual underpinning for the soul’s structural inviolability and immortality. But the instability of his theoretical powers at this point does not hinder Augustine from articulating a broadly Platonic ascetic program whereby one could rise to a salvific contemplation of things eternal.

**Cognitive Askesis and Contemplative Salvation**

When one’s attention shifts to the sequential, educative aspect of Augustine’s project the intrinsic ambiguity of his thought again manifests. Immortality is linked to an elusive relation between the soul and eternal intelligible verities (*sol. II.24; imm. an. 2; 7; 10; ep. 3.4; ep. 7.2*). In so far as the soul is either identified with those intelligible things

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89 Kenney, John Peter. 2001. “Saint Augustine and the Limits of Contemplation” in *Studia Patristica* 38, pp. 199-218 notices that Augustine’s account of the soul is wholly descended, but lacks any genetic explanation for the Augustinian alteration.
or comes through learning to enclose them, she may rightly be considered immortal (ep. 3.4; ord. II.43-50; imm. an. 2; 10). Augustine’s thoughts follow this pattern. Either “I” am *ratio*, or I can come to contain *ratio*. If the first, I am simply immortal by nature. If the second, I can become immortal through the exercise of *ratio* (ord. II.43-50; imm. an. 2; 10). Resolution of the theoretical question is simply beyond Augustine’s capacity at this point.

Nonetheless, in practice Augustine’s choice is clearer. He articulates a broadly Platonic ascetic program, which assumes that blessedness (and perhaps immortality) come through a sequential ascent to things intelligible. Thereby the soul feasts upon the stability of intelligible verities. And that contemplative knowledge is itself salvific.

In keeping with his experimentation with the fallen soul thesis, Augustine plays with the Platonic description of learning as recollection (sol.II.35; an. quant. 20.34; imm. an. 6; cf. also retr.I.4.4). Perhaps the sequence of the ascent is simply uncovering an original epistemic connection? Perhaps. Yet, this too leaves open the question of the soul’s immortality. Is it structural and rooted in nature, or is it proximate and predicated on a contingent connection to things intelligible? Augustine never explicitly

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91 Augustine never entertains the notion at this stage that a human soul could know what is highest and not love it (cf. imm. an. 18). That very distinction, however, marks the beginnings of Augustine’s mature account of contemplation in *Confessiones*. Cf. chapter 6 below. Of course, this distinction will also constitute a definitive break with the Socratic assumption within the Platonic tradition. For Socrates, to know the truth is to love it. Isocrates already thought otherwise and his position proved paradigmatic for the rhetorical traditions (cf. Antidosis).
answers the theoretical question in this period. But his ascetic program assumes the latter.

In our discussion of Augustine’s *illa ratiuncula* above, we noted that the controlling dynamic of thought in this period lies in the binary universe conceived through his reading of the *libri Platonicorum*. Both his anthropological dualism and his early ascetic program are direct applications of the insights achieved therein. So what does a circular soul, trapped within this world of bodies and illusory images, need to do?

*Antony’s Ascetic Ideal: Purgation of Action through Solitary Withdrawl*

Augustine sees the end clearly. Like other therapeutic philosophers, Augustine’s ascetic program flows from and into a rather thinly veiled image of the ideal sage. That image, for early Augustine, is provided by Antony of the Desert. And the product of his life serves as an exemplar lending shape to Augustine’s ascetic goals.

Augustine’s theoretical description of the ascetic process and goal is clear. One is to withdraw the soul from cognitive immersion in the external senses and their collective sedimentation in human opinion (*ord.I.3*). The soul is thereby drawn back into herself – collected and retained (*in se ipsum colligendi atque in se ipso retinendi, ord. I.3*).

Thus the realm of false images is left behind and the wounds they inflict upon the soul can begin healing (*ord. I.3*). From her safe place within, the soul can re-engage her attention toward intelligible realities and find delight therein (*ep. 3.4*).

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The result is twofold. With regard to things intelligible, one comes to knowledge of self and God. And in that knowing, the soul finds a stable delight in intelligible verities liberating her from lesser loves. Augustine, at this stage, never entertains the question of whether one could know intelligible verities and not love them. With regard to sensible realities, the soul discovers an extraordinary self-possession and freedom in utilizing corporeal things which Augustine names continence. Both of these results are identified in Augustine’s mind with Antony’s achievement.

Consider what Athanasius describes as Antony’s purity of soul when he emerges from the abandoned fortress after nearly twenty years of solitary, contemplative askesis (u. Antonii 14.3-4). Those who saw Antony marveled at the equanimity he exuded. He was neither fat from lack of exercise nor emaciated from excessive fasting. No expansion or constriction of soul manifested itself at his sight of other people. In perfect self-possession, governed by reason, Antony was indifferent to such occurrences and thus free to enact the good with remarkable power (u. Antonii 14.3-4). 93

Likewise, the Christian ascetic’s solitary life strikes Augustine as a sign of something deeper (mor.1.64-67). Human beings cannot live alone as mere humans. Long ago Aristotle had described the intrinsically social nature of human being. If one lives alone, he is either a god or a beast, but certainly cannot be a human being (Pol. I.2). 94

Such was Aristotle’s claim. And, while Augustine had not read much of Aristotle, in

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94 Note Aristotle’s dismissal of solitude as a viable human mode of existence in the Nichomachean Ethics 1097b6-20, 1169b3-21, et passim.
general, he concurs on this point. Yet, Antony’s practice embodies a contempt for the world and society that, while frankly inhuman, is somehow glorious.

Likewise, Antony achieves this life without the sequential study of one who reads (u. Antonii 3.7). Rather, by a special gift, this illiterate memorizes the scriptures read to him. As a result his memory, in silence, replaces the sound of books being read and his life becomes a visible, lived inscription of God’s word (cf. u. Antonii 3.7 in light of mus. VI.59; doctr. chr. pro).\(^95\)

Such gifts, Augustine concludes, are only possible through a flaming sort of contemplative love. Therein Augustine ascribes to Antony and his sort descriptions typically reserved for angelic beings. (Perhaps, Aristotle’s solitary gods are not so far away?) And Augustine avers their gift must be produced by an extraordinarily clear vision of God (mor.I.64-65). What else could produce a love so ardent?

Indeed, in his later recollection of first hearing Antony’s story, a specific term is applied to Antony and those who follow his exemplary mode of life. The solitary is an amicus dei (conf.VIII.6.15).\(^96\) Such a one is elevated from bestiality by a vision and

\(^95\) Of course, our descriptions of Antony’s graced achievements are actually attached to Antony’s name only in later periods of Augustine’s work, beginning about one year later in mor.I.64-67. However, Augustine’s conversion, in his own memory, is immediately provoked by a hearing of Antony’s story and the effect its telling had on Pontitianus and his friends (conf. VIII.6.14-7.16). Likewise, the descriptions of continence, solitude and the charism by which the illiterate’s love achieves the end of scripture without study are stable throughout Augustine’s career. Hence, my inference that Antony’s submerged image is operative already here.

\(^96\) This term was in common usage to describe various forms of the new monastic movement, according to Lienhard, Joseph T. 1994. “Friendship with God, Friendship in God: Traces in St. Augustine” in Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue ed. Van Fleteren, Schnaubelt and Reino, New York: Peter Lang, pp. 207-229. However, he hastens to note that Augustine does not assume this term for his intentional communities in Thagaste and Hippo. Rather, Augustine prefers to be known as a seruus dei.
charity, attainable only by a special charism of the Spirit, and so dwells in community with the God he loves (cf. mor. I.65-66; mus. VI.59; doctr. chr. prol).

When one inquires concerning the method of purgative withdrawal from the sensible and turning toward things intelligible, Augustine acknowledges a twofold path – solitude and study (ord.1.3). Some, like Antony, achieves purity of soul, and thereby knowledge of self and God, through solitude. By removing himself from everyday intercourse with human opinion and the self-diffusion required for that interaction, the solitary effectively collects himself within and there contemplates the reality of God and the soul (mor. I.66). Augustine always assumed Antony and the desert fathers were primarily engaged in contemplating God and intelligible verities (mor. I.66).97

Augustine himself makes hesitant attempts in this direction throughout this period. The opening of the Soliloquies finds Reason admonishing Augustine to leave the amanuensis behind, for this sort of thought requires solitude (sol. I.1). A few years later, Augustine responds to Nebridius’ complaint concerning an oppressive solitude and reminds him of the benefits afforded thereby (ep. 9). By distancing the ascetic from


Contemporary reconstructions aside, Augustine always assumed the desert solitaries were something like specially graced, super-contemplatives (in the Platonizing sense) bearing witness to the superiority of Christ’s teaching. These solitary exemplars dwelt continuously in contemplation of the intelligible realm and thereby attained the blessed life here and now: nihil de his dicam quos paulo ante commemoravi, qui secretissimi penitus ab omni hominum conspectu, pane solo, qui eis per digesta interualla temporum affertur, et aqua contenti, desertissimas terras incolunt perfruentes colloquio dei, cui puris mentibus inhaerentur et eius pulchritudinis contemplatione beatissimi, quae nisi sanctorum intellectu percipi non potest., (mor. I.66).
distraction and social opinion, solitude facilitates an inward turn to the mind. Only there can one attain certainty of non-local, intelligible verities (ep. 9).98 A few years later, the filling of the deserts with solitary ascetics will strike Augustine as an indication of Christ's success where Plato failed (uera rel. 5). But this path is not suitable for most people. Antony's means to contemplation were possible only by a special charism of grace and should not be attempted by those not so gifted (cf. mus. VI.59; doctr. chr. prol). Nonetheless, the anthropological and ascetic end of contemplation remains basic in this period.

Remedial Ascetic Program: Ascent to Contemplation through Liberal Disciplines

Augustine, therefore, sets out to chart a second-best way, as it were. He seeks a more schoolish route to Antony's contemplative end. By tracing a program of study through the liberal disciplines, Augustine seeks to mimic the effects of Antony's solitary askesis within a peculiar form of learning community. Antony's silent contemplation marks the goal, but Augustine must find a different and more accessible path to that destination.

Most likely making use of Varro's disciplinarum libri IX (ord.II.35; II.54; ep.26.3), Augustine envisions a progressive ascent through the liberal disciplines rising by steps from things corporeal to things incorporeal (retr.1.3). Augustine's curriculum provides a discursive itinerary leading away from sense-based opinion and toward the clarity of vision and intensity of love that Antony found by means of social withdrawal. Through

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98 Ep.9.1 – confer te ad animum tuum et illum in deum leua, quantum potes. ibi enim certius habes et nos non per corporeas imagines... sed per illam cogitationem, qua intellegis non loco esse nos simul.
study, then, one might parallel Antony’s production of a reason-governed life of continence and contemplative love for God, albeit by a slower, more plodding path.99

**Contemplative Fulfillment and Cognitive Nutrition**

Augustine’s schoolish asceticism provides a new way to achieve contemplative fruition and thereby traverse the divide from the foolish soul’s *minus esse* to the *magis esse* of salvific wisdom. Augustine’s ascetic program assumes that blessedness only arrives with the heights of contemplation (*beata u.* 35; *ord.* II.35; II.39; *lib.* arb. II.36). Action through bodily motion only distracts and hinders the soul from contemplative beatitude (*sol.* I.24; *Acad.* I.3; I.9; *an.* quant. 76). So basic moral training is necessary as a preliminary and accompaniment to basic studies, primarily because the virtues quiet the soul’s impulses to bodily motion and prepare her to renounce bodily activity (*ord.* II.25).

The consummation of beatitude, however, is always contemplative in this period (*beata u.* 35; *ord.* II.35; II.39; *lib.* arb. II.36). So the happy life consists in a pious and perfect act of knowing (*hoc est beata uta, pie perfecteque cognoscere...*, *beata u.* 35). Indeed to be *cum deo*, as opposed to merely *non esse sine deo*, consists entirely in knowing God as an intelligible reality (*ord.* I.3-5). And while rationality appears in three forms, the highest and final form is the delight and blessedness of contemplation (*ord.*

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99 One can scarcely help recalling Augustine’s later conversion account. Embroiled in deep conflict over his incapacity to commit to a philosophical, Christian askesis like Antony’s, Augustine hears a voice chanting *tolle, lege*. God’s own call to Augustine, it seems, is a call to a life of reading.
This contemplation epitomizes the aspiration of ratio and may be described as the most blessed contemplation of divine things (hinc se illa ratio ad ipsarum diuinaram rerum beatissimam contemplationem rapere voluit, ord. II.39).

With contemplation as the singularly acknowledged goal, Augustine employs a metaphor complex under which he describes the growth in being that culminates in contemplative wisdom. Spiritual nutrition – eating teachings and through cognitive digestion attaining conceptual truth – names the process by which a soul may grow in being. This metaphor complex continues throughout Augustine’s life, but the specific referents migrate with his anthropological commitments. At this stage Augustine’s usage basically parallels the usage found in popular Platonist and Stoic teachers. Knowledge itself is nutritive (beata u. 8). Conceptual veracity lends being to the soul (beata u. 8).

Augustine’s usage builds on a metaphorical parallelism between body and soul (beata u. 7). As with classical philosophical usages, Augustine envisions the soul as requiring nutrition, exercise and sometimes medicine to maintain or restore health. A whole complex of metaphorical referents emerges from this basic correlation. In his mature writings Augustine extends the metaphor complex in powerful and novel ways.

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100 ergo iam tria genera sunt rerum, in quibus illud rationabile apparat, unum est in factis ad aliquem finem relatis, alterum in discendo, tertium in delectando. primum nos admonet nihil temere facere, secundum recte docere, ultimum beate contemplari, (ord. II.35)
101 C.f. also lib. arb. II.36; and a continuous account of contemplative fulfillment is found early in the next period, uera rel. 110; mor. I.35; mor. I.66.
102 For the ancient philosophical commonplace of knowing truth as nourishment (cf. e.g. Plato, Phdr. 247b-e; Epictetus Diss. I.26.15-17; Diss. II.9.17-19; Ench. 46; Aurelius med. X.31.2).
103 For the common place of the philosopher as a physician and philosophical argument and exhortation as medicine (or diet, surgery, cautery, etc...), cf. e.g., Plato, Gorgias 462bff; Seneca, ep. 22.1; 27.1; 40.5; 50.4; 64.8; 72.5-6; 94.24; 95.29.
ways by adapting its elements to his equally novel anthropological commitments. But at this stage, Augustine’s usage could only be described as relatively thin and conventional.

The most specific identification of spiritual nutrition centers on knowledge of truth. Augustine rejoices because he has broken the bonds of Academic skepticism that caused him to despair of truth, which is the pasturage of the soul (...quod est animi pabulum, ep. 1.3). In a broader sense, the food of the soul is intellectum rerum atque scientia (beata u. 8). By teaching one to despise all things visible to mortal eyes and touchable with the senses, philosophy nourishes the soul who takes refuge in her (Acad. I.3). But that is to take philosophy in a very broad sense. When describing the order of studies, rising through liberal disciplines to philosophy proper, Augustine promises that the mathematical disciplines (music, geometry and astrology) nourish soldiers of philosophy (ord. II.14). So truthful cogitation nourishes.

Thus the souls of learned men are fuller and greater than the soul of an uneducated person (beata u. 8). Those souls who have never drunk from the fount of the liberal disciplines are in a state of starvation (beata u. 8). Trygetius, therefore, who has very recently decided to engage in philosophical inquiry, must be described as still lacking nutrition and education (Acad I.8).

Under ordinary circumstances, a lack of education must also result in ethical worthlessness or nequitia (beata u. 8). The moral and cognitive poverty of an uneducated soul manifests the form of rational soul existing in a state of minus esse and thus bereft of blessedness, goodness or health. Of course, the giftedness of some humanly uneducated souls like Antony and Monica circumscribe and qualify

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104 For a discussion of a few novel elements, see chapter 6 below.
Augustine’s theoretical statement of the norm ([beata u. 10, ord. II.31-33]). After all, behind and above the teachers of liberal disciplines and the philosophers, it is God who ultimately provides the intellectual feast of truth regardless of which methods are used ([beata u. 17]).

The affective dimension of learning receives very minimal expression in Augustine’s earliest usage of the culinary-digestive metaphor complex. But wherever the affective dimension receives encoding, Augustine’s usage is again wholly conventional.

So, rhetorical popularizations of philosophical arguments may be metaphorically encoded as sweet foretastes ([Acad. I.3]). Augustine refers to a particularly catchy refutation that delights by its sense of self-evidence as scholastic honey ([beata u. 13]). But too much sweetness can damage a person. A bitter thing might counterbalance and bring health. Something bittersweet, like honey from Mt. Hymettus in Attica, includes rigor enough to not bloat the stomach ([beata u. 14]).

Nutritional prescriptions vary depending on the health of the soul. Sick souls cannot eat and actually vomit out food ([beata u. 9]). Besides the illness and bloating that excessive sweetness might incur, spiritual gluttony always results in indigestion ([beata u. 13]). Thus calm and sincere investigation must be practiced, for eating more than can be digested produces ill spiritual effects ([beata u. 13]). Behind Augustine’s caution concerning spiritual or intellectual gluttony lays the standard rationale of the

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105 For Antony, see above and cf. u. Antonii 3.7 in light of mus. VI.59; doctr. chr. prol.
philosophical proscription against reading too many books (e.g., Epictetus, Diss. 1.26.15-17).106

Spiritual or intellectual gluttony ultimately shows itself as one “vomits” the hastily ingested forms of speech without signs of proper digestion. A word for this condition has come down to us in modern English. We call the student in this condition a ‘sophomore’ – a ‘wise-fool.’ He is capable and fond of regurgitating elevated sentences, but does not really know what he is talking about. His speech, even if formally correct, does not stem from an appropriate basis in thought and experience. The linguistic form of the teaching is well in hand, but the intelligible substance remains elusive. Augustine warns his charges of just this possibility (ord. II.17).107 To guard against this malady, Augustine presents his students with philosophical arguments in small, digestible packages suited to their level, and urges them to process it calmly and with sincerity before moving on (beata u. 13). Thus the cognitive powers of the soul can be nourished and grow towards their eventual beatitude in contemplation (ord. II.14).

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106 ... ἀὕτη οὖν ἀρχή τοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν, αἴσθησις τοῦ ἱδίου ἡγεμονικοῦ πῶς ἔχει· μετὰ γὰρ τὸ γνώναι ὅτι ἁσθενῶς οὐκ ἔτι θελήσει χρήσθαι αὐτῶ πρὸς τὰ μεγάλα. νῦν δὲ μὴ δυνάμενοι τινες τὸν ψωμὸν καταπίνειν σύντοξιν ἀγοράσαντες ἐπιβάλλονται ἐσθείν. διὰ τούτῳ ἐμοῦσιν ἢ ἀπεπτούσιν ἔτια στρόφοι καὶ κατάρροιαι καὶ πυρετοὶ. ἐδει δ’ ἐφιστάνειν, εἰ δύνανται. (Diss. 1.26.15-17). ... This, therefore, is a proper starting point for philosophy. Namely, a feel for the condition of one’s own governing principle. For when one realizes it is sickly, he no longer wants to use it on great things. But as it is, some who lack the strength to swallow a crumb take it upon themselves to buy a whole treatise and eat it. So they vomit or suffer indigestion. Then come stomach cramps, runny noses and fevers. But they should have first considered whether they were healthy. (Diss. 1.26.15-17)

107 si quis temere ac sine ordine disciplinarum in harum rerum cognitionem audet inruere, pro studioso illum curiosum, pro docto credulum, pro cauto incredulum fieri, (ord. II.17).
Basic Trajectory of the Educational Ascent: Rising to Eat by Intellecction

So in non-metaphorical terms, what would this special diet of a budding philosopher consist of? How does the sick and weak soul, existing at the lowest possible level as a formally rational, yet foolish soul, sequentially rise to spiritual health, cognitive clarity and fullness of being? Augustine’s answer utilizes a Varronian ascent through the liberal disciplines culminating in an understanding of philosophy and politics shared by Neo-Pythagorean and Middle Platonist approaches.

Augustine tells us the order of numbers is so great that studying music, geometry or astrology inevitably leads to vision of intelligible things (ord. II.14). The role of number, and particularly unity as that from which all order arises, serves as the conceptual linchpin in Augustine’s account. However, because obscurity makes intellectual vision of unity inaccessible to most people, a twofold path is offered (ord. II.16). First we must follow the authority of great teachers, afterward reason will grow to provide understanding (ord. II.16; II.26). This progression from authority to reason, from belief to understanding marks the trajectory of the nourishing journey through the liberal disciplines.

Authority enjongs cultic and ritual mysteries (ord. II.16), but also precepts for a manner of life that makes study possible (ord. II.25). Since contemplation marks the fruition of the journey, there is little surprise that the moral ordering of life primarily involves training for the cessation of activity (ord. II.25). In fact, the bent toward viewing morality as a progression towards inactivity manifests in Augustine’s striking

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108 *iam in musica, in geometrica, in astrorum motibus, in numerorum necessitatibus ordita dominatur, ut, si quis quasi eius fontem atque ipsum penetrare uidere desideret, aut in his inueniat aut per haec eo sine ullo errore ducatur* (ord II.14).
substitution of the negative ‘silver rule’ in place of Jesus’ ‘golden rule’ (nemini faciant, quod pati nolunt, ord. II.25). Moral precept begins to reduce impulses to activity and thus prepares the soul to move sequentially toward pure contemplation.

Real nourishment through the disciplinae would begin with ratio distinguishing and connecting things learned (ord. II.30). And this requires a regression into the self (ord. II.30). Disciplina is the very law of God to be written on human souls (ord. II.25). The new law, which Jeremiah promises will be enscribed on human hearts and not tablets of stone, resonates in the background (ord. II.25; cf. Jer. 31:31ff).

Just as the soul falls by going out toward mortal things, the soul returns inward by drawing back into ratio (nam ut progressus animae usque ad mortalia lapsus est, ita regressus esse in rationem debet, ord. II.31). Indeed, by turning away from things mortal, the soul becomes divine. Or, at least failing to turn from mortal things would deprive the soul of divinity (hinc nisi se auerterit, diuina non erit., ord. II.31).

The disciplinae fall into a duplex order of knowledge: an ordered understanding of the proper use of speech, and knowing the power of numbers (ad istarum rerum cognitionem neminem adspirare debere sine illa quasi duplici scientia bonae disputationis potentiaeque numerorum., ord. II.47). And the proper order of study leads through a seven step gradus (ord. II.39) from the more external and diffuse forms of knowledge found in manipulation of language, to the more inward and unified branches of numerical knowledge. Numerosity provides the most nourishment and provides an explicit bridge to knowledge of God and the soul (ord. II.14).

The ordo studiorum provides a general trajectory from the more corporeal dimensions of language to the more intelligible nature of number. Grammar, which includes history, emerges as a synthesis of words, letters and a very rudimentary use of
numbering in ordering syllable lengths (ord. II.35-36). As such, grammar basically provides incentive to search out the deeper power underlying the production of the arts (ord. II.35-37). Dialectic takes up this task in earnest. In the course of the search, dialectic becomes the very self-manifestation of ratio (ord. II.38). While using words, nothing becomes more unified and intelligible than dialectic (ord. II.38). Rhetoric enters the itinerary here as a concession to the foolish state of one’s fellow man and thus makes up the persuasive weakness of dialectic (ord. II.38). But the very study of what delights and moves in speech opens the soul to a new sort of study.

By noticing and searching out the difference between sonus and significatio, reason now focuses on the delight to be found simply in the sonus (ord. II.39). This leads to an isolation of the numerical relations of sound and the study of music (ord. II.39-40). In further considering the nature of music’s numerical relations, ratio finds numerical relations to be divine and sempternal (ord. II.41). At this point ratio has searched out the divine and sempternal element in sound.

Next ratio leads the soul to consider the divine and sempternal in things visible. Geometry conceptually isolates the beauty of visible figures and discovers how these are reducible to dimensions and thence to number (ord. II.42). Astrology uncovers the numerical relations in the visible celestial spheres (ord. II.42).

Reason then finds numerosity as the commonality between the disciplinae that emerges through contemplation, and realizes only vestiges and shadows exist in the things beheld by the senses (ord. II.43). By separating itself from these imagines falsae

\footnote{Of course, the six books de musica provide a clear example of how Augustine dilates this line of reasoning.}
rerum, the soul begins to contemplate itself and wonders if the substance of soul might not be numerosity itself (ord. II.43).

If at the end of this journey through the liberal disciplines, the soul collects and condenses all the scattered elements of the disciplines into a single, true and certain unity the soul will not only believe, but also be able to intellectually contemplate divine matters (ord. II.44). So philosophy proper ensues wherein one searches out the nature of the self and God (ord. II.47). The soul, already trained in the disciplinae, seipsum inspicit and thus arrives at the beginning of contemplation (ord. II.48).

Contemplation of God comes next (ord. II.51).

At the level of contemplation nourishment becomes complete, for only here does one fully discern two worlds (ord. II.47) and sees the beauty of each part in the intelligible world is as perfect as the whole (ord. II.51). So the liberal disciplines have led the soul upward to a discovery of the intelligible world, with the soul and God as its most illustrious inhabitants (ord. II.47; II.51). And just as ingesting bits of corporeal stuff nourishes the body, so the circular soul is nourished by contemplatively ingesting verities from the intelligible world (beata u. 7-8; ep. 1.3).

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110 quibus si quisque non cesserit et illa omnia, quae per tot disciplinas late varieque diffusa sunt, ad unum quiddam simplex uerum certuumque redegerit, eruditi dignissimus nomine non temere iam quaerit illa diuina non iam credenda solum uerum etiam contemplanda intellegenda atque retinenda., ord. II.44.
Chapter 2

Temporal Soul, Fallen Bodies and the Defect of Action (Milan through Thagaste, 387-391)

Biographical Bridge

With the frost still upon them, Augustine and his friends returned in early 387 to Milan and Bishop Ambrose’s catechetical orations. There, for the first time, the creed was delivered to Augustine. And its implications, as we will see, were far reaching in the development of Augustine’s thought. Apart from receiving the creed and baptism at Ambrose’s hands, Augustine also came in contact with some writings of Porphyry at this time.  

Of course, following his baptism Augustine and Monica began their return to Africa. Maximus had invaded Rome and the family was forced to winter at Ostia. Early in 388, Augustine and Monica shared a foretaste of the blessedness to come. A few days later Monica is dead. Augustine stays in Rome for most of the year and finally returns to Carthage and then Thagaste. There, on his ancestral inheritance, he establishes a


112 The scholarly idiom, largely under pressure to assimilate this experience to a Platonic act of intellectual vision, has produced the generally accepted label, “Ostia Vision.” However, Augustine studiously avoids the language of vision in his account. So we will dissent from the scholarly vernacular on this instance. Cf. discussion in ch. 6 below.
community of serui Dei to pursue a life of Christian philosophy together. His thought
develops in a rather continuous manner through this period until his forced ordination
in 391 catapults him into deeper study of the scriptures and a closer attention to their
concerns with positive action.

Catechetical Alterations: The Nicene Distinction and a Three Tiered Ontology

Augustine’s most basic conceptual alteration at this time stems from grasping the
distinction implicit in the Nicene Creed’s affirmations and denials. He realizes that the
distinction between Creator and creature thoroughly traverses the span of reality.113
There is no halfway point between the two. As he declares in his first work against the
II.11).

Grasping the Nicene distinction, therefore, forces Augustine to rethink his earlier
notion of the divine, immortal soul rooted in his binary ontological scheme of
intelligible and sensible reality. A new place is needed for non-divine, intelligible
realities such as the human soul. For the first time Augustine unambiguously declares
that the soul is creature (an. quant. 77; mor. I.20-21&23; gn. adu. Man. II.11).114

113 Of course, Augustine will consider the opening lines of Cicero’s translation of Plato’s
Timaeus as teaching the self-same ontology, quid est quod semper sit neque ullam habeat
ortum, et quod gignatur nec umquam sit? quorum alterum intelligentia et ratione
comprehenditur, quod unum atque idem semper est; alterum quod adfert ad opinionem
sensus rationis expers, quod totum opinabile est, id gignitur et interit nec umquam esse
vere potest (Cic. Tim. 2.3 [27d]). For an account of the dialectical interpretation of the
Genesis and Timaeus cosmogonies in the Latin Christian tradition, see Pelikan, Jaroslav.
1997. What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?: Timaeus and Genesis in Counterpoint. Ann
Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
114 For accessible accounts of this realization see: Burt, D.X. 1996. Augustine’s World: an
Introduction to his Speculative Theology. Maryland: University Press of America, ch.4
By distinguishing mutability and immutability from his earlier intelligible versus sensible dichotomy and then overlaying them at an angle, Augustine is able to develop his oft-commented three-tiered ontology (ep. 18).\(^{115}\) The Creator-creature distinction coincides with the distinction between things immutable and mutable (ep. 18). All immutable things are God, three in one. Of course, God is also intelligible in nature. Other intelligible things, souls, are mutable in time but not space (ep. 18).\(^{116}\) These are creatures and they are given an intermediate place in reality. Sensible, bodily things are mutable in both time and space. These are the lowest of creatures (ep. 18).

This schema has a certain power and complexity, when compared with his earlier binary notion, but it still raises problems concerning the nature of a human person. Some theory of the body-soul relation is demanded. Augustine’s earliest work of this period contains an essentially disincarnate definition of homo as rational soul using a body (an. quant. 22; cf. also mor. I.6), and he struggles throughout this period to synthesize his incorporeal ontology of soul with the biblical account of created bodies. Given his recent instruction concerning the Creator of heaven and earth, a simple opposition between body and soul seems increasingly untenable. Having rejected important aspects of Plotinian soul (whether through genius or incompetence),


Augustine now experiments with Plotinian notions of corporeality to make sense of created bodies.

**Anthropological Confusions and Forays**

The anthropological formulations that emerge during this period exhibit a fruitful instability. The internal tension is best seen in *De Genesi aduersus Manichaeos libri duo* (*gen. adu. Man.*)\(^{117}\) There we find strong traces of a submerged assimilation of the Plotinian World-Soul and the fall of the soul into individuated existence through a pre-incarnate sin (*gen. adu. Man. II.5-6*). If this were read in its full Plotinian sense, one would expect to find Augustine still affirming the divinity of soul.

But this submerged usage for explicating the allegorical meaning of creation is combined with explicit profession of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Indeed, even Augustine’s first, bold announcement that the soul is not what God is (*an. quant. 77-78*), concludes an ascent in which he ascribes to soul the characteristics of Plotinian World-Soul (*hinc enim anima se non solum suo, si quam uniuersi partem agit, sed ipsi etiam uniuerso corpori audet preponere, an. quant. 73*). Likewise, the individuation of human souls, within the *gen. adu. Man.*, may also be ascribed to the goodness of the bodies with which God personally created human beings (*gen. adu. Man. II.9*). Obviously, Augustine’s

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anthropological considerations are still more complex, or even conflicted, than a simple incorporation of Plotinian anthropology.\textsuperscript{118}

How is this to be read? Attention to genre is helpful here. Augustine is experimenting, within an apologetic project, to see how much of Plotinus he can incorporate into an anti-materialist reading of Genesis. Therefore, Augustine’s project requires moving in two directions at once. On the one hand, Augustine needs to assimilate this reading to a project of corrective orthodoxy against the Manicheans. So the scriptural text creates a genuine necessity of explanation.

On the other hand, in order to refute the Manicheans, Augustine needs to employ Plotinian notions of immateriality. These notions are primarily derived through association with Plotinian images. We have already seen that Augustine’s utilization of Plotinus’ thought concerning the soul functions better at the level of mythic imagery than in Augustine’s grasp of the actual philosophic detail involved. Indeed, Augustine’s attempt at a detailed philosophical account of the soul’s ontological stability diverges widely from Plotinus’.\textsuperscript{119} Yet, in his fervor to defeat the Manichean reading, Augustine sometimes mixes scriptural and Plotinian ideas infelicitously and subjects himself to internal contradictions. It is, after all, an occupational hazard of the philosophical theologian.

What does this internal tension require methodologically? I am proposing that one must read the \textit{gen. adu. Man.} with an eye toward the submerged Plotinian images,


\textsuperscript{119} Cf. discussion of his muddled Plotinianism in ch. 1 above.
even while problematizing the associative meanings that Plotinus typically attached to
them. In other words, to understand Augustine at this fruitfully unstable stage, one
must be prepared to separate Plotinian meanings from Plotinian images. Augustine’s
use of Plotinus in allegorically reading *Genesis*, both utilizes Plotinian imagery and
transforms the meaning of that imagery. If Plotinus’ exact meanings are bracketed, a
fairly intelligible but certainly strange narrative emerges of the body-soul relation at the
level of Augustine’s explicit affirmations. It is that level of explicit affirmation to which I
will attend.

**Prelapsarian Bodies: Animal and Celestial**

A striking tension marks Augustine’s discussion of human origins in *gn. adu. Man*. One
the one hand, Augustine depicts the invisible creation (and the soul as a constituent
thereof) as possessing vitality prior to any earthly embodiment (*gn. adu. Man. II.4*).
Indeed, the soul comes to earth through sinning (*antequam esset super terram [Gn 2,5],
intellegitur: antequam anima peccaret*, *gn. adu. Man. II.5*). The Plotinian Fall of the Soul,
at least in its mythic presentation, surely lurks in the background.121

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120 Consider Goulven Madec’s hesitations about assuming continuity of meaning when
an image is transposed from one mental world to another. “Réserve faite de la pertinence
des rapprochements textuels, je ne vois pas ce que l’on peut avoir contre un tel procédé,
quand il s’agit simplement de montrer qu’un auteur a emprunté telle expression, telle
image, tel développement. Mais il en va différemment, quand il s’agit d’apprécier
l’influence doctrinale; dans ce cas, on en peut se dispenser de mesurer la transformation
que subissent les emprunts de fait d’être transposes dans un nouvel univers mental.”
augustiniennes II:373*.

Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Harvard, pp. 146-183 is the seminal account of this
utilization of Plotinus. The tension between Augustine’s accounts, however, O’Connell
would attribute to the inherent ambiguity in Plotinus between the descent of soul as
ontologically necessary and as instigated by audacity. I cannot find this sublety in
On the other hand, when Augustine turns to the creation of the human being the initial direction of movement reverses from primordial fall to a prelapsarian elevation (gn. adu. Man. II.10). God first creates human beings with bodies from dust and endows them with a purely animal or soulish existence (nondum tamen spiritalem hominem debemus intellegere qui factus est in animam uiuentem [Gn 2,7], sed adhuc animalem., gn. adu. Man. II.10). Only later, after elevation to the affective state of Paradise and reception of the commandment may human beings be considered spiritual (tunc enim spiritalis effectus est, cum in paradiso, hoc est in beata uita, constitutus praeceptum etiam perfectionis accepit, ut uerbo dei consummaretur., gn. adu. Man. II.10). As a consequence, when human beings sinned their bodies were not degraded to an alien soulish existence, but "remained" in their merely soulish state of nature (itaque postquam peccavit recedens a praecepto dei et dimissus est de paradiso, in eo remansit ut animalis esset., gn. adu. Man. II.10).

Of course, when pressed in the previous period to provide a philosophical account of soul's purduring ontological status, Augustine resorted to securing the soul's existence from below (imm. an. 14).122 Again we find the lower level of rational soul, a merely soulish existence distinguished from higher spiritual functions, emerging as primary and providing the bulwark against descent into nothingness (gn. adu. Man. II.10). For when sin causes dismissal from the spiritual existence of Paradise, this lower level of animal existence restrains the soul from descending any further (gn. adu. Man. II.10). And, of course, Paul's words in I Cor. 15:46 now corroborate the tack Augustine initially assumed amid his wrestlings with Plotinus' argumentation (sic enim apostolus.

Augustine's text. The tension actually stems from competing storylines in Augustine's thought. 122 Cf. analysis in ch. 1 above.
After receiving the inalienable form of soulish existence, God raises the first humans to an Edenic existence as spiritual beings (gn. adu. Man. II.10). In this prelapsarian elevation to paradise, the human body is suffused with the transparency and fluidity appropriate to celestial bodies governed by fully rational souls.

The Edenic and resurrected forms of human existence share a common description throughout this period (mor. II.9). In both states our souls lend full contemplative attention to God. Indeed, contemplation as the highest expression of ratio marks human beings as truly created ad imaginem dei (gn. adu. Man. I.28). The inner man, as reason and intellect, is the first referent of the divine image (quod homo ad imaginem dei factus dicitur, secundum interiorem hominem dici, ubi est ratio et intellectus, gn. adu. Man. I.28). By reason of this intellecutive capacity, the inner man exercises dominion (potestas) over all animals (gn. adu. Man. I.28). Apparently, the original soulish body, like the other animals, responds to the inner man’s dominion and thus rises to a new form of existence beyond death (gn. adu. Man. I.29; II.15).

The primordial body, governed by this elevated and enlightened soul, now takes on the characteristics of Plotinus’ celestial bodies (gn. adu. Man. II.32; Enn. IV.3.18, 13-22). The celestial or spiritual body possesses a perfectly receptive fluidity to the soul’s decrees – not to mislead by saying ‘desires.’ For the peculiar motion of celestial bodies is not driven by impulses of desire but expresses the decrees of providence without

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123 Later, while writing his gn. litt., Augustine will question and revise this identification and provide a distinct account of Edenic (yet animal), fallen and resurrected bodies. The resurrected state remains the same.
distracting attention (Enn. IV.3.9; IV.3.13). Hence, it is “unobserved” (latens), remaining subterranean and hidden in its use. Like the growth of horns or beard, or spots manifesting on a leopard, the celestial motions proceed under soul’s power but without requiring the attention to really qualify as actions (Enn. IV.3.13; cf. also Enn. III.8.3, 4).

Bodily governance, therefore, need not distract such a one from continuously gazing upon her maker (gn. adu. Man. II.15). Indeed, the only ‘work’ in Paradise consisted of maintaining the order the celestial couple already possessed (namque in tranquillitate beatae uitae, ubi mors non est, omnis opera est custodire quod tenes., gn. adu. Man. II.15). Adam’s complete, contemplative forgetfulness of body and appetite in Paradise receives figurative expression in the account of his ‘slumber’ producing Eve (cuius contemplatio quia interior est et secretior et ab omni sensu corporis remotissima, conuenieret etiam ista soporis nomine intellegi potest., gn. adu. Man. II.16). The singular focus of the soul’s attention in Paradise was upon the intelligible reality of God alone (gn. adu. Man. II.16).

Because of its perfectly malleable expression of the soul’s state, the Edenic body was effectively transparent, just like Plotinus’ celestial bodies (gn. adu. Man. II.32; Enn. IV.3.18). 124 These bodies were not invisible, rather primordial bodies perfectly

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124 Notice the close parallel even in the usage of analogy between Augustine and Plotinus. There can be no doubt of derivation. First, consider Augustine’s text: neque enim in illis corporibus caelestibus sic latere posse cogitationes credendum est, quemadmodum in his corporibus latent; sed sicut nonnulli motus animorum apparent in uultu et maxime in oculis, sic in illa perspicuitate ac simplicitate caelestium corporum omnes omnino animi motus latere non arbitror. (gn. adu. Man. II.32).

Then consider the archetypal description in Plotinus: οὐδὲ δὴ φωναῖς, οἴμαι, χρῆσθαι νομιστέον ἐν μὲν τῷ νοητῷ οὐσίᾳ καὶ πάμπαν, σώματα δὲ ἐξούσιας ἐν σωφροσε, ὡσα μὲν διὰ χρείας ἢ δι’ ἀμφισβητήσεις διαλέγοντα ἐνταύθα, ἐκεί οὐκ ἂν εἴη ποιούσαι δὲ ἐν τάξει καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ἐκαστα οὐδ’ ἂν επιτάττοιεν οὐδ’ ἂν συμβουλευοίεν, γινόσκοιεν δ’ ἂν καὶ τὰ παρ’ ἀλλήλων ἐν συνέσει ἑπεὶ καὶ ἐνταύθα πολλὰ σωφρόντων γινώσκοιεν δι’
expressed the thoughts of the soul (*neque enim in illis corporibus caelestibus sic latere posse cogitationes credendum est*, gn. *adu. Man. II.32; cf. also Enn. IV.3.18). Thus they made invisible thoughts visible (*gn. adu. Man. II.32*). Edenic bodies, one might say, told the truth. Perhaps they told the truth precisely because no intentional action yet occupied them and, consequently, duplicitous expression remained impossible. Like faces and eyes in fallen bodies, the whole Edenic body faithfully and effectively mediated the inner reality of contemplative persons (*sed sicut nonnulli motus animorum apparent in uultu et maxime in oculis, sic in illa perspicuitate ac simplicitate caelestium corporum omnes omnino animi motus latere non arbitror.*, *gn. adu. Man. II.32; Enn. IV.3.18*). Thus Augustine employs the very image of the silently communicating eyes by which Plotinus analogizes the transparency of celestial bodies to a facet of current experience (*ἐπεὶ καί ἐνταῦθα πολλὰ σιωπῶντος γινώσκοιμεν δι’ ὀμμάτων ἐκεῖ δὲ καθαρὸν πάν τὸ σῶμα καὶ οἰνὸν όφθαλμός ἐκαστός καὶ οὐδὲν δὲ κρυπτὸν οὐδὲ πεπλασμένον. Enn. IV.3.18, 20-23*).

So human speech, with its beating of external air, would have been redundant in Paradise and consequently did not exist (*Enn. IV.3.18*). Instead, God “spoke” directly to the intelligence, as if through an interior spring of truth welling up within (*irrigabat eam fonte interiore loquens in intellectu eius, ut non extrinsecus uerba exciperet tamquam de supracticis nubibus pluviam, sed fonte suo, hoc est de intimis suis manante ueritate*

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*ὁμμάτων ἐκεῖ δὲ καθαρὸν πάν τὸ σῶμα καὶ οἰνὸν όφθαλμός ἐκαστός καὶ οὐδὲν δὲ κρυπτὸν οὐδὲ πεπλασμένον, ἀλλὰ πρὶν εἰπεῖν ἀλλὸ ἰδὼν ἐκεῖνος ἐγνω. (Enn. IV.3.18, 13-24).*

The difference is that Plotinus is describing the bodies of stars, Augustine uses this as a description of angelic, Edenic and resurrection bodies – thoroughly conflated in one.
satiaretur, *gn. adu. Man. II.5*). And from those waters of truth the soul was sufficiently nourished (*gn. adu. Man. II.6*).

In these ethereal bodies, human souls were placed at the mid-point of the cosmic order (*gn. adu. Man. II.12; cf. Enn. IV.1.1, 45; IV.8.7, 1-8*). The bodily realm was below her and fully within her dominion (*gn. adu. Man. I.28-29; II.15*). The intelligible realm and God were above. The couple’s only need was to sustain an attentive gaze toward God while effortlessly ruling over the fully submissive realm of things bodily (*gn. adu. Man. II.16; Enn. IV.3.9*). In so doing, they would hold their proper place in the center of the ontological order. Thus the symbolic meaning of the tree of life, planted in the middle of the garden, refers to the wisdom of maintaining this middle position in reality (*gn. adu. Man. II.12*).

**Fall of Body and Soul: Augustine’s Emendation of the Plotinian Fall**

Having entertained a suggestion from the Devil, however, humanity’s pride swells and consents to grasp experiential knowledge of evil in hopes of surmounting God’s height (*gn. adu. Man. II.22, cf. also the slightly later *en.Ps.I.6*). This constitutes a turn away from the truth of God and toward a lie concerning oneself (*gn. adu. Man. II.22*).

The result is described as a hiding in the middle, suspended as it were in one’s own halfway position in the world (*gn. adu. Man. II.22*). Neither bodily things below, nor the intelligible above would any longer be in reach. Humanity is enclosed in what is proper to itself alone, the lie (*gn. adu. Man. II.24*). Having concealed their hearts through an ‘itch’ for deception symbolized by fig leaves (*folia uero fici pruritum quendam significant, gn. adu. Man. II.23*), God concurs and alters Edenic bodies to match the soul’s
state (gn. adu. Man. II.32). So the Edenic body falls to its primordial animal state (gn. adu. Man. II.10) and its mortality and opacity is signified allegorically by tunics of skin (gn. adu. Man. II.32).

Now, in these tunics of skin, thoughts and feelings are hidden from view (gn. adu. Man. II.32). Opacity of body, mirroring deception of soul, isolates human beings within themselves. A tragically mutilated interiority impedes free interaction with other persons outside, and holds the self at arms length, as it were, from a clear vision of God and intelligible realities above (gn. adu. Man. II.32).

With humanity’s turn to the lie, the inner spring of truth dries up and they are forced to search outside, through exterior words, for some trickle of nourishment for the soul (gn. adu. Man. II.30). On Augustine’s account one is forced to search through eyes and ears for access to truth (gn. adu. Man. II.30). Thus the wholly descended state of the soul, in contradistinction from Plotinus, manifests itself in reliance upon the corporeal instruments of scripture and verbal teaching (gn. adu. Man. II.30). In this wholly descended condition, human language emerges as a second-best way (a redemptive possibility within the condition of the fall) pieced together from the fragments of bodily transparency (gn. adu. Man. II.30).

Yet, even as we posture and angle behind fig leaves, our fallen bodies have not utterly lost their capacity to mediate (gn. adu. Man. II.32). They retain an often-perverse trace of their original function, especially in that part most infused with light, namely, the eyes (gn. adu. Man. II.32; diu. qu. 47). Augustine picked up this hint from Plotinus (ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐνταῦθα πολλά σιωπῶντων γινώσκομεν δι᾿ ὁμίατων ἔκει δὲ καθαρὸν πᾶν τὸ σῶμα καὶ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς ἐκαστος καὶ οὐδὲν δὲ κρυπτὸν οὐδὲ πεπλασμένον, Enn. IV.3.18, 20-23)
But Augustine also develops the hint quite fully with regard to our current animal corporality, probably because his training as a rhetor already stressed the communicative role of the face and eyes (gn. adu. Man. II.32; diu. qu. 47, cf. Cicero, de or. II.56.213-223, esp., 216, 221 and the last line of 222; Orator 55-56, 60; Leg. I.9, 26; Quintillian Inst. II.3, 65ff). On Augustine’s reading, intense affections still shine through in our present state of body. Anger is the clearest example, though lust is also readily recognized nonverbally through facial expression (diu. qu. 47; cf. the later, yet continuous account of this phenomenon in cat. rud. 2.3; 4.7).

Of course, physiognomy continued to appear in Augustine’s world as a legitimate practice even for philosophers (Aulus Gellius, Noctes Atticae I.9; also Ambrose, off. I.18.71-75). Porphyry’s uita Plotini includes an anecdote in which Plotinus, by inspecting the faces of a burglaried widow’s gathered slaves, discerns the culprit without any need for interrogation (uita Plot. 11). Presumably Plotinus’ gaze was engaged in physiognomic reading of the soul through the countenance (uita Plot. 11). So Augustine’s intuition about residual fragments of bodily transparency travels in recognizable company.

**Intentio: Impetus of the Soul’s Movement and Condition for the Fall**

So we have investigated the peculiar manner in which Augustine describes both the simultaneous elevation of body and soul to Edenic spiritual enlightenment and the conjunct fall of body and soul to a merely soulish level of existence. But can we press deeper in Augustine’s theory? Now we ask the question, what on Augustine’s reading is the anthropological condition for the possibility of elevation and fall? What makes turning toward or away from God possible?

The underlying impetus of this intrinsically spiraled turning (either inward-upward or outward-downward) in response to perceived beauty is named *intentio* or *attentio*. Herein lies the source of the soul’s loves (*mus. VI.7; VI.46*). Herein her joys and sorrows. Of course, consistent with Augustine’s rhetorical predilections he is loath to use just one term. But these, their cognates (e.g. *distentio, extensio*) and rough equivalents (e.g. *animaduerto, erigo animum*) form the core of his descriptive terminology.

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Augustine’s chosen term, *intentio*, has a history in Roman Stoicism. The τόνος πνευματικός, when translated into Latin, became known as the *intentio*.128 There is an outside possibility that Augustine was encouraged in using this terminology by reading a Latin translation of Porphyry’s *uita Plotini*. For Plotinus is described as studiously maintaining a constant mental tension during waking hours (ἐπιμελείας τὴν πρὸς τὸν νοῦν τάσιν οὐδέποτε ἀν ἐγρηγορότως ἐχάλασεν, *uita Plot. 9.17*) and never relaxing his self-attention (…καὶ τὴν γε πρὸς ἕαντὸν προσοχὴν οὐκ ἂν ποτε ἐχάλασεν. *uita Plot. 8.20*) even in the midst of conversation.129 But since we do not possess Victorinus’ translations, the possibility of additional Plotinian or Porphyrian influence could only be a highly speculative conjecture.

Behind these Stoic terms is a phenomenon in need of explanation. Πνεῦμα, for the Stoics, is material, yet spans the whole of the cosmos holding it together and lending it vital energy (*SVF II.*439ff).130 At the level of individual humans, πνεῦμα also integrates and vivifies (*SVF II.*458-462). The elasticity of πνεῦμα is manifest in its characteristic striving and tensing (τόνος) – simultaneously reaching inward and outward (*SVF II.*450, 458). Thereby it both pulls elements inward to constitute a single body and pushes those elements outward in purposive, external action.131 This is *intentio* for the materialist Stoics.

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131 A possible material explanation for this internally oppositional activity may be found in the elemental composition of πνεῦμα. Composed of two active elements (cold air and
Of course, Augustine’s notion is thoroughly de-materialized. Nonetheless, the similarities in function between Augustine’s intentio and the Stoics’ are important. The cohesion of disparate elements within a single body is explained by recourse to the action of the τόνος πνευματικός (SVF II.441, 448). Likewise, in Augustine’s work of this period, intentio is seen behind the soul’s temperatio of the body (imm. an. 17; mus. VI.9-10). Additionally, traces of the usage to speak of muscular exertion are retained in Augustine (an. quant. 39).

The Stoic’s τόνος names both the condition for and directionality of moral action (SVF III.473). For Augustine, every personal action manifests a deeper intentio that set it in motion and is the ultimate reference point for judgments of human morality (an. quant. 71; mus. VI.36-39). There is, of course, a vital difference. Stoic τόνος is triumphantly self-referential.

While animation or tempering of the body is attributed to an act of intentio (imm. an. 17; mus. VI.9-10), the characteristic manifestation of intentio in this period is more a hot fire), πνεύμα may be thought to tend at once toward expansion (through heat) and contraction (through cold). Cf. Galen’s fragment in SVF II.446; also Alexander in SVF II.442 and Numesius 70.6-71.4 and commentary in Long, A. A., and D. N. Sedley. 2006. The Hellenistic Philosophers Volume 1 Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., pp. 286-289.

132 O’Daly, Gerard J. P. 1987. Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 85 states that intentio in Augustine, “has its physical source in the brain” citing gn. litt. XII.20.42. Of course, this passage lies well outside our current chronological parameters. Nonetheless, a more thorough examination of the passage in context reveals the source of the intentio is in the soul or mind. The brain is merely the physical channel through which it operates in sensation, memory and bodily action. In this case Augustine considers a condition in which the physical channel becomes occluded. I include the larger sententia here to aid the reader: sed sopito aut perturbato aut etiam intercluso itinere intentionis a cerebro, qua dirigitur sentiendi modus, anima ipsa, quae motu proprio cessare ab hoc opere non potest, quia per corpus non situr uel non plene situr corporalia sentire uel ad corporalia uim suae intentionis dirigere, spiritu corporalium similitudines agit aut intuetur obiectas., (gn. litt. XII.20.42).

matter of mental concentration or focus pointed in one of two directions (*an. quant.* 71; *mus. VI.36-39*). *Intentio* is spent either in engagement with the exterior world resulting in affectively charged sensation and bodily action (*an. quant. 71*) or in engagement with the interior processes of cogitation and contemplation of things eternal (*mus. VI.36-37*). These are contrary motions and manifest differing underlying loves (*mus.VI.39 and 42*; later cf. *lib. arb. III.75-76*).

Over time, one's soul adapts to these consistent, constitutive stretchings. Intention gradually sediments into habit. 134 The contrariety of intentional direction is reflected in the Pauline terminology by which Augustine names these habits (*mus. VI.33*). “Flesh” is not a state of body, or embodiment. Rather, flesh is a state of mind accustomed to finding delight in sense experience (*mus. VI.33, and still in 393, f. et symb. 23*). Soul loves body by force of habit (*mor. I.40*). This disposition toward affectively charged sensation causes the soul itself to be named in terms of what it seeks. So the soul, thus inclined, is labeled “flesh.” In the resurrection, therefore, the body will rise with an angelic immutability. And we will have bodies, but no flesh (*f. et symb. 24*). 135

**Governing Fallen Bodies: Animation, Sensation and Cognition through Externals**

How then is one to understand the soul's presence within the fallen body? Being non-bodily in substance, the soul does not maintain her presence to the body through spatial

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134 Augustine more fully develops his account of habit in the next period, cf. discussion below in ch. 3.

135 N.B., however, Augustine's revision of this claim subsequent to his discovery of Luke 24:39. Augustine's earliest realization of Jesus' resurrected claim seems to be *agon. 26*. His first nuanced account of the resurrection body with a discrimination between *caro* as body and *caro* as sin-tainted habit appears in the extended discussion of c. *Faust. XI*, see esp. XI.7. Note also Augustine's re-assessment of his teaching in *f. et symb.* in *retr.I.17*. 
proximity (*an. quant. 64-69*). In that sense, the soul is not in the body at all (and thus is simultaneously present to the whole and each part of the body, *imm. an. 25; Enn. IV.9.1*). However, the soul occupies and governs the body through a sort of agential intention – a stretching forth, as it were, in care for the body as a means of action (*ego enim ab anima hoc corpus animari non puto, nisi intentione facientis*, *mus.VI.9; cf. also an. quant. 71*).136

The soul ebbs and flows in her intentional interaction with the body and, in so doing, lends life and sense and image-laden cognition to her charge (*an. quant. 70-73; mus. VI.9*). Plotinus describes sensation, though not animation, in terms of an upswing and downswing of the soul (*Enn. IV.4.18-19*). Also like Plotinus, Augustine finds agency unidirectional in all these movements.137 Soul acts upon body, but body never acts upon soul (*mus. VI.9*). Thus conceptual influence is likely, but the Augustinian alteration is telltale.138

For Plotinus, the soul only senses and acts through intentional interaction (*Enn. IV.4.18-19*). Mere animation requires no agential intention (*Enn. IV.3.13; cf. also *Enn. III.8.3, 4*). The soul’s awareness is free to traverse the various levels of soul and thus

136 Cf. continuous, yet later, account in *ep.166.4*


Although, O’Daly, Gerard J. P. 1987. *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*. Berkeley: University of California Press., ch.3, rightly protests the assumption that an active theory must be derived from Plotinus, for all the ancient schools outside the Epicureans held to an active theory sensation.
ascend unimpeded to its own, unfallen place with Intellect. However, Augustine’s animal bodies are animated by the agential intention of animal souls (ego enim ab anima hoc corpus animari non puto, nisi intentione facientis, mus.VI.9). Evidently the soul’s animation requires some agential focus in Augustine, because Augustine’s post-Edenic soul is wholly descended.

And Augustine uses a range of terms to describe this activity of soul from different perspectives. When viewed from the angle of the soul’s relation to body, this ebbing and flowing is named procession and recession (an. quant. 55). The soul moves out into the body (ord.1.3) and then pulls back, only to repeat the process again (mus.VI.24).

When this is viewed from the vantage of the soul’s relation to herself, the activity is called dispersion and collection (an. quant. 70, lib. arb. II.41). By attuning her attention and stretching toward the realm of things bodily, the soul diffuses and scatters outward from her relative unity (ord. II.43, an. quant. 33, ep. 7.2, gen. adu. Man. II.29). As she pulls back from the multiplicity of body, the soul purges herself of external dirt and gathers her fragmented bits together, thus approximating her original unity (an. quant. 71). This is collection (ord. I.3, lib. arb. II.41).

When the soul’s self-dispersion is viewed, not from the angle of her self-relation, but in terms of the resultant effects upon the body, a paradox emerges (an. quant. 70). The diffusion of the higher is simultaneously the collection of the lower. By scattering herself downward into the body, the body is thereby drawn up and collected into a relative unity (an. quant. 70).

This ebb and flow is recapitulated on various levels to explain the soul’s array of activities within the body. The most basic activity is the very tempering of the body into
a living unity. By pouring herself into matter, the very admixture, as it were, collects thefour constituent elements into a complex unity (an. quant. 70). Thus the soul lends form
to the body (imm. an. 24). She orders and sustains the vital motions of the body, such as
breathing, chewing and digesting, according to rhythms of rational number (mus. VI.20).
Soul does not set these activities in motion by any crassly physical means. Rather, she
moves the body in the same way she occupies it, by intention rather than bulk (an.
quant. 30). In her Edenic body, such activities would be conducted without any
diversion of awareness at all (gn. adu. Man. I.29; II.15; cf. Enn. III.8.3, 4; IV.3.9; IV.3.13).
Under conditions of relative health, the fallen body also carries out these motions
without requiring much straining of the soul’s attention (mus. VI.13). But Augustine
thinks some measure of agential intention must be present in post-Edenic animation
(mus. VI.9), only in the resurrection will the body again require none of the soul’s
attention (mus. VI.13).

The second level of governance is sensation (an. quant. 71). Sensation is the
action by which the soul, in her procession, takes notice of some passion the body is
undergoing. Actually, Augustine’s language is more peculiar. Commentators have long
noted the oddity of Augustine’s theory of sensation.139 Passion, to a modern mind,
seems the most obvious category for one’s sensing. And so it was to the Epicureans
(Lucretius, nat. rerum 4.722-822; Diogenes Laertius X.46-53). But Augustine cannot

and the Life of Man’s Body in the Early Dialogues” Augustinian Studies 3, pp.131-146;
O’Connell, Robert J. 1968. St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Man, A.D. 386-391. Cambridge,
Mass: Belknap Harvard., ch. 5; Nash, Ronald H. 1969. The Light of the Mind; St.
Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky., ch. 4; Miles,
ch. 1.; O’Daly, Gerard J. P. 1987. Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind. Berkeley: University of
California Press., ch.3;
stomach the idea of things lower and bodily acting directly upon an entity so superior as
the soul (cf. his earlier train of thought in ord.II.6). Instantiating his hesitation,
Augustine defines sensation as the soul “not being unaware” (non latere) of the body’s
passion (an. quant. 41; 48; mus. VI.10&11). Plotinus uses a similar periphrasis in
describing the soul’s awareness of pain (περιλαμβάνων δὲ δηλονότι τοῦτο σημαίνει,
ὡς ὄνομα μετὰ τοῦ μὴ λαθεῖν τὴν ὄνομα τὴν αἰσθησίαν., Enn. IV.4.19, 25, emphasis
added).

Action as Temptation and Time as Mutation of Active Soul

Thus Augustine and Plotinus highlight the (relative) freedom and agency of the soul
over against the body’s passivity in sensation (an. quant. 41; 48; mus. VI.9-11). At
bottom, the soul is aware of the exterior world of bodily entities and causes herself to
feel their jostling for one reason. She wants to (mus. VI.10).

Augustine bemoans the state of the fallen soul. Misery stems from her
enthrallment to her own capacity to act upon the body. In this midpoint of acting by her
own resources upon the lower world, she experiences the affectively charged
sensations that bind her (mus. VI.9). Her body must be viewed as a tool through which
she intentionally acts and the byproduct of this engagement is sensation (mus. VI.9).
When the external world’s resistance yields to her intentional efforts through the body,
pleasure pours through the soul (uera rel. 72; mus. VI.9). When resistance frustrates, the
soul enacts pain within (mus. VI.9). The tragedy is that fallen soul prefers pleasure,

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140 So while the Stoics and Peripatetics also held to an active theory of sensation,
Augustine’s reasons for doing so here are distinctively Platonist.
through the overcoming of external resistance, to the healthful state of attentive contemplation wherein there would be no resistance at all (mus. VI.13).

**Epiphenomenon of Action: Inventing Soulish Temporality**

In the preceding period, even when pressed, Augustine found himself very uncomfortable talking about the soul as a temporal entity (an. quant 28-29, 34). For within his binary universe of the time, temporality suggested a sensible and not an intelligible mode of existence.¹⁴¹ Such a concession would have seriously disrupted his flight from Manichaeism. But now Augustine has distinguished mutability from the distinction between sensibility and intelligibility. And with the discovery of intentio beneath the soul’s failure of contemplation named action, the stage is clear for a further realization concerning the human soul.¹⁴²

Within Augustine’s three-tiered ontology, temporal mutability is the distinguishing mark of soul’s middle position in the cosmos (ep.18). God above is immutable. Bodies below change in time and place. But soul only changes in time (ep. 18). She experiences no spatial mutability. But what sort of change would temporal, non-spatial mutation comprise? Or, to be bolder, in what manner is temporal mutation registered in personal experience? How does the soul know when she’s doing it?

Augustine’s answer follows. Temporal, non-spatial mutation is experienced as emotional change (*mutari autem animam posse non quidem localiter, sed tamen temporaliter suis affectionibus quisque cognoscit, uera rel. 18*). The affections, by their

¹⁴¹ Cf. discussion in chapter 1 above
perpetual alterations, mark the soul as intrinsically temporal. The shifts of love and hate, attraction and disgust, entranced yearning followed by indifferent boredom all gesture toward the underlying nature of the soul as temporal (gn. adu. Man. II.7; uera rel. 18). These subjective alterations in affect are produced, in part, by the mutability of those things the soul sets her affections upon in external action (uera rel. 65). The very alterations in affection directly follow from the inevitable loss of a beloved object (uera rel. 65).

The clearest optic for this description in Augustine may be found in observing his account of the moment when soul transitioned from mutable to actually mutating. Of course, I refer to his account of the Fall from contemplative, spiritual existence in Eden (gn. adu. Man. II.20ff). Affective alteration, external action and experience of temporality are intertwined in his reading of the expulsion from the Garden. Paradise is not a place, for Augustine. Rather, Paradise is an affect of blessedness (gn. adu. Man. II.20) derived through full contemplative attention on God (gn. adu. Man. II.16). The affective blessedness of contemplation consequently held the primordial couple in eternity immune to time (uera rel. 38). Temporality, intentional action and mutable affectivity are convertible in Augustine’s mind of the period.

This is why the serpent is never described as “in Paradise” but only “among the beasts,” for the instrument of temptation could not enjoy the blessedness of stable contemplation (gn. adu. Man. II.20). Nonetheless, the serpent had access to the woman,

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143 Cf. ca. 394, s. Dom. m. I.35 - quibus peractis tamquam de paradiso, hoc est de beatissima luce iustitiae, in mortem homo expellitur
144 Cf. gn. adu. Man. II.7, “dies autem iste, cuius nomine uniuersum tempus significari diximus, insinuat nobis non solum uisibilem, sed etiam inuisibilem creaturam tempus posse sentire; quod de anima nobis manifestatur, quae tanta varietate affectionum suarum et ipso lapsu, quo misera facta est, et reparatione, qua rursus in beatitatem redit, tempore mutari posse conuincitur.” Also see s. dom. m. II.27 early in the next period.
notwithstanding his exclusion from Paradise, because her affective experience of
blessedness did not remove her spatially from his alluring voice (gn. adu. Man. II.20).
Eve and the serpent occupied the same spatial sphere simultaneously, but by reason of
differing affective experiences they were living in different times. So it is that in the Fall
humanity is expelled from Paradise into this age (ita homo de paradiso in hoc saeculum
expulsus est, uera rel. 38). With a change in affect, expressed through intentional
external action, humanity enters the realm of temporality (uera rel. 38).145

For Augustine, mutability is intrinsic to the nature of soul (ep. 18). But actual
mutation is not. Indeed, whether a soul actually experiences mutation through the
twisting and turning of her loves is wholly dependent on the objects of her love (mus. 
VI.14). For, she was created within a relational proximity to God that obviated her ever
needling to mutate. If she set her intentio only and always above in contemplation, the
soul would have been mutable, but never experience mutation. For the focal point of her
longing would be immutable.

Sequentiality of physical movement does not, however, constitute a sufficient
condition for temporality in Augustine (gn. adu. Man. II.15; cf. also Enn. IV.3.9-13; Enn.
III.8.3, 4). For emotional attachment to bodies, and not mere interaction with bodies,
drives the soul’s mutation. Edenic souls before the Fall would still have governed a
spiritual body, but would have unconsciously expressed perfect motions without any
descent into intentional action (gn. adu. Man. II.15; cf. also Enn. IV.3.9-13; Enn. III.8.3, 4)

145 Another way of naming the distinction is that eternal life surpasses temporal life
precisely in the intensity of life or vivaciousness of existence. And this form of life is
only accessible through intellection (aeterna enim uita uitam temporalem vivacitate ipsa
superat, nec quid sit aeternitas nisi intellegendo conspicio., uera rel. 97). Thus to leave
intellection in intentional action draws the soul out of eternity into temporality.
By turning to things below in action, the soul inevitably experiences emotional change, because the objects of her love dissolve and disappear (uera rel. 65). Places offer things to love, says Augustine. And times tear those things from the soul leaving turbulent phantasms in their place (loca offerunt quod amemus, tempora surripiunt quod amamus, et relinquunt in anima turbas phantasmatum, uera rel. 65). The distention of mind whereby the soul contorts herself through an aching for loves only remembered and wistful longing for desires not yet present is consequent to her fundamental choice to set her intentio on things below (lib. arb II.41).

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146 One might fairly ask if this act of turning, in Augustine’s estimation, is really the same as mere attention, in the minimal sense required for tying one’s shoes or doing the laundry. The philosophical distinction between providential governance of bodily motions (such as digestion, growth of hair and nails, etc...) and intentional action, which Augustine seems to borrow from Plotinus (Enn. IV.3.13; cf. also Enn. III.8.3, 4), does not clearly address the question of a possibly middling sort of intentionality.

Of course, our everyday experiences of absorptive attention would certainly be a manifestation of the soul’s turning for Augustine. When I am engrossed in a novel, or fixated on a theatrical performance or sprinting with laser focus to beat my time in the 100m dash – all this involves an absorption of self in the activity which forbids concurrent contemplation of God and indicates an emotional attachment to the end sought. In other words, our experience of absorption in activity, when viewed against the end of contemplating God, is not a manifestation of focus but of severe distractibility.

However, Porphyry seems to suggest a middling form of attention to action as practiced by Plotinus (uita Plot. 8.20; 9.17). During the entertainment of guests and attending to the mundane business of everyday life, Plotinus retained an everpresent contemplative engagement with himself in the background (uita Plot. 8.20; 9.17).

Nonetheless, we find no thorough incorporation of this middling state in Augustine and actually find him arguing against Julian’s use of it much later in life (c. iul. 5.5.20ff). Perhaps, Augustine’s antipathy to this distinction also turns on his notion of the fully descended soul and it’s anchoring from below? For secondary discussion of debate see, Sorabji, Richard. 2000. Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation. The Gifford Lectures. Oxford: Oxford University Press., pp. 409ff.

147 For a convincing chronological analysis of lib. arb. that attributes everything up to lib. arb. II.43 to this period, see Du Roy, Olivier. 1966. L’intelligence de la foi en la Trinite selon saint Augustin: genese de sa theologie trinitaire jusqu’en 391. Paris: Études augustinienes., pp 237-238. The remainder, by Augustine’s own account, was completed at Hippo.
Early in the next period, this immersion of the soul in time will be associated with the biblical language of Ecclesiastes – “vanity” describes the condition of amorous mutability (en. Ps. IV.3). One becomes a *uanitator* by loving temporal, mutable things (en. Ps. IV.3). The futility entailed therein is not native to the mutable natures themselves or to their sequential existence. For they fill providential niches perfectly and are thus good in their appropriate order (*uera rel. 41*). Futility arises from the soul’s *intentio* seeking fulfillment in goods lesser than God. The resultant affective oscillation between fixation and loss almost constitutes a corporalization of the soul (*uera rel. 28*).148

148 Affective we are by nature and affective we will remain (*aeterno enim creatori adhaerentes et nos aeternitate afficiamur necesse est, uera rel. 19*). But the affections when intentionally fastened to the immutable God become virtues (cf. *mus.VI.37 & 50*) and thus sources of stability, not of change (cf. later, *lib. arb. III.21*).

Also note, *imm. an. 3, gn. litt. inp. 16.59*, Constancy and stability seem to be cardinal features of *virtus* in the broad sense of both “power” and “virtue” for Augustine. See also the very late, *c. lul.4.20* for the inverse claim that inconstancy is vice.
**Phantasms: The Residual Stain of Action in the Soul**

In what sense does the affective mutation consequent to intentional action corporalize the soul? As the soul recedes into herself again following her ejaculation in bodily action, she inevitably carries with her a trace of her sense experience (*sol. II.34; mag. 39; mus. VI.32; lib. arb. II.23*). These affective vestiges of sense experience are called *imagines* – mental images (*mag.39*). But occasionally Augustine exploits the subtlety afforded by the twin Greek terms, φαντασίαι (phantasai) and φαντάσματα (phantasmata, *sol. II.34; mus. VI.32; lib. arb. II.23*).

*Phantasai* are the immediate result of sense experience – the well-defined initial stain, as it were, documenting the soul’s active engagement in the body’s passion (*mus. VI.32*). The very retention of such things bespeaks a dangerous interest in bodily action. And to consider them as known or certain brings one already to the brink of error (*quas pro cognitis habere atque pro perceptis opinabilis utia est, constituta in ipso erroris introitu., mus. VI.32*).

But these initial stains of bodily action tend to propagate new maladies for the soul. Phantasms are derivative images, patched together by the alteration and conflation of other images (*uera rel. 18; mus. VI.32*). They can be described as images of images (*tamquam imaginum imagine, mus. VI.32*). In comparison with the diffusive activity of sensation, the drawing together of diverse sensations into a unified mental image is considered an act of collection (*uera rel. 105*). Relative unity is produced from the multiplicity of external stimuli.\(^{149}\) However, phantasms should be considered failed

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\(^{149}\) N.B. the multiplicity, or shall I say disparity, of terms used to describe roughly the same phenomenon in Augustine’s writings of this period. E.g. *sensus interior* occurs only in one text of this period (*lib. arb. II.8-16*) and roughly corresponds in function to what
or perverse collections stemming from an over-engagement with bodily sensation (*mus. VI.32*).

The problem presented by these miscollected images is the way they take on a life of their own within our minds (*mus.VI.14; VI.32*). The initial stain, *phantasia*, possesses a residual capacity for self-motion in the memory bestowed through the emotional intensity of the always-active sensation (*motus igitur animae seruans impetum suum, et nondum extinctus, in memoria esse dicitur, mus. VI.14*). Indeed, the vividness and endurance of *imagines* are proportionate to the affective intensity lent to the original sensation. As a result, those forged through intense affective engagement continue to possess a capacity to move within us (*uera rel. 65; mus. VI.14*). And, without our intending, they can usurp our attention and recombine to produce novel images (*mus. VI.14*). The principle of combination seems to function through the attraction of like to like (*et cum in aliud intenditur animus, quasi non inest animo pristinus motus, et reuera minor fit, nisi antequam intercidat, quadam similium uicinitate renouetur, mus. VI.14*).

Augustine certainly considers these proliferating and mutating stains of action as a consequence of the Fall (*gn. adu. Man. II.30; II.41*). Thus full contemplative beatitude can only hold when our soulish bodies are transformed into spiritual bodies and these hybrid stains are obliterated from our memories altogether (*mus. VI.51; VI.52*).

For the soul at present, the phantasm presents a double-edged danger. On the skyward edge, these images may be easily mistaken for things intelligible (*mus. VI.32*; *are described as *occursores numeri* in *mus. VI.21*. For a genealogy of this halting evolution of terms, see Martino, Carla Di. 2000. “Il ruolo della *intentio* nell’ evoluzione della psicologia di Agostino: dal *De libero arbitrio* al *De Trinitate*” Revue des études augustiniennes., pp.173-198.*
VI.51; gn. adu. Man. II.30; uera rel. 40; 64; 95-101). One need only remember young Augustine’s failing attempts to imagine God’s omnipresence to sense the danger of this mistake (cf. conf. VII.1.1-2). Nonetheless, all of humanity slips into this practice since the Fall (gn. adu. Man. II.41). So one must assume that not only one’s own unconverted thoughts, but also social opinion generally, sinks its roots into phantasms (sequuntur autem nonnulli phantasmata sua tam praecipites, ut nulla sit alia materies omnium falsarum opinionum, quam habere phantasias vel phantasmata pro cognitis, quae cognoscuntur per sensum., mus. VI.32). External action reconfigures cognition and inhibits intellectual vision of God (mus. VI.32; VI.51; gn. adu. Man. II.30; uera rel. 40; 64).

On the earthward edge, phantasms constitute temptations to pursue further action (mus. VI.14; VI.32; uera rel. 40). They press us to pursue sense pleasure (mus. VI.14; VI.32; uera rel. 40). Mental images retain an unbridled dynamism proportionate to the delight the soul took in the acts by which they were impressed (mus. VI.14. VI.32). Likewise, the memory interacts involuntarily with one’s experience, automatically associating like to like (mus. VI.14). Whenever an element of one’s present experience bears a similarity to an element of one’s past stored in a memorial phantasm, that phantasm is brought to the surface. Hence, incidental similarities between memory and present experience (e.g. a certain scent, innocuous in itself, but present also in the memory of some carnal experience) may inflame and stir the residue of desire.

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150 The best account of this judgment is to be found in the twin articles by Teske, R.J., 1993. “Augustine, Maximus and Imagination” Augustiniana 43:27-41 and 1994. “Heresy and Imagination in St. Augustine” Studia patristica 27, pp. 400-404. Therein, Teske illustrates Augustine’s consistent and oft-repeated analysis of diverse heresies as rooted in a fundamental confusion between phantasms and intelligible realities. Heretics viciously cling to what they can imagine. Orthodoxy calls one to think what one cannot imagine.
triggering a flood of mental images. These images provoke the sensual habits and cause a sudden affliction of carnal desire (mus. VI.14; uera rel. 40).

**Ascetic Program: Negotiating the External Requirements of Learning**

Augustine’s basic ascetic project throughout this period is to uproot residual phantasms and thus free the mind from temptation to action and for contemplation of God in intelligible purity (mus. VI.32; VI.52; uera rel. 3; 65; 94-97). Given the state of our wholly descended souls, however, a pitfall is necessarily entailed in this project (gn. adu. Man. II.30; II.41). The inner spring, by which God once “spoke” directly to our understandings through pure presentations of truth, has dried up (gn. adu. Man. II.7).

Now we must turn to sensible things, namely exterior words, to find instruction in truth (et quoniam necessitate iam per hos oculos et per has aures de ipsa ueritate admonemur, gn. adu. Man. II.30). And yet the very process of attending to sensation is productive of phantasia and phantasms (et difficile est resistere phantasmatis quae per istos sensus intrant in animam, quamuis per illos intret etiam ipsa admonitio ueritatis, gn. adu. Man. II.30). Since these tend to distract and deceive us in our search for truth, the very act of textual learning inevitably contains within it seeds of temptation. Therefore, great labor is required to cultivate one’s mind so as to learn through human speech and writing while simultaneously uprooting the seeds of phantasms along the way (gn. adu. Man. II.30). Therein lies the spiritual sense of Adam’s sweating brow producing nourishment for the soul (in ista ergo perplexitate cuius uultus non sudet, ut manducet panem suum?, gn. adu. Man. II.30).

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151 *et quoniam necessitate iam per hos oculos et per has aures de ipsa ueritate admonemur, et difficile est resistere phantasmatis quae per istos sensus intrant in animam, quamuis per illos intret etiam ipsa admonitio ueritatis, gn. adu. Man. II.30*
From the Liberal Disciplines to Scriptural Contemplation

Obviously, Augustine’s interpretation of eating bread by the sweat of one’s fallen brow assumes that the received culinary-digestive metaphor complex lies back of the scriptural text (gn. adu. Man. II.30). But Augustine’s thought through this period evinces a decisive motion toward a more thoroughly ecclesial usage of this metaphor complex. To these developments, read in light of the alterations in his ascetic program, we now turn.

During this period, Augustine seems to occupy an oddly hybrid position in his ascetic program. As described in the previous chapter, Augustine’s earliest project strove to rise through the disciplinae liberales to intellectual vision of God (ord. II.35ff; retr.1.3). Within a few years, doctrina Christiana will usurp the introductory role of the disciplinae in Augustine’s ascetic program (doc. Chr.). But at this transitional phase, we find Augustine describing a twofold disciplina in scripture (mor. I.56) that constitutes not only nourishment but medicine for the ailing soul (mor. I.55).

Augustine again invokes the body-soul parallelism behind his earliest use of the metaphor complex (mor. I.52; cf. beata u. 7). But in the context of battling the Manichees, nourishment is too limited a goal. Now he conceives an analogy between bodily medicine and disciplina for the soul (mor. I.52). Minds so thoroughly entrusted to phantasms need radical healing. Of course, healing may include diet – prescriptions of

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152 Cf. ch.1 above for discussion of Augustine’s earliest usage and the philosophical patrimony behind it.
153 For the common place of the philosopher as a physician and philosophical argument and exhortation as medicine (or diet, surgery, cautery, etc...), cf. e.g., Plato, Gorgias 462Bff; Seneca, ep. 22.1; 27.1; 40.5; 50.4; 64.8; 72.5-6; 94.24; 95.29.
food and drink (mor. I.52). But the main point is to find in disciplina that which restores health to the mind (mor. I.55).

Augustine seems to allude to his earlier, rather involved and diffuse, plan to rise to contemplation through the liberal disciplines (mor. I.55). There is still value in it. We do indeed assist the mind with instruction (disciplina animo subuenimus, mor. I.55). But then Augustine signals a change in focus. There are other means by which the soul's varied diseases may be healed, namely, through a great infusion of ratio that outstrips speech (sunt uero alia, quibus multimodi variique morbi animorum magna quadam et prorsus ineffabili ratione sanantur, mor. I.55). And, for people so far gone in sin as the Manichees, only this God sent medicine can offer hope of salvation (quae medicina nisi diuinitus populis mitteretur, nulla spes salutis esset tam immoderata progressione peccantibus, mor. I.55).

The twofold disciplina in scripture corresponds to the primary divine strategy in the old and new testaments, respectively (mor. I.56). Although both testaments properly read contain both strategies (quamquam enim utrumque in utroque sit, praeualet tamen in ueteri timor, amor in nouo, mor. I.56). The first stage of disciplina is deterrence from acting on sinful impulses. This stage of the strategy manifests primarily in the old covenant (praeualet tamen in ueteri timor, mor. I.56) and employs fear of punishment as the deterrent (mor. I.56).

The second stage aims to instruct in love (mor. I.56). And this strategy becomes obvious primarily in the new covenant (praeualet tamen...amor in nouo, mor. I.56). Together the two testaments constitute the regula disciplinae (mor. I.56) that leads us to the twofold love of God and neighbor, which is the God given forma uiuendi for the church (mor. I.62).
Milk and Meat: Developing the Culinary Digestive Metaphor Complex

The twofold disciplina of scripture also maps onto specific forms of nutrition within the culinary digestive metaphor complex. The distinction between forms of teaching as milk and as meat, though not completely unattested outside Christian writings,¹⁵⁴ seems peculiarly adapted to ecclesial teachings.¹⁵⁵ At Cassicacum, Augustine never employed this peculiar distinction. Now Augustine develops it at length (an. quant. 76; mor. I.17; ¹⁵⁴ Philo is the nearest of kin among non-ecclesial writers. He utilized a contrast between milk and wheaten bread to describe appropriate training in the cycle of studies for the infant soul before moving on to the solid food of philosophy (de ag. 9; de congress. 14-19; prob. 160). Otherwise, no explicit usage of the distinction can be located among the philosophers. Epictetus reproaches people for refusing to be weaned and whining for their nanny instead of growing up (Diss. II.16.39; III.24.9). But the Stoics never develop an explicit distinction between milk and meat as forms of teaching.¹⁵⁵ Ecclesial usage of the milk and meat metaphor emerges in the New Testament and ab initio describes modes of growth within an embedded metaphor complex of new birth. The metaphorical neighborhood consists of the following interactive connections: The word or gospel is seed or sperm (Mk 4:1-20, 26-32; Matt. 13:3-35; Lk. 8:4-15; 1 Cor. 4:15; Philem. 10; Jam. 1:17-18; IPet. 1:23-24) that, when well-received, causes one to be sired again or generated again (Jhn. 1:13; 1 Cor. 4:15; Philem. 10; Jam. 1:17-18; IPet. 1:23-24) and this spiritual pregnancy issues in the birth of a spiritual infant in need of specially adapted moral and spiritual nutrition to grow (1 Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14; IPet. 2:1-3, cf. also Odes of Solomon 19). When fully grown, the initial seed and fodder manifests as a new self or new creation (Jam. 1:17-18; IPet. 1:3-2:3).

For Augustine the material content of milk and solid food are the same.\textsuperscript{156} Both refer to God's revelation of truth in scripture (\textit{gn. adu. Man. II.12}). The difference in nourishment lies in the varying degrees of intellectual processing required to make certain texts intelligible. Each one receives from the scriptures according to his capacity (\textit{mor. I.17}).\textsuperscript{157} Thus, as the self same text is read, one person sucks milk and another chews meat (\textit{mor. I.17; uera rel. 49}). So the primary distinction is no longer between public and esoteric teaching, respectively, as in the first and second century church.\textsuperscript{158}

Now milk and meat refer to the surface and the depths of scripture, respectively. Of course, expositions of scripture in a secondary sense can still offer milk or meat, depending on the penetration of insight verbalized (\textit{alimenta lactea large auidis pluribus atque instanter infundunt, ulidioribus autem cibis cum sapientibus paucis uescuntur}., \textit{uera rel. 51}).

So the milk of scripture, which is also the content of the milk of mother church, begins to annex the propaedeutic role of the \textit{disciplinae liberales} (\textit{an. quant. 76; mor. 156} The late \textit{textus classicus (Io. eu. tr. 96-98)}, spells out Augustine's case quite fully. However, this lengthy discussion seems to be in continuity with operative assumptions in his usage dating from his catechism onward. For a discussion of \textit{Io. eu. tr. 96-98} in light of ancient esotericism, cf. Stroumsa, Guy G. 1996. \textit{Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism}. Leiden: E.J. Brill., pp.132-146

\textsuperscript{157} In a much broader sense, this principle governed not only the milk and meat metaphor, but also the logic of God's economy in Irenaeus, cf. \textit{adu. haer. IV.38, 1ff}. Also, Behr, John. 2000. \textit{Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement}. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press., pp. 23-128.

In Augustine’s usage of metaphor, drinking as opposed to eating indicates an immediate internalization of the content without need for laborious ratiocination. Drink is already suited for immediate incorporation, but solid food requires chewing to become suitable for placement in the body.

In the present age, the milk of mother church enters the inner man directly by means of faith in authoritative teaching (an. quant. 76; mor. I.17; I.64). Thus the teachings received in the catechism, which are simply to be believed, are sustinence and milk from mother church (quam uera nobis credenda imperata sint quamque optime ac saluberrime apud matrem ecclesiam nutriti fuerimus quaeue sit utilitas lactis illius, an. quant. 76). We believe in the resurrection of the body, the incarnation and the virgin birth based on authority without any intervening processes of rational distillation (an. quant. 76). In so doing, we memorially internalize the aspect of truth already fitted to our soul without any intervening judgment and thus drink the milk of mother church (an. quant. 76; mor. I.17).

Likewise, the scriptures, under a certain aspect, provide milk for the spiritual infant (an. quant. 76; uera rel. 49; 51). Of course, Paul calls attention to the fact that he is dispensing milk (I Cor. 3:1-3). And Augustine takes note (an. quant. 76). But Augustine

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159 Note also, diuinum scripturarum consideratione et tractatione pascamus animum atque potemus… hoc uere liberali et ingenuo ludo salubriter erudiamur, uera rel. 100.
160 N.B. Augustine comes eventually to use liquid and drinking metaphors for sensation, because the internalization requires no intervening discursive processes, e.g. trin. XI.6; XI.13.
161 This assumption, operative already in this period, becomes explicit through an explanatory gloss a few years into the next period: nam fortasse propterea et panis dictus est non potus, quia panis frangendo atque mandendo in alimentum convertitur, sicut scripturae aperiendo et disserendo animam pascunt, potus autem paratus sicuti est transit in corpus, ut isto tempore panis sit ueritas, cum cotidianus panis dicitur, tunc autem potus, cum labore nullo disputandi et sermocinandi quasi frangendi atque mandendi opus erit sed solo haustu sincerae ac perspicuae ueritatis., s. dom. m. II.37.
also names the aspect of scripture that specifically depends on authority and is internalized by faith alone, namely, history (**uera rel. 49**). More specifically, the inner babe, not yet a man, is given to suckle at the breast of useful history (**primam in uberibus utilis historiae, uera rel. 49**). The babe extracts the nutriment of milk in the form of moral examples (**...quae nutrit exemplis., uera rel. 49**). All of this transpires through imbibing a literal reading of the text by faith in authority (**an. quant. 76; uera rel. 49**).

The metaphor of milk resonates with a peculiar notion of physical character tranference among the Romans.\(^{162}\) Two texts, available to Augustine, explicate underlying assumptions about father’s seed and mother’s (or nurse’s) milk transferring character to the neonate (Cicero, **Tusc. III.2**; Aulus Gellius, **Noct. Att. XII.1**). Aulus Gellius tells of accompanying the philosopher Favorinus to congratulate a certain senator whose wife recently gave birth to a son (**Noct. Att. XII.1, 1-4**). Favorinus is shocked to hear a plan circulating to employ a nurse, and urges the protagonist to allow the mother to be wholly and entirely the mother of her son by personally breastfeeding him (**Oro te... sine eam totam integram matrem esse filii sui, Noct. Att. XII.1,6**). For mother’s milk, much like paternal seed, has power to shape the body and rational soul in its likeness (**sicut ualeat ad fingendas corporis atque animi similitudines uis et natura seminis, non secus ad eandem rem lactis quoque ingenia et proprietates ualere, Noct. Att. XII.1, 14**).

To take a noble’s child, who was nourished by his mother’s blood **in utero** (**Noct. Att. XII.1, 6**), and subject him to the milk formed from a morally inferior woman’s blood would pollute his character (**Noct. Att. XII.1, 17**). Hiring a wet-nurse thus infects the
noble child with a pernicious contagion, namely the spirit of the worst class of people
(Patiemurne igitur infanatem hunc nostrum pernicioso contagio infici et spiritum ducere in
animum atque in corpus suum ex corpore et animo deterrimo?, Noct. Att. XII.1, 18).
Likewise, Cicero links this practice of wet-nursing with the very early perversion of
otherwise good character (Tusc. III.2). So the underlying Roman assumption is that
milk imbues character, good or bad, into the infant (quoniam uidelicet in moribus
inolestendis magnam fere partem ingenium altricis et natura lactis tenet, Noct. Att.
XII.1,20).

To Augustine’s mind at this time, internalizing the moral exemplars in scripture
begins the process of moral transformation that will lead away from action and end in
contemplation (an. quant. 76; uera rel. 49). The background linkage between character
formation and the milk imbibed draws special attention to the primary historical
exemplar Augustine found in scripture’s milk – the incarnation, virgin birth and other
miracles of the Son (qui ad exemplum salutis nostrae ac primitias a filio dei potentissimo,
aeterno, inconmutabili susceptum hominem eundemque natum esse de virgine ceteraque
huius historiae miracula, an. quant. 76). By internalizing these historical examples, one

163 For the larger context of Stoic doctrines of διαστροφή or peruersio in Cicero’s usage, cf. chapter 5 below
164 Of course, Augustine’s account of soul is thoroughly dematerialized. Nonetheless, his
capacity to use this metaphor of character transference through milk seems unhindered
as he plays off Cicero’s Tusc. III.2 in conf. III.8: et hoc solum me in tanta flagrantia
refrangebat, quod nomen Christi non erat ibi, quoniam hoc nomen secundum
misericordiam tuam, domine [Ps 24,7], hoc nomen salvatoris mei, filii tui, in ipso adhuc
lacte matris tenerum cor meum pie biberat et alte retinebat, et quidquid sine hoc
nomine fuisset quamuis litteratum et expolitum et ueridicum non me totum rapiebat.
acquires enough moral character to move toward contemplation where all action will cease.165

The spiritual infant takes the next step toward contemplation, when he no longer suckles moral exemplars from scriptural history but chews the text allegorically. Solid food is found in ratio alone (est omnis ratio, quae cibus est animae, gn. adu. Man. II.12). Since the specific shape of history cannot be reduced to universally valid axioms and propositions, one can only arrive at ratio by rising above history. Thus naïve assent to historical events based on authority can never provide solid food.

The meat of scripture is acquired through allegorical reading leading to rational understanding beyond human speech and mental images (gn. adu. Man. I.14; II.41; uera rel. 49). The first nibbles of solid food begin with figurative reading (uera rel. 49).166 Thereby we, like Paul, forget things human and stretch out towards divine things through seeking out the immutable laws of reason behind the history we initially received on authority (iam obliuscentem humana et ad diuina tendentem, in qua non auctoritatis humanae continetur sinu, sed ad summam et incommutabilem legem passibus rationis innititur, uera rel. 49).

165 Very early in the next period, this location of scriptural milk in history, including the incarnation, find reaffirmation: consulitur autem cum illi quoque nondum capaces cognitionis rerum spiritualium atque aeternarum, nutriuntur fide temporalis historiae, quae pro salute nostra post patriarchas et prophetas ab excellentissima dei uirtute atque sapientia etiam suscephi hominis sacramento administrata est, in qua salus est omni credenti, ut auctoritate commotus praeceptis inserviat, en. Ps. 8.5
166 Cf., Clement of Alexandria, paed. I.6 and strom. V.10, for a similar distinction. Catechetical milk and contemplative meat ultimately derive from the selfsame source, on Clement’s telling, because blood is simply liquid flesh and milk is blood boiled within the mother to render it more easily digested. The primary difference is that Clement does not theorize history as inherently milk-like because epistemically based on authority.
Of course, this requires the preparatory moral work, of submitting to authoritative commands received in the milk (salus est omni credenti, ut auctoritate commotus praeeptis inserviat, en. Ps. 8.5, early in next period but continuous). By being cleansed from phantasms and established in love, a person begins to attain the understanding and knowledge that constitutes solid food (en. Ps. 8.5). For the certainty of knowledge, which is solid food, can only pertain to things eternal (per quem in aliquum certum, quod esse nisi aeternum non potest, en. Ps. 8.6).

Augustine specifies how the attentive reader can rise from historical narrative to intellection of unchanging truth through allegorical interpretation (uera rel. 99). Allegorical interpretation, according to Augustine, explicitly follows the pattern of ascent in Rom. 1:20 (uera rel. 101). Having recounted the standard list of images from scripture that could not be literally Godworthy (uera rel. 99), Augustine asks a leading question (uera rel. 101). The body perceives all these images, and the soul is known to be better than the body (uera rel. 101). So wouldn’t one expect the soul to see things on its own, and wouldn’t those objects of intellectual vision be more excellent and altogether preeminent compared to bodily perception? (nihilne per se animus ipse conspiciet aut quod conspiciet potest esse nisi multo excellentius longeque praestantius?, uera rel. 101). Augustine’s programmatic answer follows.

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167 quibus purgatus unusquisque et in caritate radicatus atque fundatus possit currere cum sanctis, non iam paruulus in lacte, sed iuuenis in cibo, comprehendere latitudinem, longitudinem, altitudinem et profundum, scire etiam supereminentem scientiam caritatis Christi, en. Ps. 8.5
168 This early, favorable quotation of Rom. 1:20 is out of sync with Augustine primary usage in philosophical contexts, for a detailed account cf. chapter 6 below.
169 Augustine’s favorite little argument (ep. 3; 4) from Cassiciacum surfaces again, cf. discussion above in chapter 1.
Bodily perceptions, including those in scripture, require us to pass judgment upon them to establish their meaning (ue ra rel. 101). This decision implies the presence of some extra-sensory criterion of truth, for sensation itself cannot tell the difference between phantasm and direct sensation (diu. qu. 9). Thus the light of truth alone enables one to accurately name phantasms as false (ue ra rel. 64). But those sensual and image laden things we judge can be used as so many reminders prodding us to turn our minds toward the immutable laws or forms by which we judge (ue ra rel. 101). When we thus turn from sense image to immutable form, we see the invisible things of God through what has been made (ue ra rel. 101). For the intelligible light of form issues from God and all truly rational souls judge everything else according to God as the standard of truth (diu. qu. 30). So the soul’s intentional turn, from the realm of action and sense-derived images to intellectual contemplation, actually constitutes the return from temporality to eternity that refashions the new man out of the old (ue ra rel. 101). By rightly allegorizing the text, the convert leaves behind the temporality of intentional action for fully focused contemplation of the intelligible realm of God and therein finds an ever new, eternal life (ue ra rel. 101).
Summary Conclusion for Part I: Anthropology of Augustine’s Early Period

In the above analyses, we have followed the first crucial transformation in Augustine’s anthropology – from the fallen circular soul thesis to relapsed soulish bodies.

At Cassiciacum we witnessed a youthful enthusiasm for a still largely mythic account of the circular soul derived from a reading of Plotinus. Therein the soul was constitutively divine and indestructable but fallen into human bodies. The primary task of that soul was to escape the body and rise again to the heavens. However, the philosophical detail of Augustine’s Plotinian soul was riddled with contradictions. Augustine simply lacked the technical philosophic skills to make good sense of Plotinus’ mythic presentation. In attempting to make sense of the soul’s immortality, Augustine inverted the Plotinian thesis. Augustine’s soul descends utterly into foolishness but finds residual ontological stability in the lower part of rational soul.

After receiving the catechism, Augustine immediately dispenses with the divine, circular soul thesis. The soul is creature and thus temporally mutable. However, he still needed to untangle the relation of body to creaturely soul. In his earliest commentary on Genesis, we found Augustine pressed by scriptural affirmations to reconceive the Fall as something secondary to creation. Since the soulish man comes before the spiritual man, God originally created soulish or animal humans as body-soul compounds and then elevated them to spiritual existence, again body and soul. When pride induced them to act and thus fall, the body-soul compound fell to its originary lower level as a soulish body. So the lower level of soul provides the more basic ontological stability still, now within a more scriptural mythic presentation.
Augustine’s theory of human fulfillment, however, changes a bit less dramatically through this period. From beginning to end, beatitude is ultimately a matter of pure contemplation of intelligible reality. Action as such is nothing but distraction, though it may be a necessity to be endured and manipulated until contemplative fulfillment becomes possible.

The practical directives Augustine employs for progressively moving toward contemplative fulfillment change more significantly. While virtue ultimately only counts as a preparation for contemplative transcendence of activity, Augustine’s account of where virtue comes from and how to rise to contemplation alters significantly. At Cassiciacum the primary propaideutic for contemplation was training in the liberal disciplines. After his catechism, Augustine begins to consider the catechetical teachings and the moral exemplars of scriptural history as a more sure and powerful preparation for contemplation. And one finds initiation into intelligible contemplation more surely through allegorical interpretation of scripture than through the dialectical exercises of Platonic philosophy. While the role of liberal disciplines is not eradicated, scriptural milk and meat seem a surer means to contemplative fulfillment.

Finally, as Augustine seeks a psychological mechanism behind the primordial elevation, spiritual contemplation and the fall into action of the body-soul complex, we find the first indication that action may have a somewhat Stoicising explanation. In his early doctrine of *intentio* Augustine finds that a modified Stoic account of mental focus offers a conceptual tool to describe a single psychological mechanism behind contemplation and action. It remains only a hint of Stoic influence in this period, for Augustine’s account of fulfillment is fundamentally Platonic and he has little desire to
analyze action more closely. In the next period, however, Augustine will be catapulted into interpreting Jesus’ interest in action and the Stoic tools will prove very handy.
Part II

Augustine’s Priestly Discovery of Redemptive Action

Biographical Bridge

In the spring of 391, Augustine traveled to Hippo Regius in order to meet with an old acquaintance, an imperial agent, who was contemplating the assumption of a monastic life (cf. Possidius, utia III.3-5). Augustine hoped to found a monastery there in Hippo (s. 355.1-2) and orient its activities as he had the serui Dei gathered about himself in Thagaste.

Valerius, the aged Greek bishop of Hippo, conjured different plans, however. While the town was gathered in church, Valerius began to speak passionately concerning the great need of his church (utia IV.1). Soon all eyes were turned toward Augustine. While weeping over the loss of contemplative leisure, Augustine was forcibly ordained as priest of the church in Hippo (utia IV.2). Much against the custom of the African church, Augustine was almost immediately charged with the task of preaching, a function jealously guarded as sole privilege of the bishop. God had snatched him from the life of pure contemplation.

Soon after his ordination, Augustine wrote to Valerius pleading for time off to study the scriptures before resuming his duties in ministering the “sacrament and word of God” (ep. 21.3). Despite his literary productions and earlier criticism of priestly activism, Augustine now realizes his inadequacy for the task at hand and fears God’s judgment in shirking so great a calling. Notice the therapeutic philosopher present in
the pastor's plea. Specifically, Augustine pleads ignorance of all the medicaments of soul, which must be contained within the scriptures and seeks occasion to discover them (*ep.21.3*). Only thereby would Augustine’s soul and those of his charges be made healthy.

Valerius grants Augustine leave, and for several months Augustine immerses himself in the sacred texts. Three loci claim his attention during his study leave and continue through his resumption of preaching duties. First, judging from the bulk of questions recorded within his community at this period, Augustine turns to the gospels themselves (*diu. qu. 51-65*). Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount contains within it all the directives we need for life (*s. dom. m I.1*) and becomes the focus of Augustine’s earliest commentary from the gospels (ca. 393). Simultaneously, Augustine launched into his meditations on and explication of the Psalms. His sermons and outlined comments on *Ps.1-32* were completed within the first year of his pastorate. Finally, the writings of Paul increasingly captured his attention from the year 394 (note the shift in focus at *diu. qu.66ff*).

This sudden immersion in the holy texts led Augustine to an increasing commitment to the peculiar language of scripture. And his newfound devotion to the idiom of scripture directly results in one of the most important anthropological developments of Augustine’s priestly career – his invention of the heart. Nonetheless, alongside this baptism in scripture we find ever finely tuned incorporation of Stoic conceptualities in interpreting those scriptures.
**Chapter Itinerary for Part II**

The real focus of this middle section of our project, therefore, is Augustine's interwoven reading of scriptural accounts of action in terms of Roman Stoic psychologies of action, and his meticulous analysis of the Stoic theories in terms of scripture's teaching.

So in chapter three, we turn to Augustine’s discovery of Jesus’ teachings about the heart, his Stoicising reading of the heart and the detailed psychology of action the resulting concept enabled. All this transpires in the early priestly period, primarily between 391 and 394.

Then in chapter four, our focus will zoom in on the further anthropological developments in the later priestly period initiated by reading Paul from 394 to 396. Therein Augustine finds Paul drawing on and crucially altering Stoic concepts of the linkage between pre-passionate movements, assent and the actual impulse to action known as *voluntas*. As Augustine wrestles with Paul, a new anthropology of grace emerges in which the beginnings of faith constitute a passion. At the same time, we will find Augustine falling back on some old Stoic resolutions of the fate-freewill conundrum in order to articulate his new doctrine of election.
Chapter 3

Augustine’s Invention of the Heart:

Standing with Jesus between Plato and the Stoa: (Study Leave of 391-394)

Delineating the Heart: Discovering cor beneath intentio

Just as Augustine’s distinctive concept of *intentio* was coming into focus, Augustine found himself drawn to comment upon Jesus’ words in Matt. 6 (*mus.VI.29*). Therein Augustine discovers the biblical “heart” (perhaps with some imported Stoic and Platonic content) underlying and enriching his earlier, more phenomenological description of the originally Stoic *intentio*.

In this chapter I will trace the outlines of that invention. I am aiming at a diachronic account of the development of Augustine’s anthropology. So, in this chapter, I focus simply on the origins of his distinct notion of the heart, tracing the lineaments of interpenetration between biblical metaphor and earlier philosophical descriptions of *intentio*. Of course, Augustine makes much more of this concept in later writings. But I will primarily focus on Augustine’s texts from the priestly period.

Stoic Matrix of a Key Term: Intentio in Augustine

For the sake of conceptual clarity, I return to the Stoic background of Augustine’s language of *intentio*. In Stoic thought spiritual tension permeates all things and holds the cosmos together (*SVF II.450, 458, 459ff*). Within each living being, the basic states and functions are simply manifestations of various degrees of tension. From the
cohesion of stones to vegetative growth, the sensation and appetitive action of beasts and, finally, the rational judgment of human beings and god\textsuperscript{170}, escalating degrees of spiritual tension produce each act.

Of course, for the Stoic the emanating direction of spiritual tension always moves from the higher functions to the lower. And so, for instance, there is no cohesion within beasts except through the very tension expressed in their sensitive and appetitive actions. Likewise, all the lower functions of human beings are simply aspects of the spiritual tension centered in the \textit{ήγεμονικόν or principale}\textsuperscript{171} and physically located in the heart (\textit{SVF II.837; II.879-881; III, Diog. II.30}).\textsuperscript{172} The spiritual tension in human beings is most itself, one might say, as the rational governing power of the soul. But it morphs and extends itself in turn to produce the various tensions manifest in the eight parts of the soul\textsuperscript{173}, namely, the five senses\textsuperscript{174}, speech\textsuperscript{175}, procreation\textsuperscript{176} and the


\textsuperscript{171} This is best seen in their account of rational impressions. The Stoics claimed that all impressions (\textit{ἡ φαντασία}) are not of the same kind. Those of animals and infants are non-rational (\textit{ἄλογοι}). All impressions of an adult human, on the contrary, are rational (\textit{λογικαί}), inasmuch as they are intinctured with rational discursivity and have thought processes (\textit{νοησεῖς}) (\textit{SVF II.61.21-25}). This does not guarantee they will be rational in the normative sense, but one must be rational by nature before he can distort his nature in irrationality. What makes rational impressions distinct from non-rational is the entwined presence of the ‘sayable.’ A sayable is that which under-girds a rational impression. And a rational impression is one in which what has been impressed is presentable by speech (\textit{λέκτὸν δὲ ύπάρχειν φασί τὸ κατὰ λογικὴν φαντασίαν υφιστάμενον. λογικὴν δὲ εἰναι φαντασίαν καθ' ἕν το φαντασθὲν ἐστι λόγῳ παραστῆσαι \textit{SVF II.187.23-25}}).

\textsuperscript{172} N.B., however, the internal debate signaled in \textit{SVF III, Diog. II.33} where in a minority position held that the \textit{ήγεμονικόν resided in the head.}

\textsuperscript{173} The eight-member account of the soul is broadly attested in the surviving fragments. Cf. Aëtius in \textit{SVF II.827}, Diogenes Laertius in \textit{SVF II.828}, Porphyry in \textit{SVF II.830} and Iamblichus in \textit{SVF II.831}. 
*principale* itself. The *principale* completely controls and regulates all the subordinate forms of tension. In so doing, it does not lose its rationality but infuses all the lower functions with rationality.

The most basic, healthful expression of the tension within the ήγεμονικόν is named in later Roman Stoicism\(^ {177}\) as a deliberate awareness or alertness (προσοχή)\(^ {178}\),

\(^{174}\) Note how each of the senses are manifestations of tension. Concerning the visual rays, emitted by the eyes, cf., *SVF II.863* and Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att. IV.16,2.*

\(^{175}\) For the voice as *intentio aeris*, cf. Seneca, *Naturales Questiones II.6.3.*

\(^{176}\) So, Aëtius, *placula philosophiae* IV.21.4 = *SVF I.150* “τὸν δὲ λοιπὸν τὸ μὲν λέγεται σπέρμα, ὅπερ καὶ αὐτὸ πνευμά ἐστι διατείνον ἀπὸ τοῦ ήγεμονικοῦ μέχρι τῶν παραστατῶν” (emphasis added).


\(^{178}\) The fullest text addressing this activity is Epictetus’ *Diss. IV.12 – Περὶ προσοχῆς.* The same basic activity is described variously elsewhere under such terms as “following” or “attending” (παρακολουθέω *Diss.1.6, 12-22*) or as “stretching the mind” (τείνειν τὴν διάνοιαν *Ench.7*). Cf. also *Diss.III.16.15; III.22.105; IV.2.1; IV.3.7 and Ench.33.6*

However, this characteristic call to προσοχή certainly entered Roman Stoic thought through the early interactions of Panaetius. Aulus Gellius records the following gloss on Panaetius’ exhortations to deliberate self awareness given in light of the constant difficulties of human life. *Ad ea cauenda atque declinanda perinde esse oportet animo prompto semper atque intento, ut sunt athletarum, qui ‘pancratiastae’ uocantur…”* (*Noct. Att., XIII.28.3-4*, emphasis added). I also take Seneca’s calls to asidua obseruatio in resisting the onslaught of prepassions (e.g. *De i ra II.4.2*) to be a continuation of this characteristic posture of Roman Stoicism.
which is itself productive of further psychic tension. This effort infused self-awareness provides the psychic foundations upon which all other forms of spiritual exercise build.

In his fullest treatment, Epictetus describes deliberate self-awareness as consisting of two practically inseparable, but logically distinguishable, activities. First, one must keep the fundamental precepts ready at hand (ἔχειν πρόχειρον). Thus the mind’s basic tools will always be accessible and the state of the soul in relation to those diagnostic tools will continuously be monitored (Diss. IV.12.15). Second, one must stretch the soul tautly toward the mark (τετάσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν ἐπὶ τοῦτον τὸν σκοπὸν) which those precepts define (Diss. IV.12.15). Especially vigilant self-awareness is called for in settings where moral missteps are more difficult to avoid. On such occasions, “let your awareness be stretched taut within you” (ἐντετάσθω σοι ἡ προσοχή Ench.33.6).

So deliberate alertness, in Roman Stoic thought, is a dispositional configuration of tension peculiarly appropriate for rational beings. By a twofold process of self-monitoring vis-à-vis consciously retained precepts and intentional engagement with or striving for those moral goals, the principale possesses itself in awareness. Thus self-


Notice Epictetus’ analogy for deliberate self-awareness and its pervasive practice amid quotidian activities, “Just as on a voyage, when your ship has anchored, if you should go on shore to get fresh water, you may pick up a small shellfish or a little bulb, but you have to keep your attention fixed on the ship (τετάσθαι δὲ δὲ τὴν διάνοιαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλοῖον) and turn about frequently for fear least the captain should call. And if he does call you must give up all these things and run...” (Ench. 7). One must exercise self-awareness to maintain the tension necessary for sudden, positive action.

Thus, προσέχειν σευντό (“pay attention to yourself”) sums up the whole of the philosophic life and names how Socrates became what he was (Ench. 51.1-3).
awareness is a form of tension most appropriate to rational beings, which produces further, healthful tension.

**The Heart in Augustine: Zone of Self-Aware Engagement in the Present**

Augustine, too, has a way of speaking about self-aware engagement in the present – he calls this dynamic the heart. The heart, for Augustine, is a zone of self-presence and conscious engagement with other things. And its primary act is to produce and direct the soul's *intentio*.

In his earliest writings, the distinctive concept of heart is simply absent. The pivotal role of *intentio* is everywhere, but prior to his ordination to the priesthood in 391 the conceptually thick language of the heart is nowhere to be found.¹⁸¹ However,

¹⁸¹ Anyone searching the very early, philosophical texts of Augustine in pursuit of anthropological formulations will not find the heart playing any distinctive role. This partially explains the surprisingly scant attention given to the heart in philosophical accounts of his anthropology. Indeed, I know of no standard account that includes an analysis of the heart as a conceptually distinct dimension of Augustine’s anthropology.


Philip Cary’s wonderfully suggestive work on the origins of Augustine’s notion of a private inner self, Cary, Phillip. 2000. *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: the Legacy of a Christian Platonist*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, likewise shows no awareness of a distinctive role for the heart. On pp49-51 Cary discusses the notion of “Christ in the Heart” but does not consider the heart as anything beyond a general synonym for the “inner man.”
with his priestly efforts to comment upon scripture, the concept of the heart emerges with a surprising fullness and complexity *ab initio*.\textsuperscript{182} In fact, its very fullness and evident intertwining with earlier notions of *intentio* cause one to suspect Augustine’s initial usage is drawing upon prior resources. But, for the moment, that can only remain a suspicion.

As we turn to the conceptual shape of the Augustinian heart in its earliest expression,\textsuperscript{183} we find important similarities with the Stoic notion of self-awareness and its relation to psychic tension. The clearest way to distinguish this shape of the heart is by a series of conceptual triangulations with other psychic entities found in Augustine’s anthropology.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{182} The central text for analyzing the origins of Augustine’s usage is *s. dom. mon.*, especially book II.
\end{flushright}
**Heart, Mind and Memory: Pre-differentiated, Multi-Modal Psychic Entities**

Three psychic entities – heart, mind and memory – stand out in Augustine’s thought as alike in one crucial way. Anthropologically, each of these entities is manifestly expansive and complex in function. That complexity is seen in the way events of heart, mind and memory are susceptible to further analysis into intellective, affective and volitional aspects. In this sense, the density and extensiveness of the heart, mind and memory result from the pre-differentiated state of these entities within the self.

Two clusters of metaphor, used in quasi-technical ways, highlight the pre-differentiated density of these psychic entities and shed significant light on the similarities and differences between them in Augustine’s thought.

**Spatio-Locative Metaphors**

The first cluster of metaphors Augustine employs consists of locative or spatial metaphors. These highlight the commonalities between our three concepts. Spatial metaphors have a peculiar utility in addressing the pre-differentiated complexity of heart, mind and memory because they provide an intuitively accessible way to speak of the simultaneity and interrelation of irreducible psychic events. Augustine never

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184 E.g. *s. dom. mon. I.34*, *consentire* is, for Augustine, both an act of the heart and of reason. Likewise, *mens* both desires and judges by intellect *sol. II.35*; *ratio est mentis motio*, *ord. II.30*; *pravitas voluntatis* is in the *mens, mor. II.1*; *mens* contains both acts of knowing and desiring, *lib. arb. II.26*; for further modal subdistinctions within *mens* see also *uera rel. 62*; *diu. qu. 51.4*.

For the memory as containing acts distinguishable into intellective, affective and sensitive modes, *ord. II.41*; *lib. arb. I.19*; *an. quant. 8*; *mus. II.5*.

speaks of the “room” of intellect, or “fields” of affect, or “courts” of the will. For these terms name differentiated aspects of the self and lack the inclusive complexity characteristic of heart, mind and memory.

In contrast, Augustine first indentifies the heart as an interior room (en. Ps.3.4, s. dom. m. 2.11, s.50.7) or temple (en. Ps.4.6, s. dom. m. I.27) where God deigns to make himself present to the self. Distinguishable intellectual and affective acts fill this inner space with allegorical objects and motions. The altar refers to sincerity of faith because this rational affect props up and forms the acceptable ground for all gifts offered to God (s. dom. m. I.27). Leaving the altar and going for forgiveness is not prescribing bodily motion. Rather, a movement of the affections concerning one’s brother and a sign of humility betokens an inner change (s. dom. m. I.27). Other forms of affective alteration, such as joy or sorrow, refer allegorically to expansion or constriction of the temple itself (cf. en. Ps. 4, 2 and 6; for later consistent accounts, see conf.1.1-5, en Ps.118.10.6; en. Ps. 118.11.1; qu. 2.107; loc. 5.19). The spatiality of the underlying metaphors provide a...
picture of the self as a clearing within which complex and overlapping, one might even say messy, activities transpire.\textsuperscript{189}

Although the references are not so numerous, Augustine also considered spatial metaphors appropriate for describing the activities of mind and memory. The \textit{mens} is referred to both as an inner room and as an inner temple (\textit{mag.2}). Early in the next period (ca. 399-400), Augustine will describe the \textit{mens} as an interior \textit{domus} (\textit{qu. eu. 2.41}).\textsuperscript{190} The famous descriptions of \textit{memoria} as fields and palaces, filled with caves and caverns and treasuries, occur only in \textit{conf. X.12&26} at the beginning of the next period.\textsuperscript{191} However, the metaphorical spatiality of memory seems to follow naturally from that of mind and heart. If mind and heart require spatial metaphors by reason of the complex interrelations of their activities, surely memorial traces of those moments would exhibit a similar complexity at least some of the time.

\textsuperscript{189} Lest I seem to be invoking Heidegger on the sly, allow me to clarify. My choice of the term "clearing" rests solely on finding it the best generic term to encompass the diverse spatial metaphors Augustine employs such as house, room, temple, field, etc… Fascinating as Heidegger’s much-discussed concept of \textit{Lichtung} may be, Augustine has his own metaphorlic sense of the self as a clearing, which I will seek to explore philologically.

If I might risk one suggestion as a dabbler in another’s business, I would suggest scouring Heidegger for indications of initial conceptual derivation from Augustine. His adoption of the notion of care while lecturing on Augustine and Neoplatonism during the summer semester of 1921 is well documented, e.g. Kisiel, Theodore. 1993. \textit{The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time}. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press., pp.149-220. The coincidence of spatial metaphors for the self might not be accidental.\textsuperscript{190} Allegorical interpretations of \textit{domus} as referring to \textit{cor} are thick in \textit{en. Ps.} as a whole. One could begin with \textit{en. Ps. 30.2,3,4&8} and proceed.

\textsuperscript{191} Indeed, detailed reflections upon memory’s contents (aside from the dangers posed by its retention of phantasm) and accounts of the metaphorical structure of memory really only emerge in the next period. The metaphors for heart are found already in our present period and continue consistently into the next. So our metaphorical comparisons, engaged in for the sake of conceptual clarity, do entail a slight measure of chronological transgression. \textit{Mea culpa, mea culpa}...
Of the three entities, *mens* is clearly the name for the totality. While *cor* and *memoria* share the multi-modal complexity of *mens*, they are differentiated from the psychic totality in one crucial way. We will consider that differentiation alongside the next metaphor complex. But first we need to point to a special distinction of the *mens*.

**Mens and the Fragility of God’s Image in Human Beings**

A handful of crucial passages, penned during Augustine’s priestly period, locate the image of God within the *mens.* Well, that is not quite accurate. In his earliest statement during this period, Augustine says human beings were made “to the image and likeness of God” but that was destroyed by their sin (*homo enim factus est ad imaginem et similitudinem dei, quam peccando corrupit – en. Ps. 4.8*). The human person is not exactly the image of God, but made to approximate the image and is capable of losing correspondence. This notion that the approximate image of God in humanity could be destroyed is connected to a few other features of Augustine’s teaching. But the claim itself will be consistent until the beginning of the Pelagian controversy in 412.

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About a year later, Augustine specifies the location of the approximating image within human beings as the mens, which he also names as the principale (Gn. litt. inp. 16.60). The overtones of Stoic anthropology are unmistakable. However, the image itself, toward which the human mind is crafted, also receives an explicit designation here. The Son, who is Truth, is the image of God. The human mind was created to stretch toward his truth. The mind’s imaging of God is thus conditioned by proximity to Truth. No other nature need mediate that relationship (Gn. litt. inp. 16.60; diu. qu.51.2). Herein lies the meaning of our creation ad imaginem dei.

The proximity to Truth, which constitutes our participation in the image of God, also explains its corruption by sin. Augustine makes this implication explicit in the context of his refutation of the Manichee, Adimantus. The statement that humans were created ad imaginem et similitudinem dei was made before they sinned, says Augustine (c. Adim.5.1). Because sin corrupted the image, human beings are now found ad imaginem dei only by means of spiritual renewal (cf. Col. 3:11-12). The very language of renewal, Augustine notes, implies the prior loss of the image, which had been displaced by the habit of sin (c. Adim. 5.2).194

Culinary-Digestive Metaphors and Self-Aware Engagement

The second cluster, culinary-digestive metaphors, provides a means of distinguishing these pre-differentiated, multi-modal psychic entities. While the spatial metaphors

provide ways to speak of the simultaneity of irreducible psychic events, the culinary-digestive metaphors specifically highlight presence and absence of self-aware engagement in various sections of the self. These metaphors are expansive and rich in themselves, but for our purposes a partial delineation is sufficient.

When he seeks to describe the interrelations between what is inside and what is outside the self, Augustine frequently employs a cluster of metaphors, which picture the self as a vast digestive system. The parts of the self are reliably apportioned distinct functions within that process of eating and digesting. The heart is consistently named as the “mouth” in this system (ep. 19, mend. 34-37, cont. 2-5). At the beginning of the next period, the memory is contrasted as “quasi uenter animi” (conf. X.21). And thus it remains (cf. c. Faust.6.7, cat. rud. 22, en. Ps.59.1; 141.1, trin.12.23).

Among other functions, taste and speech demarcate the temporally present engagement of the heart from their residual effects in memory. Thus the heart stands out from the memory as being the leading edge of the self in the present. The heart engages, both in the affective receptivity of taste and the expressivity of speech, while the memory retains traces of that engagement in the heart’s absence.

The passage from present engagement to memorial retention typically results in a gradual detachment of affective and cognitive aspects of the retained experience. Thus, Augustine notes, the retained memory of an excruciating toothache does not produce pain. Indeed, one can even recall moments of past sorrow with joy now, or moments of bygone bliss with sadness in the present (conf. X.21). Metaphorically, this process of dissolving and reordering the inner connections between affect, image and concept can be thought of as digestion.
Obviously, the contents of now absent engagements are not irrevocable. Thus the heart, through recall (significantly, recordari), can partially merge with memory for a spell. This act of bringing memorial retentions into present awareness, so as to again experience some entwined cognitive and affective engagement with them, is called ruminatio and amounts to tasting again the contents of the stomach (conf. X.22). The distinction between memorial absence and the self-presence of the heart is highlighted by a metaphorical equivalence occasionally substituted by Augustine. The mouth of the heart may also be named as the os cogitationis in distinction from the stomach of memory (conf. X.22, c. Faust.6.7, en. Ps.59.1). Thus the present churning of thoughts stands in as a rough, intellectually tinged equivalent for the self-present engagement of the heart.

**Determinative Impulses and their Sources: Heart, Habit and Will**

A second triage of terms relate to various modes of determinative impulse to action in Augustine’s thought. To attain a clear understanding of Augustine’s emerging conception of the heart in this period, we need to demarcate the interrelation between three sources of determinative impulse to action.

The most general complex of terms used centers around voluntas, appetitus and impetus, which can be applied to any determinative impulse to action whatever. That

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196 The literature that has grown up around the ambiguities of Augustine’s usage of voluntas is thick and, like Augustine’s usage, often convoluted. Among those who have attended to the genetic connections between Stoic ὀρμη and Augustinian voluntas, a few are worthy of special mention. Gauthier, René-Antoine. 1970. *L’Ethique a Nicomaque I.1*. Louvain: Publications Universitaires, sees Augustine’s usage as merely recapitulating
impulse might be the whim of the moment or a dispositional bent\(^{197}\) of the person in a given direction. It might be rational or a purely corporeal drive. Regardless and irrespective, \textit{uoluntas} and her rough equivalents cover all determinative impulses to action.

Augustine’s usage has a philosophical prehistory. Cicero, when translating the technical language of the Stoic psychology of action, tended to use \textit{uoluntas} to gloss the eupathetic impulse, βούλησις,\(^{198}\) (\textit{Tusc. IV.12}) or the broader term for moral choice, προσερεσίς (\textit{De fat. IX.23, de or. II.22f}). \textit{Appetitus} (\textit{Acad. II.24; fin. III.23, IV.39, V.17, etc...}) and \textit{impetus} (\textit{Off. II.11}) typically translate ὀρμή, the generic term for a determinative impulse to action in Stoic thought. However, Cicero does not consistently reserve \textit{uoluntas} for use as a term of art. Rather, spontaneous desires and rational impulses alike are sometimes named by the same word (\textit{Tusc. IV.34; IV.82; V.5}).\(^{199}\) Of course,

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198 Later, Augustine too would use \textit{uoluntas} to translate the category of εὐπαθεία named βούλησις (cf. \textit{cit. XIV.8}). But his late, semi-technical usage in \textit{cit.} is not typical of Augustine general practice at this time. Like Cicero he is rarely consistent in use of technical terms.

Cicero’s purpose was not to translate word for word (even assuming such a task to be possible). He wanted to Latinize, beautify and ultimately replace the Greek thinkers he called upon (Tusc. I.6-8).200

The variability of Cicero’s usage is matched by the vagaries of Seneca’s. One thing is clear. *Voluntas* does not translate one specific Greek term in his writing. Rather, it is used mostly in the colloquial senses ranging from wish to considered desire, willingness or intention.201

Classical Stoic usage acknowledges both dispositional and occasional forms of impulse or ὀρμή. Something very similar is at work in Augustine’s thought. The very distinction between dispositional and occasional impulse permits an ambiguity basic to Augustine’s anthropological thought. *Voluntas* typically follows upon the act of consent (e.g. *lib arb* III.75; *s. dom. m. II*.9, etc…) and, if unimpeded, issues in action. However, when pressed for the reason one consented in the first place, Augustine will respond by referring back to an underlying *voluntas* as its source (e.g., *lib. arb. III*.29; *uera rel. 28; duab. an. 18). *Voluntas*, it seems, is both prior and posterior to the act of consent.

The tacit distinction, which makes this conundrum intelligible, is that between dispositional impulses to action and occasional impulses.202 These flow from two

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distinguishable sources in the self, which are potentially in conflict with each other. To identify the sources and the possibility of their conflict, we must now turn to a consideration of heart and habit in relation to determinative impulses to action.

**Basic Act of Heart is to produce intentio**

The most basic act of the heart is to produce spiritual tension, but that tension produces a cascade of effects. This is best seen in Augustine’s comments on Jesus’ words concerning adultery in the heart (s. dom. m. I.33-35; cf. also util. cred. 33). Such is Jesus’ designation for the act of looking on a woman in order to lust for her. Augustine’s gloss makes explicit the connection between intention and heart – “id est hoc fine et hoc animo adtenderit” (s. dom. m. I.33). The act of stretching out in a certain spirit and toward a certain end implies assent or consent in the hidden recesses of the heart (s. dom. m. I.34). Given sufficiently convenient conditions, action inevitably follows upon consent. The chain of effects stretches from the heart’s intention, through an act of judgment, to the resultant bodily action.

This complex of activities (tension, judgment, action) is common to Augustine’s notion of the heart and the Stoic’s understanding of the spiritual tension amplified through self-awareness. The Old Stoics said it this way.

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203 Augustine betrays awareness of this ambiguity in diu. qu. 40, and in this particular passage chooses to reserve *voluntas* for dispositional impulses resulting from habit, *appetitus* for the first movement resulting from a presentation, *adipisci* for the occasional impulse to action. *ex diuersis uisis diuersus appetitus animarum, ex diverso appetitu diuersus adipiscendi successus, ex diverso successu diversa consuetudo, ex diuersa consuetudine diuersa est uoluntas*, diu. qu. 40.
Just as bodily strength is sufficient tension in the nerves, so strength of soul is sufficient tension in the acts of judging and acting or refraining (SVF I.563).

The silent linkage in this succession is supplied by an understanding that consent, in the act of judgment, issues immediately and inevitably in a determinative impulse to action. Likewise, should the principale dissent from the content of the presentation this would result in refraining from acting.

The judicial act of consentire is at once an act of reason, in Augustine’s description, and an act perpetrated by the heart (s. dom. m. I.34). Consent goes before any action and gives rise to it. The judicial act unifies the inner tension of the heart in a given course of action. Thus, consent produces voluntas or appetitus as a determinative impulse to action (lib arb III.75; s. dom. m. II.9).

Augustine insists that the heart’s act of consent must be carefully distinguished from the suggestions and titillations stirred by any phantasm or sense impression (s. dom. m. I.34). Likewise, the surge of appetitive desire preceding consent must not be conflated with the act of consent.204 Moral weight rests solely on the heart’s judgment

204 Augustine’s analysis maps onto an Old Stoic distinction as transmitted through the permutations of Origen and the Desert Fathers (cf. Sorabji, Richard. 2000. Emotion and Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation. The Gifford Lectures. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 343-384). The key distinction is the difference between passions as false judgments and prepassions or first movements as non-voluntary motions preceeding said judgments. For a thorough analysis of Stoic passion as false judgments in contrast to initial contractions or expansions, felt in the chest or
Only when the heart decides it would act thus given sufficiently convenient conditions has consent been granted. At this point, even looking can be adulterous, for underneath the purposeful look is an intention to inflame lust. And that presupposes consent. This much any Roman Stoic could have taught, albeit without employing Jesus’ language of the heart.

There is one crucial difference, however, to which we will return below in greater detail. But some mention of it must be made now. The criterion of correct judgment – assenting or dissenting from appearances – has changed radically and in two ways.

First, the consent granted, according to Augustine, is to the pleasure accompanying the suggestion or titillation, not to the propositional content of the presentation. This concern with the accompanying feelings, and not just with the conceptual content being judged, sets Augustine apart from Classical Stoicism and identifies him as holding some affinity with those, such as Posidonius, who acknowledge irrational powers of the soul.

Second, for the Stoic there is no such thing as external goods or evils. The only good is in a tension-guarded self-hood consistent with cosmic reason. But Augustine lives in a cosmos created good from top to bottom. Thus externals are good too. All of stomach, which provide the occasion for false judgments see ibid, pp29-54. Stoic first movements are bodily, not conceptual.

The Christian permutation is to consider first movements as primarily mental, rather than bodily phenomena. For the precursor to passion is not a swelling of corporeal soul felt in the stomach, but mental suggestions or even momentary doubts making one susceptible to suggestion. Cf. Byers, Sarah. 2003. “Augustine and the Cognitive Cause of Stoic Preliminary Passions (propatheiai)” Journal of the History of Philosophy XLI.4 pp433-48
them are. So the question a proper judicial act of heart must answer is more nuanced. Namely, “is this a temporal good or an eternal good?” (s. dom. m. I.34, II.9 & 39).

To answer that question, Augustine’s intentio must reach beyond judging the propositional content of a phantasm and even assessing its concomitant affective texture. Rather, Augustine’s intentio must constitute a new and alternate form of apprehension in itself. But first we need to position the impulse to action, which flows from the heart’s intentio, in relation to an alternate source of determinative impulses within the Augustinian self.

**The Alienation of the Impulse to Action in Habit**

The heart is the leading edge of the self as it engages the world. But not all of life is lived within its bounds. Much of human life transpires below the radar of self-conscious engagement. The depths possess their own dynamism and produce their own impulses. Sometimes those impulses take the heart by surprise in their eruptions and the person finds herself saying or doing things of which her heart disapproves (e.g. c. Fort.22).

While the heart may disapprove now, prior enacted intentions stand behind the creation of those unruly impulses. Indeed, consistent acts of the heart result in the sedimentation of habit (mus. VI.13-14; 38). Anything engaged in repetitively will create a patterned dynamism in the self that is known as habit (mus. I.10). Thus, the impulse to action is gradually alienated from the heart through habituation. Habit, once formed, no longer requires the heart’s permission to set itself in motion.

Though present, self-aware commitments may be violated by a habitual impulse, habit nonetheless provides a quite accurate diagnostic of one’s diachronic loves (si animaduerteris quibus rebus maxime animum soleamus intendere et magnum curam
The residue of our affective stretching produces a sedimented weight of habit configured in the often-conflicted shape of our various loves.

Habit and memory are not separate faculties, but exist as poles of a single continuum of dynamic tendency in Augustine. When the engraining involved relates to action, or impulses, the resulting dynamic tendency is named habit. But the selfsame power or force (*uis*) is called memory, when it is sufficiently distantiated from the objects of its action yet withstands the passage of time (*an. quant. 71*). Though both lie beyond the pale of the heart’s self-awareness, habit is situated closer to the surface of determinative impulse than is memory. Thus habit constitutes a form of dispositional *voluntas*, which is potentially in conflict with current intentions or occasional *voluntas*.

A moral and spiritual escalation of woes may be found in the process of habit formation – if the actions being engrained are sinful. Augustine describes the onslaught of woe in a parable (*s. dom. m. I.35*). When the heart consents to sin this is akin to dying within one’s house. The external act exacerbates the situation – one is carried outside for burial. When a sinful habit is fully formed, a weight bears down on the soul akin to the rotting of a buried corpse (*s. dom. m. I.35)*. Of course, the gospels give us good reason for hope. Jesus has raised people from all three degrees of death (*s. dom. I.35*).

The same process of alienation is found in the sermons and the *de mendacio*. The fullest account is in a later (ca. 411) sermon that deals, in part, with governance of the tongue (*s. Denis 20*). Although the heart initially decides to speak viciously, once a habit is formed, one may find the habit prompting action against the wishes of one’s heart.

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205 Note the Stoic account of proclivities produced as the result of perturbations – *morbi* (sickness), *aegrotationes* (severe disease), *vitirositas / habitus* (habitual vice) – as transmitted by Cicero in *Tusc. IV. 23-24,29.*
Like a wheel given a push, the habit will “roll” according to its nature. The mind might decide to tell truth in this case, but the tongue is already lying by force of habit (s. Denis 20).

In this period, Augustine finds the very same logic, in less vivid imagery, operative behind Jesus’ prudential advice to forgo the practice of swearing (mend. 28, s. dom. m. 1.51-53). The ban on swearing is not an absolute law. But, as a rule of thumb, it prevents the habit of swearing to become fully formed (mend. 28). This habit would make one particularly susceptible to false witnessing, and Jesus would guard us from such weakness (mend. 28, cf. also his challenge to Fortunatus, c. Fort. 22, and s. dom. m. 1.51-53).

Though Augustine does not dwell on it at great length, he does believe this same capacity for habit formation can be harnessed for weal as well as woe. It simply is not true, at the conceptual level, that Augustine’s account of habit is only an account of bad habit or of habit as the dynamic of resistance to grace. Augustine’s therapeutic and rhetorical aims required his overwhelming emphasis upon these negative dimensions in most of his writings. Nonetheless, Augustine does acknowledge, in this period, positive examples of habit and even incorporates the notion into his ascetical program.

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206 Note Cicero’s usage of the same metaphor derived from Chrysippus in de fato 42, and the parallel usage reported by Aulus Gellius in Noctes Atticae 7.2. The metaphor was used in an effort to reconcile determinism and moral freedom by arguing that the specific configurations of mind determine their own inevitable responses to the promptings of fate. For Augustine’s adaption of this concept to explain the congruent call in Simpl. I.2, cf. chapter 4 below.

207 Pace Prendiville, John G. 1972. The Development of the Idea of Habit in the Thought of Saint Augustine. New York: Fordham University Press. Prendiville’s insistence on reading Augustine’s notion of habit only as a subset of the doctrine of sin requires that he turn a blind eye to the positive possibilities of habit within Augustine’s anthropological theory.
The two most important texts were both composed in opposition to the Manicheans. The earlier account of good habit comes from the previous period (gn. adu. Man. II.29-31). Reflecting on the curse upon the woman in Gen.3:19, Augustine finds a redemptive possibility consonant with his figurative reading. Each of us have a “soulish,” affective part through which alone the devil can reach us with temptation. This soulish, subrational part receives figurative representation in the text by the woman (gn. adu. Man. II.28). The curse of pain in childbirth refers to this womanly part of our psyches, not to physical pain in Eve’s body.

Abstaining from carnal pleasures is always painful at first and it persists until the affective part becomes habituated to submitting to its better (gn. adu. Man. II.29). When that habit of submission to reason is fully formed, two figures describe the result. First, a son is born as good habit is established and prepares the affections for good deeds (quod cum prouenerit, quasi natus est filius, id est ad bonum opus paratus affectus per consuetudinem bonam, gn. adu. Man. II.29). Second, that habit of submission constitutes a figurative turning toward the husband, who is the rational part of the soul (gn. adu. Man. II.29). When this turning is complete, our realigned affections are appropriately called the mother of the living, that is, of right actions (gn. adu. Man. II.29). Augustine apparently envisions an ascetic process of affective transformation

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209 Verumtamen magnum sacramentum est huius sententiae, quod nulla abstinentia fit a voluptate carnali, quae non habeat in exordio dolorem, donec in meliorem partem consuetudo flectatur... (Gn. adu. Man.II.29)
whereby proper use of habituation could realign the appetites for use in defeating temptation.

A similar conception of habit’s ambivalent usefulness underlies the second important passage (c. Fort. 22). But a few noteworthy developments have accrued in the meantime. Augustine now explicitly links his account of habit to a changed situation of humanity after Adam. The first man was created with “liberum voluntatis arbitrium” (c. Fort. 22). He was fully free to choose without anything restraining that decision. Of course, we find ourselves in a different position (c. Fort. 22). After Adam, and especially after personal experience of carnal pleasure, we experience a resistance to free choice called habit. And habit is registered experientially as a form of necessity or constraint in our choosing. Theologically, Augustine aligns this necessity of soul with the Pauline language of “flesh.”

But “flesh,” as a habit of soul, is a malleable state of affairs. Bad habits can be overcome. Good habits can displace them. In light of Augustine’s explicit identification of habit with a necessitating force constraining choice, the possibility of forging good habits is important. Augustine has effectively conceptualized the potential of a positive limitation to willing and thus marked one goal of his ascetic program as the progressive limitation of choice precisely through a voluntary production of counter habits.

If one considers the Christian life as akin to any complex, exacting activity the practical value of limiting choice becomes apparent. Perhaps we can clarify by drawing out Augustine’s metaphor of warfare (en. Ps. 9.8; s. dom. m. I.34; I.54; II.58; diu. qu. 69.8). The warrior must be so trained that he does not need to deliberate over every move. Only when most of the work has been entrusted to well-trained habits, can the agent devote proper attention to the strategic choices that arise in the midst of combat.
So also the Christian who has replaced a bad habit of swearing with the good habit of simple truth-telling, to use Augustine’s example, will be freed from the distraction of deliberation by a good habit’s limitation of practical choice (s. dom. m. 1.51-53; mend. 28, c. Fort. 22). Having thus aligned habit with one’s consciously chosen direction in life, the heart is freed to attend to more important matters.

**Summary of the Conceptual Correlations**

Perhaps a summary statement of our quest thus far would be a small kindness to the reader. We have performed two acts of triangulation and found the triage of terms in both cases to overlap partially but significantly.

The heart, mind and memory are all multi-modal, pre-differentiated entities but they are distinguishable. Mens refers to the psychic totality and is subdivided into heart and memory. Cor is the consciously aware engagement of the self in the present. Memoria is the retention of past engagements. Heart and memory interpenetrate in acts of recall, whereby previous engagements are re-engaged in present awareness.

Heart, habit and will partially map onto the first triage of terms. The overarching, totality concept when discussing determinative impulses to action is willing. But the sources of determinative impulses – volitions – are double. The present, self-aware production of impulse comes through the heart’s intentional consent. But, habit, as a corollary to memory in the realm of action, retains the dynamic of past intentions enacted and creates its own impulses which can do violence to those produced by the heart.
**Overarching Moral Concern: Simplicity and Duplicity of the Heart’s Intention**

We now turn our attention from tracing the lineaments of Augustine’s concept of heart to discerning the moral and philosophical work that concept is meant to perform. Augustine’s primary concern pertaining to the heart resides in the human tendency to divide our attention and thus fragment our moral strength. This dimension of Augustine’s thought is readily recognizable as Stoicising. Indeed, he draws upon specific strategies the Stoics used for promoting self-awareness. However, the Stoicising strategies are employed for largely Platonic ends. Augustine is not only concerned with the diffusion of our awareness ending in weakness of will. He describes an intrinsic linkage between that diffusion and a consequent impediment to contemplation of God. Diffusing our attention pollutes the inner eye and soils God’s proper abode within the self.

**Situating Augustine’s Project in de Sermone Domini in Monte**

Since a ponderous amount of the relevant material for interpretation is found in *s. dom. m.*, I begin with a brief overview of Augustine’s project in that work. Augustine reads Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount as an independent position on the purdaining philosophical debate concerning the nature and means to happiness. All the ancient philosophical schools were organized around distinctive, competing accounts of happiness – εὐδαιμονία. The one unanimous agreement between the schools was that human life

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was properly directed at this end alone\textsuperscript{211} and that temporal duration was irrelevant to the question of happiness.\textsuperscript{212} Where they differed sharply was on the question, “what constitutes happiness?”

When Cicero invented for the Romans a philosophical vocabulary adjacent to the Greeks’, he subsumed the question of εὐδαιμονία under the more Latin notion of \textit{uita beata} or \textit{beatitudo}. Augustine, of course, had thoroughly absorbed Cicero, along with whatever he could find of the philosophical traditions in Latin. Thus Jesus’ pronouncement of who would be blessed (\textit{beatus}) and why, immediately struck Augustine as Jesus’ own account of happiness. Since the philosophic schools carried on a perennial debate on this theme, this body of teaching marks off Jesus’ school from the others.\textsuperscript{213} Cicero’s dictum surely applies here, “\textit{qui autem de summo bono dissentit, de tota philosophiae ratione dissentit}” (fin. V.V.14).

\textsuperscript{211} Note Augustine’s late summary (c. 413-414) of the five schools all aiming at a single goal variously defined: \textit{primo generaliter audite omnium philosophorum commune studium}, \textit{in quo studio communi habuerunt quique divisiones et differentias sententiarum propriarum: communiter omnes philosophi studendo, quaerendo, disputando, uiuendo appetuerunt apprehendere uitam beatam}, s. 150.4

\textsuperscript{212} On the rare agreement of the Hellenistic philosophies on this issue see, Hadot, Pierre, 1995. \textit{Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault}. Malden, MA: Blackwell., ch. 8, “‘Only the Present is our Happiness’: The Value of the Present Instant in Goethe and in Ancient Philosophy.” Of course, Augustine rather starkly departs from this notion in his insistence that only an everlasting possession of the good could produce happiness.

\textsuperscript{213} Perhaps a brief reminder of the various schools’ positions concerning εὐδαιμονία would be useful for clarifying Augustine’s interpretation of Jesus’ way.

Plotinian ascent sees virtue as a preparatory step, which is surpassed in contemplative vision. Wisdom, vision and happiness are coextensive and reside above virtue. Cf. McGroarty, Kieran, and Plotinus. 2006. \textit{Plotinus on eudaimonia: a commentary}
So Augustine begins his commentary by assuring his readers that this Dominical discourse contains all the precepts they need for life (\textit{apparet in eo praecepta esse omnia quae ad informandam uitam pertinent., s. dom. m. I.1}).\textsuperscript{214} Herein, Jesus offers an

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authoritative account of happiness and its acquisition – which turns out to be synonymous with a *perfectus vitae christianae modus* (*s. dom. m. I.1*). Augustine explicitly contrasts the lower morality of adjudicating external actions (associated by Jesus with the practices of the Scribes and Pharisees) with the higher morality of Jesus that centers in emotional realignment and purgation of underlying intentions (*s. dom. m. I.21, 33*).

The Dominical ladder to happiness is chronologically linear and consists of seven rungs divided into two distinct phases (cf., the traces of Augustine’s exegesis in *en. Ps. 11.7* - *nam septem sunt etiam beatitudinis gradus, quos in eodem sermone quem habuit in monte dominus exsequitur κατά Ματθαεω... de quibus sententis septem totum illum sermonem prolixum dictum esse animaduerti potest*). The first five steps constitute the first phase and occupy the comments of *s. dom. m.* book I.

The first five steps form a substratum of moral reformation preparatory to a more intellectual or cognitive completion in the last two steps. This much one expects, since Augustine’s theories of virtue so far have been preparations for ceasing all activity in contemplation. In *s. dom. m.*, however, Augustine for the first time explicitly refuses to relegate moral, bodily action to a preliminary phase (cf. Augustine’s words in the final paragraph of this work, *s. dom. m. II.87*). Throughout the first phase of

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215 Plotinus’ understanding was cyclical for the duration of embodiment.

216 Besides the expositions in the first two chapters above, a fruitful comparison for ascertaining the development in Augustine’s thought would be the earlier *diu. qu. 35*. Therein, Augustine offers a purely cognitive account of happiness as possession of an eternal good through knowing it - *quid est aliud beate uiuere nisi aeternum aliquid cognoscendo habere?* Cf. also his explicit disavowal of the purely cognitive account late in life (*retr. I.26*).
transformation, the emphasis falls distinctly upon the production of equanimity and the
need to prepare the heart for the inevitable obstacles to Christian living.\textsuperscript{217}

In effect, Augustine overlays Jesus’ beatitudes with the seven gifts of the Holy
Spirit inversely detailed in \textit{Isaiah} 11:2-3 \textit{(en. Ps. 11.7, s. dom. m. I.10-11, doctr. chr. II.9-}
\textit{11)}. The connection was natural given Augustine’s context. Who could doubt that the
end of a philosophical pursuit of human flourishing was wisdom itself? What else could
make of mortals sons of God and produce perfect equanimity in the process? This
composite he interprets by inventing a narrative of progressive moral transformation
that explains the natural connections and movement between the various stages. Herein
Jesus’ account of the pathway to happiness is found.

The story goes like this (cf., Augustine’s synthesis in \textit{s. dom. m. I.10-11}). God’s
word intrudes from beyond the self and initiates the process. Upon receiving God’s
word, the soul experiences a fear (Is. 11:3) of just judgment and grows humble (Mt. 5:3)
before God (\textit{s. dom. m. I.3}). With her newfound malleability, she begins to carefully read
the scriptures (\textit{pietas}, Is. 11:2) and meekly (Mt. 5:4) submit to what it says (\textit{s. dom. m.}
\textit{I.4}). The result is a growing knowledge (\textit{scientia}, Is. 11:2) of her sinfulness and she
begins to grieve (Mt.5:5) over her carnal habits and sins (\textit{s. dom. m. I.5}). Grief instigates
a desire to change. Hard labor ensues as she resists and gradually uproots entrenched
habits. Only with God-given fortitude (Is. 11:2) can she accomplish this since severing
the delights of sin causes a spiritual pain akin to hunger or thirst (Mt. 5:6, cf., \textit{s. dom. m.}
\textit{I.6}). Indeed, the toils and woe cause the soul to cry out for help at this point. She
receives the one sound counsel (Is. 11:2) for obtaining help. Help is given to those who

\textsuperscript{217} One might discern here a dominical admonition to the Stoic spiritual exercise of
\textit{praemeditatio malorum}.\par
help others in whatever ways they can. And so she begins to show mercy (Mt.5:7) and thus receives divine mercy to aid in conquering carnal habit (s. dom. m. l.7&10-11).

These first five steps establish a foundation of good conscience that calms the mind (s. dom. m. l.56-61). This serenity and composure will be necessary to endure the ensuing purgation of heart and attain wisdom in divine likeness at last. The climb is steep on the two remaining levels of the journey. And the way traversed lies wholly within the heart.

The pinnacle of wisdom within the heart results in a form of apatheia (...nullusque motus aduersus rationem rebellis est, s. dom. m. l.11), such as Augustine in this period believes the Apostles achieved in their lifetimes (s. dom. m. l.12; cf. his later mind on the question, retr. l.19.1-2). The reward of virtue-wisdom is intrinsic, as it was with the Stoics. And Jesus has a name for it – the kingdom of heaven. Heaven and earth stand for contrary directions of the human person, toward holiness and sin respectively (s. dom. m. l.15, 53. II.17). When all the rebellious affects have been quelled through perfect holiness of intention, the state within the soul is called happiness or the kingdom of heaven (s. dom. m. l.13).

The Struggle for Singularity: Purity and Pollution in Sacred Space

The second book, taking up the final phase of the Dominical ladder, begins with the project of mundatio cordis (s. dom. m. II.1).218 The language of purification within a

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philosophical account of obtaining εὐδοκιμονία immediately conjures the names and doctrines of Platonist teachers. Indeed, Augustine does interact with those teachings. However, his interests and his explanations of Jesus’ words are much more complex than a single philosophical pedigree can enclose.

**Platonist Models of Purification**

Platonist purification is essentially an intellectual affair. Prior to Plato, the word ἴκαθορσίς has the basic meaning of “clearing away” obstacles or “clarification.” For Plato, the obstacle to be cleared away was anything bodily that tainted or obscured the soul’s view of the forms. But, of course, Augustine’s interaction with Plato was entirely mediated through the Platonist heavyweights of his own era.

Plotinus’ account of purification surely counts as a faithfully intellectualist reading of Plato. But it is just as certainly a creative reading. Plotinus has relocated the topos of the discussion. Since clarification precedes vision, and thus is left behind, Plotinus identifies it with virtue as preparation for intellectual vision.

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221 Cf. e.g., *Phaedo 65e-83e* for purity and pollution of soul, *Soph. 230a-d* for Socratic refutation as intellectual clarification or purification, *Rep. 508c*, describes clear or pure cognition as possible when the soul is not impeded by bodily obstacles, *Phdr. 65ff* & *110ff* specify the καθοραφόν, the “clear” or “pure,” as what is truly knowable.
Plotinian virtue falls into two categories – the social and the purificatory (*Enn. I.1.10; I.2; I.4; II.9; VI.9*). Both stand as sequential, preparatory stages within the cyclical ebbing and flowing of contemplation and earthward plummeting. After falling back into quotidian existence, the philosopher begins the process of purification for another bout of contemplation. The first step is civic or social virtue. Here one manages the composite mixture of body and soul in its interrelations with other embodied souls. The cardinal virtues – prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance – all belong in this category as mere preludes to purification of mind. In themselves, these merely image the later purgative, intellectual virtues. They do not cleanse the soul.

When the soul presses on to intellectual purgation, she attains some degree of likeness to God (*Enn. I.2.1*). Just as evil comes through the soul getting mixed up in the body so that it comes to feel with the body and even evaluate things with the body, so virtue and goodness come when the soul refuses to evaluate with the body and begins to perform its own act alone (*Enn. I.2.3*). Purification chisels away everything alien to the soul. What is leftover, not the act of purification itself, is the Good (*Enn. I.2.4*). But purification begins with conversion, turning away from the darkness of body and toward the intelligible light. To attain knowledge, the soul must thrust itself toward the intelligible ray (δεί προσβάλειν τῷ φωτίζοντι – *Enn. I.2.4*). Purification has the Good as its goal and vision floods the eye with light once clarification is accomplished (*Enn. VI.7.36*).

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223 Ἡ ἔπειδὴ κακή μὲν ἔστιν ἡ ψυχή συμπεφυμένη τῷ σώματι καὶ ὢμοπαθής γινομένη αὐτῷ καὶ πάντα συνδυαζόμενα, εἰ τὸν ἄγαθον καὶ ἀρετῆν ἔχουσα, εἰ μήτε συνδυαζόμενον, ἀλλὰ μόνη ἐνεργόν (*Enn. I.2.3*).
Some measure of victory over the passions as entailments of bodily engagement results. Thrusting towards the light simultaneously involves disengagement with the body (Enn. I.2.5). However, the passions do not go away entirely. The soul simply learns to remain aloof from them and to cease allying (and thus alloying) itself with them. Plotinus’ strategy vis-à-vis the passions is one of containment, not eradication or moderation. Confined to their proper abode, the passions are weakened and the soul experiences no militant struggle (μαχη) with them (Enn. I.2.5). The clarified soul resides alone, apart from earthly things (Enn. III.6.5).

But the name Augustine more readily attaches to Platonist purification is that of Porphyry and his account of theurgical ritual. Porphyrian theurgy was aimed at purification of the “spiritual soul” or emotional part that Plato identified in Rep. IV. Porphyry considered this process useful for those unable to endure the rigors of Plotinian contemplation. Plotinus repudiated the practice of theurgy, considering it

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225 Porphyry, in more orthodox development of Plotinus’ views, also elaborates a fourfold theory of the virtues in his Sententiae 34. The social and purgative virtues comprise the first two stages and constitute the primary work of this life. Theoretic and paradigmatic virtues detail the energy involved in intellectual activity of soul and the patterns contained within the soul, respectively. Augustine, however, seems to have attached Porphyry’s name only to theurgical notions of purification.


damaging. During his master’s lifetime, Porphyry apparently changed his mind concerning theurgy’s benefits and composed his skeptical letter ad Anebontem Aegyptium.228

Our only access to Porphyry’s primary, positive account of theurgy in De Regressu Animae is from Augustine’s comments229 in ciu. X.230 According to Porphyry, emotional purification results in receiving visions – Augustine specifies these as mere phantasms (ciu. X.10). Indeed, the theurgists’ rites pollute the emotional soul rather than purify it, by Augustine’s lights. For they produce phantasms which contaminate and hinder the higher powers of the intellect (ciu. X.27).

Porphyry does admit the possibility of purifying the emotional-spirituol part of the soul without theurgic rites by exercising the virtue of continence (ciu. X.28). And Augustine must tacitly concur. For he notes that under the dispensation of the Old Testament, the just were enabled by faith in the gospel-prefigured to purify themselves through pious living (ciu. X.25).231

228 Augustine addresses the inconsistencies between this and the de regressu in ciu. X.11. Eusebius is also familiar with this letter, cf. Prep. Evang. III.4 and V.8-10.
229 Here I step outside my methodological commitment to reading Augustine’s texts in chronological order, because for the moment I use him simply as a source of testimonia. And since there is no question of development here, I order my use of the fragments to their relative importance in reconstructing the theory begin theurgical practice. Hence my choice to deal with testimonia from ciu. before diu. qu.
231 Of course, a sharp difference is noticeable in Augustine’s primary response in ciu. X and his critical assimilation of emotional purification in s. dom. m.. for his doctrine of grace has taken a sharp turn in the meantime. Now Christ’s incarnation is the only purification needed for all levels of body and soul (ciu. X.22-24, cf. also the final paragraphs of Conf. X).
One minor Platonist figure deserves mention in this context. Fonteius of Carthage was familiar to Augustine but is otherwise unknown to us. In response to questions posed, Augustine treated his little community at Thagaste to this snippet of a philosophical campfire tale Fonteius told about purity and pollution. Consequently, they requested this excerpt to be recorded and it is now found as *diu. qu. 12*. Given the imagery, who could resist?

A certain *malignus spiritus*, the story goes, mixes itself with the things of sensation and passion (here resolutely conflated) and if not resisted will defile the *domicilium* of the self. The foe slithers through the openings afforded by sensation. There it sets the passions boiling until their vapors thicken to block the corridor whereby a ray of light could otherwise deliver understanding. The mind's ray of reason, which the malignant one would block, consists of ether and mirrors the divine presence. Within that ray are found conjoined God, blameless will and the merit of right action (*diu. qu. 12*).

**Commonalities of Platonic Accounts of Purification**

All these accounts have a few things in common. First, and most importantly, there is no rational psychology of action discernable in any of them. Consistent with a Platonic tri-partition of soul, they do not feel compelled to root all bodily action in rational processes. Thought and action are not clearly connected, let alone theoretically delineated.

Second, they all register a sharp break between bodily activity – including moral agency through the body – and the final purgation of mind. Social virtue may play some
preparatory role. But there is no clear theoretical continuity between socially enacted virtue and purgation of mind. As such, virtue seems merely preliminary.

Finally, their containment strategy vis-à-vis the passions opens up the possibility of simultaneous adjacent experience of bodily emotion and intellectual clarity. Even Porphyry's account of emotional purgation through the exercise of continence leaves the emotional purity achieved separate from purgation of mind. And theurgic purification is explicitly limited to subrational aspects of the self.

Augustine unquestionably shares the Platonic concern with intellectual purgation and the complexities of clearing away bodily images to allow pure intellection. We will address his peculiar strategies for the contemplative fruition of action in the following section. Nonetheless, all three of the above commonalities conflict with Augustine's account of the heart's cleansing in his priestly period.

**Augustine on Pollution and Purgation**

Augustine's primary concern when discussing purification is the singularity or duplicity of intention behind moral action. This focus comes from a reading of Christian scriptures, but Augustine's comments and consequent theorization are not simply replications of the relevant texts. Rather, he finds in the Stoic's rational psychology of action an amicable system of theory (given a few adjustments) that allows him to

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articulate the connection between the heart’s intention and human action. Thus they fill a gap in the Platonizing account Augustine has been developing so far. In the end, a synthesis of Stoic and Neo-Platonic emphases is utilized to explain an anthology of scriptural texts.

The heart is the zone of conscious self-awareness in Augustine.233 And purity of heart *ab initio* is identified with simplicity of heart (*s. dom. m. I.8*). Jesus’ words are glossed by Wisdom’s admonition (*Wis.1:1*) to seek the Lord *in simplicitate cordis* (*s. dom. m. I.8*). While purity of heart is connected in scripture with seeing God (and thus immediately coalesces to the Platonist agenda in Augustine’s mind), Augustine is acutely aware that Jesus considered the heart to be the source of bodily action – good and evil – as well as rational speech (*Mt. 15:19*; cf., *cont.5*).

Exegetical fidelity requires the very same dimension of the self to find simplicity and purification in bodily action, speech and contemplative vision.234 Thus, the zone of sanctity and pollution is much more inclusive for Augustine than Plotinus. Not simply an intellectual part of the soul, but the entire sphere of present self-awareness becomes holy or profane together.

Likewise, Augustine’s biblical concern for singularity of intention resonates clearly with the Stoic worry about fragmenting moral strength through division of

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233 Maxsein, Anton. 1966. *Philosophia cordis. Das Wesen der Personalität bei Augustinus*. Salzburg: Müller, pp.13-17 *et passim*, expounding later texts, finds the heart to be the integrative center of body and soul, as well as disparate elements of soul. The heart ends up being the posterior principle of unity that draws together a deeper ontological complexity of body and soul. Of course, critiquing his reading of later texts falls outside the scope of this chapter. But I have found Augustine’s usage in this earlier period to point more towards the prior, undifferentiated totality of self-awareness which may then be differentiated into rational, volitional and affective aspects.

234 Cf. chapter 1 and 2 for accounts of action and speech as failures of contemplative vision and the requirement to leave action behind for human fruition.
attention (s. dom. m. I.8; II.48; II.64; II.67; II.74; cf. Seneca, De ira II.4.2; Epictetus Diss.; Diss.I.6, 12-22; Diss. III.16.15; III.22.105; IV.2.1; IV.3.7; IV.12 and Ench.7; 33.6; Aulus Gellius, Noct. Att., XIII.28.3-4). However, Augustine approaches this phenomenon with a very unStoic concern. The heart’s zone of awareness is intended to be the meeting place with a transcendent, irreducibly higher deity (s. dom. m. I.27; II.1; II.17-18; II.54). So singularity of intention doesn’t just achieve moral self-consistency, it shapes that zone of awareness to be God-like and thus a fit clearing for God’s abode (s. dom. m. II.14).

But how does the purification of heart work in detail? Purification of heart entails an entwined complex of ethical agency and epistemological distantiation from corporeal imagery. This complex finds integrity in an account of upright or perverse loves as the intentional substance underlying both bodily action and contemplative vision.

Purification comes from a good conscience of good deeds and frees the intellect to contemplate the highest good in serenity and purity (cordismunditia de bona conscientia bonorum operum ualens ad contemplandum illud summum bonum, quod solo puro et sereno intellectu cerni potest, s. dom. m. I.10). Conscience retains an infallible and unalterable trace of the affective and cognitive texture of consensual acts past (cf., quoniam rea tenetur in consensione conscientia, gn. adu. Man. II.21).

Actually, conscience is yet more basic. Conscience registers what one is aware of whether he admits it or not (cf. mor. I.64; and lib. arb. III.29, conscientia mortalitatis as an underlying awareness of death’s approach). As such, conscience retains a comprehensive record of one’s heart and constitutes a private knowledge accessible only to self and God (mag.39). This erects an ineradicable bulwark, which does not
totally prevent self-deception but does stand as a perpetual, inner witness to
uncomfortable truths (mor. I.80).

Thus conscience complexifies self-deceit enough to require clearly culpable
motivation when lying to self and others. Prior to the Fall, the divine presence was in
the conscience – in the simple awareness of being a creature and thus dependent upon
the Creator (mus. VI.40). Pride, in essence, is fleeing outward from the secretario
coscientiae in an effort to appear as what one knowingly is not (mor. II.6).

One must make peace with this inner witness to uncomfortable truths, by
honestly transforming one’s intentional activity, before clarity of heart is possible (s.
dom. m. II.8–9). This is where Wisdom’s admonition to simplicity becomes relevant.
Simplicity and good conscience unite in an analysis of motivation within the psychology
of action. Or, in Stoic terms, simplicity and good conscience reside in the consent that
gives rise to any impulse.

The usual concomitants of good actions pose a threat to simplicity of motivation
(s. dom. m. II.1). The res humanis, whereby people need to praise those who live well,
carries with it a potent threat for those praised. There is delight to be had in praise (s.
dom. m. II.8). It feels good to be well received by those one esteems. In this way, human
praise threatens to subtly displace or contaminate the good of fulfilling divine precept
as the goal of one’s action (s. dom. m. II.9). Simplicity consists in singularity – in
stretching toward only one end (s. dom. m. II.9; II.11).

But singularity and simplicity of intention do not purify irrespective of the single
end sought (cf. discussion of s. 162.2 below). That end must be morally praiseworthy.
Here Augustine weds a Neo-Platonic hierarchy of eternal and temporal goods to his
more Stoic analysis of intention. The praiseworthy goal is always and only eternal.
Blame properly falls upon any temporal and earthly objects of desire (s. dom. m. II.9-11, et passim). But the unchangeable and incorporeal are impossible direct objects of bodily action. One simply cannot directly stretch for incorporeal substances by means of physical activity – hence the Platonist’s disjunction between social virtue and intellectual purification. So something has to stand in for that upper level of praiseworthy objects in the realm of intentional action.

Predictably, Augustine reaches into his Stoic tool kit to supply the missing surrogate. The Roman Stoic’s strategy for enhancing self-awareness (προσοχή) adhered to two elements: precept and end. One cultivates self-awareness by consciously retaining precepts and stretching tautly toward the σκόπος they mark out to the exclusion of all distractions (cf. Epictetus, Diss. IV.12.15; Ench. 33.6). For Augustine, the fulfillment of divine precept stands in for the eternal good to supply an immediate goal for intentional action (s. dom. m. II.8). Once the divine precept is received within the heart, the primary moral struggle is to avoid the distractions offered by social favor and stretch toward that end alone (s. dom. m. II.8-11; II.56). A simple and pure intention is found in stretching toward the good of fulfilling divine precept without thought of human praise or blame (s. dom. m. II.9). That intention leaves its trace in a pure conscience (s. dom. m. II.9).

Conversely, duplicity diffuses the heart’s moral intention and contorts the conscience (s. dom. m. II.8-9; II.40; II.43; II.49). Augustine is very sensitive to the histrionic underpinnings of duplicity that Jesus names. A fictive love of seeming, already associated with pride (mor. II.6), underlies all acts of duplicity (s. dom. m. II.5). Positive self-presentation produces pleasure or delight, even if the presented self is fictional. Social favor obtained by appearing upright may spur simulation of moral actions (en. Ps.
7.9; s. dom. m. I.58, II.64-66). If the heart’s reason consents to that pleasure, thus stretching in its direction, it becomes an end (finis) of the action (s. dom. m. I.33; II.45).

The hypocrite, through love of seeming, directs his heart’s tension in some measure toward positioning a positive image of himself before men (s. dom. m. II.5). But his conscience stands always before God, the inspector cordis, and thus retains a pull on the hypocrite’s self-awareness (s. dom. m. II.1; II.5; II.9). The heart necessarily doubles itself to carry out the dramatic role of simulatio it desires (s. dom. m. II.40; II.43; II.48-49).

The very act of adjoining opposing ends in a single action requires compartmentalizing and thus alienating sectors of the self. Augustine sees these sectioned intentions under Jesus’ language about “right hand knowledge” and “left hand knowledge” in relation to acts properly done “in secret” (s. dom. m. II.8-9). The left hand stands for delectatio laudis (s. dom. m. II.8). The right hand signifies stretching to fulfill divine precept (dextra autem significat intentionem implendi praecepta divina, s. dom. m. II.8). In one part, the self seeks aggrandizement and implicitly envies God’s rightful glory. Simultaneously, another part of the self seeks to render obedience to God’s commands.

Conscience cannot join in the pretense. She lies wounded, bearing the factual stain of dissimulation and veiled envy (s. dom. m. II.9). Duplicity inevitably produces a bad conscience, which further frustrates growth toward vision of God (s. dom. m. II.9). Uncomfortable, suppressed knowledge of competing loves hinders contemplative attention of the heart on God (s. dom. m. I.10). One cannot stand in wondrous joy and rapture before Truth while simultaneously expending effort to suppress truth. Thus the
conflicted conscience presents a primary obstacle to the practical fulfillment of contemplating God.

**Distension: Augustine’s Phenomenology of Dissipated Focus**

Augustine has a name for this conflicted state of the heart consequent with duplicity. *Distentio*, a malformed and diseased mutation of intention, displaces the heart’s healthful, singular tension in that state. Wanting too many things dissipates the heart’s power of stretching forth in pursuit and frustrates human action. Deliberative paralysis strikes when one considers a multiplicity of goods without acknowledging their place within the proper hierarchy of goods. The self freezes in its incapacity to choose a single direction. The distention of heart lasts until the competing impulses are effectively unified in a singular intention to pursue one good above others. The best description of this phenomenon is found later in *conf.*VIII.24, however, plenty of examples are available in the period under consideration.

The following passages from Augustine’s priestly period serve to illustrate the primary forms of intentional complexity within his purview at the time (*s. dom. m. I.3; s. 353.1; 103.5; 162.2 and early in next period, s. 177.6)*. The fundamental root of duplicity, and thus distention of heart, is pride and her accompanying vices (*quis uero nesciat superbos inflatos dici tamquam uento distentos?, s. dom. m. I.3*). When the mind falls into its possession, pride’s search for self-enlargement rends the unity of conscience and heart, as described above.

The vacillation between intentions within the doubled heart dissipates the soul’s attention (*s. 353.1, ca. 394*). In a similar way, avarice through its multiplicity of desires (or desire for multiplicity) creates a paradoxical bloating of the heart akin to bodily
dropsy (s.177.6). As the soul seeks to fill her lack through accumulation of temporal goods, the heart swells with a mixture of outward tension and diseased inner flaccidity (s.177.6). Just as the one afflicted with dropsy craves liquid despite his bloating, so the heart seized by avarice desires more things even as it acquires more (s.177.6).

But even morally upright acts, when they require negotiating multiplicity, are capable of causing distention (s. 103.5). As Augustine considers the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42, the phenomenon achieves a clearer focus. The very act of service distends the soul because the spatial location of needed articles requires motion and gathering of things from different places (s. 103.5). The guest is here. The food has to be prepared over there. Something else is needed but absent. The mind flits in multiple directions at once (s. 103.5). Service in the flesh almost inevitably produces distention of mind, laments Augustine (s.103.5).

Paradoxically, the act of fornication is particularly dangerous because its intensity prevents the possibility of distention (s. 162.2). In all other forms of vice, one’s mind and body might be somewhat detached. Habit’s capacity to alienate the

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impetus for action from the heart also enables a certain distantiation from acts of wrongdoing. My tongue may be gossiping, but my mind is not fully intending the evil underway. This is a dimension of the internal fragmentation named distention. And it is a mark of brokenness and the root of much sin. But it is better than achieving unity through singular intention of sin (s. 162.2).

In commenting upon Paul’s warning concerning fornication, as sinning against one’s own body, Augustine considers the peculiar intensity of focus involved in sexual intercourse (s. 162.2). The sexual encounter so overwhelms and fixes mind to body that one’s full intention can only be directed into the evil act (s. 162.2). Paradoxically, the overcoming of distention in wrongdoing is worse than the distention itself (s. 162.2).237

Evidently, the very temporality and multiplicity of bodily things presents a dangerous pull toward distention for Augustine (\textit{uera rel.} 18; 40; s. 353.1; 103.5). Only a very intense act of focus can overcome it (s. 162.2). But not just any object of focus will do for a singularity of heart that is pure. And now the gravitational pull toward a Platonic system of evaluation comes into view behind Augustine’s prescriptions for cordial focus.

\textit{Two Prior Acts of Heart that Integrate Stoic and Platonic Concepts}

The first stage of purgation centers on the heart’s peculiar role as the originator and director of embodied action. Only by focusing intently, indeed exclusively, upon fulfillment of divine precept can the heart quell its frenetic alterations between

\footnote{237 Of course, this phenomenology of the sexual encounter is an anomaly in Augustine’s oeuvre. His mature complaint is actually the inverse. Genital arousal and relaxation escapes cognitive control and thus points to a deeper fragmentation of the self, which is a punishment of original sin. Thus, Adam’s first indication of his internal rupturing was an involuntary erection (\textit{c. lul. imp.}).}
intentional objects. Divine precept offers a focal point for the intention. And the focused heart, through its good deeds, begets a tranquil mind free from pangs of conscience.

But the very act of focusing for integral action, Augustine argues, presupposes prior interpretive and perceptual work within the heart (s. dom. m. II.1; II.3; II.76). Here another metaphor for the heart comes into play – the oculi cordis. This metaphor is manifestly connected to the Platonic figure of the mind’s eye, also much beloved of Augustine. But Dominical diction underlies the pregnant metaphoric shift from mind to heart. The pure in heart will see God, Jesus says. So the heart, and not just intellect, must be the instrument of spiritual vision.

Significantly, this metaphor emerges in Augustine’s writings in the priestly period first (s. dom. I.8; I.10-12, II.1; II.14; II.45; II.76; II.82; c. Adim. 28; doctr. Chr. II.11). And it is always used in contexts of concern for “cleaning” the eye, by which Augustine means a simplification of awareness resulting in improved focus upon the highest good. Simplification requires perceptual pruning and orderly binding of values. Jesus’


guidelines boil down to instructions about what I should and should not think about on this embattled journey through life (s. dom. m. II.58).

In particular, purgation of the eyes of the heart involves establishing a rigid hierarchy of values according to which alternative ends (a.k.a., temptations) are easily identified as properly placed in subordination to the highest good (doctr. chr. II.11). This hierarchy enables the heart to quickly release from its attention lesser things and so pursue God with singularity of intention (doctr. chr. II.11). Failure to pass by temporal things in one’s awareness is a symptom of pride and results in distortion of the heart’s vision. Simplification comes by way of subtraction; subtraction, it seems, by means of humility.

When Augustine introduces this perceptual function of the heart, he names its task as twofold: “looking into” things (intueri) and “connecting up” or making sense of one thing in terms of another (referre, s. dom. m. II.1). Consideration of Augustine’s peculiar use of these terms in relation to self-aware engagement manifests his creative synthesis between Platonic and Stoic conceptualities.

**Intuition: Seeing the Hierarchy of Values**

To “look into” or “intuit” in Augustine means discerning deep structures – rightly or wrongly – in things and in self. Prior to his invention of the heart, Augustine tends to use this term to describe the lone intellect looking into truth or God or a formal exemplar in order to judge the adequacy of an image (e.g. Acad. II.6,7; III.40; beata u. 35; imm. an. 10, 11, 17, 18) or to name the reality behind a sign and thus end the play between signifiers (dial. 7; mag. 40). The Platonic patrimony involved is blatant when Augustine praises the few healthy persons whose intellects can intuit another, higher world (ord.I.32, cf.
also his *mea culpa* in *retr. I.3.2*). For instance, the trained intellect finds delight by intuiting the symmetry of windows and light in the baths (*ord. II.34*). Intuiting here seems to imply a penetrative perception of the underlying ratios and numerical relationships that constitute a phenomenon (*lib. arb. II.42* makes the connection explicit). Indeed, the nature and power of numbers is a fit target for the student’s intuition (*ord. II.50*).

When introducing the *oculi cordis* metaphor, Augustine anchors its purity or pollution in intending actions within its prior deployment of intuition. The clean eye does not find the deep structure of right conduct in human praise (*pertinet ergo ad oculum mundum non intueri in recte faciendo laudes hominum, s. dom. m. II.1*). A broadly sophistic ethics, wherein moral norms are merely byproducts of emergent social consensus, seems to be in Augustine’s mind here. Cicero had slanderously ascribed this unmanly ethic to the Epicureans as well (*fin. II.XV.48­-50*). But even Cicero ties this mode of evaluation less to an articulated theory and more to the perennial shallowness of public opinion (*…ut enim consuetudo loquitur, id solum dicitur honestum quod est popular fama gloriosum, fin. II.XV.48*). No schooling is required to find the real reason for morality in what others are whispering roundabout.

The rightness of right action cannot be anchored in the flux of human praise and blame, says Augustine (*s. dom. m. II.1*). Those waters are simply too shallow, for human beings cannot see beyond overt action and thus cannot separate genuine goodness from simulation (*s. dom. m. II.1*). Rather, the sort of perception that gives rise to truly moral action sails by the histrionics of social convention and sets anchor in an intuition of divine praise and blame alone.
Augustine’s peculiar language is instructive. For he explicitly binds together three themes: purity of heart, the heart’s act of intuition and a vertical metaphor of ascent (non ergo habet simplex cor, id est mundum cor, nisi qui transcedit humanas laudes et illum solum intuetur... qui conscientiae solus inspectore est., s. dom. m. II.1). The metaphor of ascent is telltale. Augustine’s earlier descriptions of intellectual intuition were manifestly Platonic, as illustrated above. Now, Augustine seeks to integrate the Platonic concern for intellectual vision with the Stoic concern for simplicity of moral intention.

All human action presupposes a cognitive hierarchy of values. The Stoics’ was supremely elegant. One asks, “Is this good, evil or indifferent?” of the implicit propositional content (λεκτόν / dicible) tucked away inside any presentation.239 Anything external to my moral choice can only be indifferent (e.g., Epictetus, Ench. 1; Diss. I.1.7; I.4.27; I.22.9; II.5.4). Only virtue is good. The only evil is moral evil. If one can persuade the presentation to stand still for a moment, the standard for judging it is simple.

But Augustine lives in a world created good from top to bottom. God said so. Externals, therefore, are good and it would be vicious to deny their goodness. So Augustine requires a different set of distinctions to construct a usable hierarchy of values. For this he turns to a Platonizing reading of Jesus’ warning concerning the placement of one’s treasures and thoughts about tomorrow (s. dom. m. II.43-44; II.56).

For Augustine, the question of value is always cast against a backdrop of transcendence (s. dom. m. II.43-44; II.56). The orienting question, to which intuition provides an answer, implies a gradation of goods falling into two categories. So the Christian asks of a given presentation, “Is this a temporal or an eternal good?” (s. dom. m. II.43-44; II.56). A scale of values from highest to lowest is implied and the moral injunction is to ever pursue the higher in preference to the lower. Pollution can occur by adding other good things, if they are lesser goods (s. dom. m. II.44). The additive will assuredly be clean and good in itself, when filling its proper niche in the creation (...ipsa terra in suo genere atque ordine munda sit, s. dom. m. II.44), but pollution results from mixing desires for it with higher aspirations for things eternal.

The most important aspect of this hierarchy is the twofold categorization. One might become confused about relative worth when comparing two or more temporal things. Little harm would be done thereby. But the lowest eternal thing vastly surpasses the highest temporal thing. Moral error results when temporal things are intuited as if they were eternal. A cross-eyed gaze of the heart issues in pollution and twisted intentions.

Jesus offers admonitions to guide us. “Don’t think about tomorrow,” Jesus says. Having connected “tomorrow” with the notion of temporal goods, Augustine offers this counsel of purification (s. dom. m. II.43). Allowing one’s thoughts to churn on the necessities of this life injures the inner eye and duplicates the heart (s. dom. m. II.43). So, in one’s moral conduct, fix your concentration on eternal things and just don’t think about temporal things (ergo cum aliquid boni operamur, non temporalia sed aeterna cogitemus!, s. dom. m. II.56).
So behind consent and determinative impulses to action, lies an act of intuition wherein the heart ascribes to the good in question a particular placement within a hierarchy stretching from carnal, temporal things to things eternal. The pure heart rises above the lower elements of that scale, good as they may be in their own order, and finds the deep structure of moral action in God alone, before whom one’s conscience must pass muster (*id est mundum cor, nisi qui transcendit humanas laudes et illum solum intuetur... qui conscientiae solus inspector est, s. dom. m. II.I*).

While Augustine enriches his ethics and integrates them with his ontology in his account of intuition, he also necessarily complexifies his account of what constitutes singularity of intention. To resolve, or at least lessen, the tension, Augustine calls upon another cordial activity, with a differing patrimony.

**Reference: Making Connections between Things in the Light of the Hierarchy**

If the act of intuition pegs entities, rightly or wrongly, onto a hierarchy of values, then the other constitutive act of the *oculi cordis* involves thinking the relationship between those pegged entities. By embracing the idea of a graded multiplicity of goods, Augustine parts company with the rigorous, ethical monism of the Stoics (*cf. Cicero, fin. III & V*). But a problem arises immediately. Multiple goods legitimate multiple desires and impulses. How can Augustine hope to maintain his account of simplicity of intention as purity of heart?

The Stoics had already addressed this problem in their own way. Although they did not admit the notion of multiple goods in theory, the Stoics did acknowledge ranges of appropriate desirability within the category of *adiaphora* without allowing those things intrinsic goodness. The preferable indifferent (*τὸ καθῆκον / officium*) may be
considered useful or expedient (τὸ συμφέρον / utile) and thus properly selected given the opportunity. Only the honestum (translating the Greek, τὸ καλὸν) has intrinsic worth, however, for it alone consists of moral intention. So selection of the preferables involves discerning a tentative means-ends relation between things preferable and intrinsically good. Preferables and the honestum appropriately constitute proximate and ultimate ends, respectively.

Thus ethical monism and a plurality of lesser values are rendered compatible. But this story, stretching from the Stoics’ moral distinctions to Augustine’s account of the heart’s act of “connecting up,” meanders through a detour of technical distinctions and their replacement in Cicero’s Latin.

In order to safeguard their distinction, and the invincibility of moral goodness in itself, the Stoics produced a technical distinction within their vocabulary. The immediate or proximate goal of action bore the name of “target” or σκοπός. The target was a corporeal entity (whether it be an artifact to obtain or an action to perform). In contrast, the end or τέλος of one’s action was an incorporeal ‘sayable’ (λέκτόν / dicible). Thus the σκοπός–τέλος distinction in the realm of ethical action was analogous to the φωνή – λέκτόν distinction in logic. We might describe the end as a proposition, which is related to the target and forms the content of one’s moral intention through assent. So a speaker’s voice might be drowned out by another noise.

240 Aristotle used the terms interchangeably, cf. Pol. VIII.13, 1331b28-33.
without changing what the speaker means, so the target of one’s actions may prove unobtainable without depriving the agent’s end of its intention. Therefore, the sage’s end can never be diminished by external failure for it is formulated with reservation (Seneca, tranq. XIII.2-3; ben. IV.34, 4-5; Epictetus, Ench. 62, 2; Marcus Aurelius, med. IV.1,2; V.20,2; VI.50,2). And a singular τέλος constitutes a singular point of intentional focus.

Cicero, never one given to abstruse distinctions, seems aware of the Stoic jargon but does not attempt to translate it in his summaries of Stoic thought. The τέλος travels under a copious variety of names in his accounts – extremum, ultimum, summum or simply finis (fin. III.VII.26). But he never offers a Latin equivalent for σκοπός. In one passage, Cicero seems to have the distinction in mind (fin. III.VI.22). But he omits the technical terms and instead utilizes the submerged metaphor of archery to illustrate the distinction. The ultimum consists in doing everything within one’s power to aim well. But actually hitting the mark is simply preferable or to be selected, not desired (... ut feriat, quasi seligendum, non expetendum., fin. III.VI.22).

So how does the crucial connection between preferred indifferents and goods find a home in Latin? In place of Stoic jargon, Cicero substituted a more hermeneutic language to describe the relation between proximate goals and the more basic objective at hand. Cum uero illa quae officia esse dixi profiscantur ab initiis naturae, necesse est ea ad haec referri, ut recte dici posit omnia officia eo referri ut adipiscamur principia

Note Cicero here assumes Antipater’s unorthodox gloss – “to do all that is clearly and inviolably within one’s power to attain the primary natural advantages” (πάν τὸ καθ’ αὐτὸν ποιεῖν δηνεκὼς καὶ ἀπαραβάτως πρὸς τὸ τυγχάνειν τῶν προηγουμένων κατὰ φύσιν., SVF III.Ant.57) – on the more orthodox dictum, coined by Diogenes, “to act rationally in the selection of natural advantages” (ό μὲν οὖν Διογένης τέλος φησὶ ρητός τὸ εὐλογιστεῖν ἐν τῇ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ἔκλογῃ. D.L.VII.88 = SVF III.Dio.45).
naturae... (fin. III.VI.22). To make an appropriate activity one’s proximate end is to refer or mentally connect that activity in a subordinating relation with the higher, ultimate end. Thus connected in one’s intentions, the proximate goal is effectively used for the sake of a higher end. The Stoic’s singularity of intention remains intact, for inner tension is concentrated upon the end referred to (fin. III.VI.33).

In this period, Augustine initially makes use of Cicero’s utile-honestum distinction (diu. qu. 30-31), before developing his own distinction between usus and frui (doctr. chr. 1.3.3ff). But the element of referentiality between the binaries remains constant, even when the words change. The honestum, Augustine explains, is what should be sought propter se ipsum. Conversely, useful things find their value only in connecting up with something other and better (...utile autem quod ad aliud aliquid referendum est, diu. qu. 30). The language is still Cicero’s (cf. fin. III.VI.21). But Augustine now maps Tully’s distinction, however awkwardly, onto a Christian-NeoPlatonic scale of intuited values (honestatem uoco intellegibilem pulchritudinem, quam spiritalem nos proprie dicimus, utilitatem autem diuinam prouidentiam, diu. qu. 30).

Here we must consider how Augustine intertwines the acts of “connecting things up” and “intuiting” in the oculi cordis. The heart, in the act of connecting things up, implicitly answers the question addressed to any object or activity, “propter quid?” The answer received constitutes the agents intended end. Just as the Stoics, Augustine places the moral value of an action in its intended end - finis enim quo referuntur ea quae facimus, id est propter quem facimus quicquid facimus, si non solum inculpabilis sed etiam laudabilis fuerit, tunc demum etiam facta nostra laude aliqua digna sunt (mor. II.27). Thus, Augustine can contrast the prodigious endurance of Catiline, with that of the Apostles. Catiline’s ostensible virtue was vicious because he endured hunger and
cold for the sake of sating a grosser cupidity. The Apostles bore such things for the sake of quashing distorted desires and forcing them to serve reason (mor. II.28).

But Augustine is convinced that the question of reference can never be answered without prior intuition. The hierarchy of values must be established and the deep structure of things discerned before one can determine the proper way to mentally connect them to each other. One early text provides a particularly clear illustration of the prior-posterior relation between intuition and reference (lib. arb. II.41-42). Augustine had not invented his concept of heart yet, but he had already effected the synthesis between these acts, which he later mapped onto his concept of heart.

In context, Lady Wisdom is calling the soul back within where she deigns to meet the soul. And she does so by the very traces she leaves on external, bodily things. An act of intuition reveals beauty in form and number within form (intuere caelum et terram et mare et quaecumque in eis uel desuper fulgent uel deorsum repunt uel volant uel natant. formas habent quia numeros habent, lib. arb. II.42). Wisdom leaves traces, leading back to herself, so the soul could understand that acts of comparison would be impossible without prior possession of a law of beauty to which externals are referred (ut... in te ipsum reedes atque intellegas te id quod adtingis sensibus corporis probare aut inprobare non posse, nisi apud te habeas quasdam pulchritudinis leges ad quas referas quaeque pulchra sentis exterius, lib. arb. II.41). Reference presupposes the hierarchy of values is already in place. And one ascertains that Platonic hierarchy by means of intuition.

The oculi cordis at once intuits the hierarchical scale of values and refers things to other entities against the backdrop of that scale (pertinet ergo ad oculum mundum non intueri in recte faciendo laudes hominum et ad eas referre quod recte facis, id est propterea recte facere aliquid, ut hominibus placeas, s. dom. m. II.1). This relation
remains stable even as Augustine increasingly applies it to textual interpretation apart from bodily activity (cf., cat. rud. 6, c. Faust. 16.23, ciu. XX.21).

Purity, as singularity of intention, is evaluated according to the singularity or multiplicity of ends *more Stoicorum*. Plurality of proximate goals does not pollute if all the goals tend toward one pure end (s. dom. m. II.56). But the distinction between singularity and multiplicity of ends maps, without remainder, onto the intuited distinction between temporal and eternal goods.243

Temporal goods necessarily entail multiplicity. The Platonizing tendencies are palpable in Augustine’s distinction between eternal and temporal. But a closer investigation helps to circumscribe the specific content of Augustine’s concern. Bodily activity and embodiment *per se* never comprise his concept of temporality. Rather, two concerns loom large.

First, in his psychology of action Augustine has two vicious motivation structures in view. The couplet of wealth and reputation recur as distorted ends to which the vicious refer their activities (*diu. qu. 35.1, s. dom. m. II.8-9, 54-55; and later, *en. Ps. 118,12.2*). On the one hand, valorization of social favor or reputation may lead to ostensibly moral behavior, but it would be mere simulation of goodness (s. dom. m. II.8-9). On the other hand, a squeamish shrinking from bodily discomfort or a cognitive preoccupation with nutritional and monetary necessities could lead to abandoning even external appearances of morality (s. dom. m. II.54-55).

Second, Augustine continues to worry about the tendency to confuse mental imagery (phantasms) with notions of intelligibility (s. dom. m. II.11). The cognitive

243 The one exception, which proves the rule, is Augustine’s anomalous discussion, considered above, of the sexual act paradoxically overcoming distention in a singular intention of sin (s.162.2).
confusion of phantasms with intelligible realities involves elevating a temporal entity to the status of eternity. Epistemological conflations disorder the rigid hierarchy, by which behavioral intentions are given focus, thus compromising moral action.

Only an eternal good can be intended with singularity. Scriptural precept and reproof thus teaches us to refer all our bodily actions to the one end of clinging to God eternal (en. Ps. 17.36). All our service to and benefits from other human beings should likewise be connected up mentally with the end of loving God together (doctr. chr. I.30).

So it comes as no surprise to find Augustine speaking explicitly of ends that purify. Scripture, in its twofold love command, provides the end that cleanses the soul necessarily engaged in bodily activity (ad hunc igitur finem si omnes illos humanae actionis motus numerosque referamus, sine dubitatione mundabimur, mus. VI.43). Referring an activity to a given end simultaneously constitutes the focus of one’s attention in that action. Indeed, Jesus uttered precepts as so many prescriptions for cleansing the heart (s. dom. m. II.11). Only a singular, simple focus upon eternal life, stemming from a pure and lone dispositional love of wisdom, renders the heart clean (…non mundat nisi una et simplex intentio in aeternam uitam solo et puro amore sapientiae, s. dom. m. II.11).

The safest strategy is to adopt a posture of forgetfulness toward the intermediate goals and strive to think only upon the singular end of eternal life (s. dom. m. II.43, 56). But Augustine reluctantly admits this will be impossible for most people while serving in the flesh (s. 103.5), and thus highlights the residual tension in synthesizing intrinsically active and contemplative approaches to happiness (s. dom. m. II.71, 86-87).
Chapter 4

The Anthropology of Grace: Stoic Compatibilism, Psychology of the Passions and Grace Irresistible (394-396)

Setting the Stage: Augustine’s Early Account of Pauline Election

Soon after Augustine’s appointment to the episcopacy in 395, Simplicianus, the aged successor to Ambrose in Milan, writes to beg answers to several questions (ep. 37 is Augustine’s immediate, promissory response). Simplicianus’ first two questions elicited explanations of Rom. 7:7-25 and Rom. 9:10-29, respectively. In retrospect, Augustine pinpoints this work as his first steps toward placing the initium fidei within a larger doctrine of election (retr. I.I; praed. Sanct 4.8; perseu. 20.52; 21.55). Indeed, according to his later memory, this conclusion came almost against his will (retr. II.1). Strongly echoing Saul of Tarsus’ conversion (cf. Acts 26:14), the old bishop describes struggling to avoid seeing the beginnings of faith as primarily extrinsic to free human choice. But grace conquered in the course of this composition244 (… in cuius quaestionis solutione

244 For treatments of Augustine’s reconstrual of grace as a “second” or “final” conversion, see Pegis, Anton. 1975. “The Second Conversion of St. Augustine” in Gesellschaft, Kultur, Literatur: Rezeption und Originalität im Wachsen einer europäischen Literatur und Geistigkeit. Stuttgart., pp.79-93 and Ferrari, Leo. 1984. The Conversions of Saint Augustine. Villanova, pp. 70-84. I do not doubt Augustine would have agreed to the term “conversio” in describing this moment. But the edginess that descriptor carries in contemporary circles draws on an assumption Augustine certainly did not share. This assumption is that conversion is supposed to be a one-time, once for all sort of event (an idea shared by many ancients, cf. the Stoic notion of “surfacing” as witnessed in Plutarch’s Comm. not. 1061e-1062).
laboratum est quidem pro libero arbitrio voluntatis humanae, sed uicit dei gratia,
retr.II.1).

Grace may well have conquered. But a string of conceptual alterations leading up to Simpl. I.2 made that victory fairly predictable. For two years prior Augustine had been engaged in a wrestling match with key Pauline texts. The primary trace of that encounter is found in a series of fragmented notes recording responses to questions from within the community at Hippo (diu. qu. 66 & 68; ex. prop. Rm.). Two commentaries, one barely begun and the other complete, also provide important insights into his developing interpretation of Pauline grace (ep. Rm. inch; exp. Gal.).


The doctrines of grace and election that Augustine embraced in his early Pauline exegeses are easy to summarize.\textsuperscript{247} Prior to \textit{Simpl. I.2}, Augustine sees grace as a God-given bridge over the gap between a good will and a good deed. That gap was opened up by the Fall. Human beings, after Adam, can desire to do good works but cannot manage works of obedience without God’s grace to help (\textit{nostrum enim est credere et uelle, illius autem dare credentibus et volentibus facultatem bene operandi per spiritum sanctum, ex. prop. Rm. 61.7}). Grace helps humans fulfill their good intentions by infusing sufficient love to complete intended acts of obedience (\textit{ex. prop. Rm. 48.9; 61.7}).

Paul is clear. Grace’s help comes only to those who believe. But, where does the belief come from? Prior to \textit{Simpl. I.2}, Augustine understands faith’s origin to be a purely human, freely chosen act (\textit{ex. prop. Rm. 60.12}). One can believe simply by choosing to assent to the gospel call, and then grace reliably empowers the human will to obey out of love (\textit{In libero autem arbitrio habet, ut credat liberatori et accipiat gratiam... ex. prop. Rm. 44.3}).

But Paul also says God predestines – chooses people before they are born. In his early Pauline exegeses, Augustine consistently subordinates God’s choice to his foreknowledge.\textsuperscript{248} God’s predestination, in this view, is simply a matter of God acknowledging in advance what he foreknows of free human choices in faith (\textit{nec praedestinavit aliquem, nisi quem praesciuit crediturum et secuturum vocationem suam, quos et electos dicit... ex. prop. Rm. 55.5}). Justice requires some form of desert to

\textsuperscript{248} Throughout his life, Augustine maintains a distinction between God’s foreknowledge (or, more properly, simply eternal knowledge), which does not cause events, and predestination whereby God’s choice causally determines events. Cf. Sorabji, Richard. 1983. \textit{Time, Creation and the Continuum} London: Duckworth pp.253-267 for analysis.
differentiate between those whom God chooses (*si enim nullo merito non est electio, aequales enim omnes sunt ante meritum nec potest in rebus omnino aequalibus electio nominari, ex. prop. Rm. 60.8*). The Pauline surprise, on Augustine’s first reading, is simply that merit accrues to faith not works (ex. prop. Rm. 62.12). So the justly deserved grace of election is rooted in God’s choice by foreknowledge of faith, not works (*...non quidem deus elegit opera, ... sed tamen elegit fidem, ex prop. Rm. 60.9*). This is a fair arrangement because belief is strictly within the capacity of our free will, but actions are not this side of Eden (*quod ergo credimus, nostrum est, quod autem bonum operamur, illius, qui credentibus in se dat spiritum sanctum., ex. prop. Rm. 60.12*).

**Anthropological Conceptions Beneath the Early Pauline Exegeses**

So what prompts Augustine’s momentous change as he composes a reply to Simplicianus? The most elemental and precise answer is simple. Foreknowledge of faith and foreknowledge of works were no longer sufficiently distinct concepts for Augustine to explain differentiations in God’s choices (cf., *Simpl. I.2.5* for the moment this dawns on Augustine). But in order to explain why, we must first consider key developments in Augustine’s psychology of action and belief over the course of his priestly exegetical work.

A close examination of Augustine’s anthropological concepts in his early Pauline exegesis reveals a close interaction between his readings of Paul and his discoveries.

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sparked by commenting on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Our last chapter highlighted the entwined uses Augustine made of Stoic and Platonic conceptualities in interpreting Jesus’ admonition to purity of heart. This chapter must build upon it.

About the time Augustine achieved a stable conception of the heart and the moral ideal of purity therein, the questions of his brothers at Hippo beckoned him into the world of detailed Pauline exegesis. These early exegeses show Augustine’s considerable, ongoing debt to Stoic conceptualities in constructing his characteristic interpretation of Paul. By closely examining Augustine’s mixture of Dominical, Pauline and Stoic anthropological concepts through this period, we will illuminate the precise matrix of that historic decision in the ad Simplicianum I.2.

The Four Ages: Augustine’s Analysis of Consent prior to ad Simplicianum I.2

The primary anthropological developments emerge in Augustine’s glosses on Paul’s cryptic description of life sine lege (Rm. 7:9ff) in contrast to the arrival of precepts and mandates, which result in a manifest mastery of sin. Paul’s own account describes strange alterations in the act of consent after the arrival of law (Rm. 7:16-17). Augustine also saw a clear articulation that divine grace created a third state of victory over sin and hints of a final resolution achievable only with the end of bodily mortality (Rm. 7:24-25).

By synthesizing this progressive, historical movement with his earlier structural picture of the struggle for consensual purity within the heart, Augustine invented a

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250 For a helpful discussion of Augustine’s tendency at this point to read Paul through a gospel lens, albeit without any specific focus on the anthropological concepts involved, see the introductory essays in Plumer, Eric. 2003. Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes. Oxford: Oxford Early Christian Studies.
schema of the four stages or levels (gradus) of human spiritual development – ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia, in pace (diu. qu. 66.3; ex. prop. Rm. 13-18; exp. Gal. 36).251

Augustine’s first formulation of the four stages is cast in terms of overcoming or being overcome by carnal desire and habit (diu. qu. 66.3ff).252 By his second voicing of the schema, however, Augustine prefers to highlight a different set of terms that enable a greater degree of nuance. This formulation becomes his standard:

We distinguish therefore these four levels of humankind: before law, under law, under grace and in peace. Before law we follow the desire of the flesh, under law we are dragged by it, under grace we neither follow it nor are dragged by it, in peace there is no desire of the flesh (ex. prop. Rm. 13-18).

itaque quattuor istos gradus hominis distinguamus: ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia, in pace. ante legem sequimur concupiscentiam carnis, sub lege trahimur ab ea, sub gratia nec sequimur eam nec trahimur ab ea, in pace nulla est concupiscentia carnis (ex. prop. Rm. 13-18).

251 Of course, in so doing, Augustine also displaced his early usage of the traditional six ages of man as the primary schema for human life and history – infantia, pueritia, adolescentia, iuventus, grauitas et senectus. Cf. Gn. adu. Man. 1.35, 40; diu. qu. 58.2; 64.2. Hereafter, the four ages found in Paul become Augustine’s primary schema.


252 In Senecan terms, Augustine’s earliest description turns on the presence or absence of third movements, constituted by the vanquishing of reason (cf. ira II.4.2). The distinctions between these “movements” and Augustine’s appropriation of them will be explained below.
The submerged metaphor has changed. Instead of a battle, issuing in victory or defeat, Augustine envisions human relation to fleshly desires as akin to being tied behind an unstoppable source of motion – perhaps a horse drawn cart. So one is either dragged or follows, or is by grace cut loose. The metaphoric setting has evolved from a battle to its aftermath. The key metaphors now conjure a train of captives. But one might properly ask why the choice of metaphor and whence does it derive? Do these specific metaphors hearken back to an identifiable philosophical patrimony? If so, what submerged connections do these metaphors disclose?

Augustine correlates these metaphors with specifically nuanced mental acts vis-à-vis carnal desire and divine precept. Again the associated terminology of mental acts proves philosophically pregnant.

Following (*sequi / sectari*) or being led (*duci*), which Augustine uses interchangeably (*exp. Gal. 47*), amounts in psychological terms to consent in the fullest sense. The early Pauline exegeses employ several descriptive phrases to highlight the qualitative distinction of consent in following.

Following only happens when a person is willing in an undivided way. So Augustine clarifies the first stage of human existence (*sequimur concupiscentiam carnis*) as implying the absence of even partial (*ex parte*) resistance to cupidity (*exp. Gal. 46.4*). Likewise, approval (*approbare; ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.3*), or an unqualified consent, prove apt for describing the first stage of human existence. So, for instance, Paul lists the works of the flesh to show the Galatians that “*si ad operandum ista desideriis carnalibus consenserint, tunc duci carne non spiritu*” (*exp. Gal. 48.1*). In the context of following God’s call, not carnal desire, Augustine will associate following with free choice (*ex.*
prop. Rm. 60.15). But Augustine seems to be chary of describing any act of following carnal desire as an exercise of free choice. For it clashes with his underlying metaphor of overarching constraint in motion.

To be dragged (trahi), on the other hand, is associated with a range of terms that all refer to lesser forms of consent (ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.3; exp. Gal. 46.5, 9; 54.2; Simpl. I.9.9-10). Several times Augustine implies that dragging is a subspecies of consent. The demonstration of this is that whenever consent is withheld, both following and being dragged are prevented (ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.8-9 & 45-46). This is the defining feature of transition from life sub lege to sub gratia.

When Augustine first uses the terminology of being dragged by desire to identify the second stage of human existence, this term is contrasted with willing consent as being unwilling yet overcome (...nolumus facere, sed... superamur., ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.3). But the fullest description comes in his reflections on Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

Dragging refers to what happens when simultaneous desires for temporal and eternal goods come into conflict (exp. Gal. 46.5). Given the psychology of action Augustine has incorporated from the Stoics, no action is possible without consent or some analogue to consent. Dragging occurs when the “weight of temporal desire” leads one to action despite partial resistance from contrary desires (exp. Gal. 46.5). Augustine thinks of this fragmentation of impulse in which lower drives override higher desires as a sort of captive consent (... dum eam concupiscentia carnis in consensionem peccati captiuam ducit..., exp. Gal. 46.9). So, in the case of equal yet opposed desires, one cannot
follow but only be dragged or paralyzed – stranded afloat, as it were, amid the flux of changing desiderative tides (exp. Gal. 54.2).\

The most telling and technically precise identification of the dragging metaphor occurs in Simpl. I.1.9. Augustine composed this response immediately prior to his momentous restructuring of divine election and the initium fidei. Augustine uses the Stoic technical term “to yield” (cedere) in order to identify the psychological process metaphorically tagged “being dragged” (loquitur enim adhuc ex persona hominis sub lege ... qui profecto trahitur ... cupiditas quippe id operatur, cui superanti ceditur., Simpl.I.1.9). To fully understand the developments in Augustine’s theology of grace in terms of his changing anthropology, we must carefully consider the significance of this equation.

Collation of Key Terms in Four Ages

Having conducted a preliminary identification of Augustine’s terminology concerning the four stages of human existence, I venture two observations leading to two questions.

The first observation pertains to the distinction between graced life and its consummation in pace (stages three and four). Since the specific difference between sub gratia and in pace existence consists in a change in the flesh, one would expect the difference between ante legem, sub lege, and sub gratia existence to consist in changes of mind or spirit. This expectation receives explicit confirmation by Augustine (nondum enim etiam corpus reformatum est in caelestem illam immutationem, sicut spiritus iam

\[^{253} id sectabimur, quod amplius dilexerimus, si tantundem utrumque diligatur, nihil eorum sectabimur, sed aut timore aut inuiti trahemur in alterutram partem aut, si utrumque aequaliter etiam timemus in periculo, sine dubio remanebimus fluctu delectationis et timoris alternante quassati., exp. Gal. 54.2 \]
mutatus est reconciliacione fidei ab erroribus conuersus ad deum., ex. prop. Rm. 53.20).

The transition from *sub lege* to *sub gratia* existence manifests precisely as a change in *spiritus*.

The second observation seeks specificity concerning the distinction between the graced life and what precedes (between stage three and the first two stages). In *sub gratia* existence we no longer follow nor are dragged by carnal desires, but carnal desires do persist. We simply do not consent to them (*ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.8-9 & 45-46*).

Withholding consent is the new element of action under grace. But in the two preceding stages, wherein we consented to carnal desire, a distinction is made between following (as full consent) and being dragged (as yielding or captive consent; *exp. Gal. 46; Simpl. I.1.9*).

So two programmatic questions follow. Where does this root metaphor of following and being dragged come from? And, what is the specific difference in psychology of action between consent in following and “captive consent” or yielding in being dragged? Both these questions lead us back to key distinctions formulated among the Stoics to deal with theoretical tensions internal to their philosophy.

**Stoic Matrix of Key Terms in their Thought World I: Dragging v.s. Following**

Competing philosophic schools\(^{254}\) in the ancient world never tired of pointing out the tensions between Stoic macrocosmic and microcosmic teachings.\(^{255}\) The Stoics’ global

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picture turned on an affirmation of the complete determination of each detail of the cosmos (SVF II.937). This much seemed the necessary correlate of universal ordering according to Divine Reason (SVF II.943). Sufficient reason requires that everything have a cause, a due explanation (SVF II.945). Causes, by definition, make their effects necessary. Universal reason implies universal causation. Universal causation renders necessity universal. An all-pervasive fate follows (SVF II.917).

When dealing with human beings, however, Stoics emphasized the inherent freedom of the ἡγεμονικόν or principale to assent or dissent to the λεκτόν imbedded in any presentation and thus live free of fate (cf. e.g., Epictetus' Diss. I.1.24; I.1.26). The entire world external, including one’s body, is enmeshed in the chain of antecedent causes named fate. But assent and dissent is up to us (ἐφ’ ἤμιν / in nostra potestate)


255 The earliest weighty opponent was Carneades the Academic (cf. Cicero’s echo “qui introducunt causarum seriem sempiternam, ei mentem hominis voluntate libera spoliatam necessitate fati deuinciunt., fat.IX.20). But, one must also call to mind Plutarch’s De Stoicorum repugnantis and the peripatetic polemic of Alexander of Aphrodisias in his De fato.


257 μηδὲν γὰρ ἀναιτίως μήτε εἶναι μήτε γίνεσθαι τὸν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ διὰ τὸ μηδὲν εἶναι τὸν ἐν αὐτῷ ἀπολελυμένον τε καὶ κεχωρισμένον τῶν προγεγονότων ἀπάντων., SVF II.945

258 οἱ Στοικοὶ εἰμικόν αἰτιῶν, τοιτέστι τάξιν καὶ ἐπισύνθεσιν ἀπαράβατον., SVF II.917

and thus free. Or, at least, it can be in principle. The capacity for choice, \( \pi\rho\omicron\omega\iota\rho\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma \), lies within the individual’s immediate control alone. And therein lays the nucleus of moral value and responsibility.

The tension becomes most acute when one considers that the freely assented actions of human beings must themselves be an integral part of a universally determined world (SVF II.943). If Diogenes’ siring of a child with his slave girl is fated, the passion of lust, which drove his misconduct, must also be fated. If the passion is fated, the assent to false presentation, which caused the passion, also falls under fate’s dictates (cf. Cicero, fat. XVII.40). Free choice dissolves into fate... or does it?

The Stoics employed sophisticated arguments to demonstrate the compatibility between free will and fate. Two of these arguments, and their associated metaphors, are relevant to our project in this chapter.

The first, and earliest, argument comes from Chrysippus. Two textual witnesses have survived, namely, Cicero’s de fato XVIII.41-XIX.45 and Aulus Gellius’ Noctes Atticae VII.2. Chrysippus’ argument turns on a crucial distinction between levels of causation (...}

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260 Of course, the very capacity for assent makes slavery in the deepest sense possible, cf. Epict. Diss. IV.1.54-67. Everything hangs on the use to which one puts it. Specific training for dealing with external impressions is modeled in Diss. III.8.

261 One genre of arguments against Stoic causal determinism is typically labeled the “lazy argument.” In essence, opponents accused the Stoic doctrine of removing all motivation for work or moral improvement. After all, if everything is determined why bother? (cf. e.g. Cicero fat. XII.28-XIII.30). Chrysippus’ response is that certain events can only be conceived as “co-fated” with others. The argument for compatibility between free will and fate to follow is a subspecies of this notion of co-fatedness. In this case, that susceptibility to moral failure can only be co-fated with a prior, morally negligent state of internal character. Cf. Bobzein, Susanne. 1998. Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy. Oxford: Clarendon Press pp.180-233.

causarum generā distinguīt... fat. XVIII.41). Fate provides only the proximate or auxilary cause (... cum dicimūs omnia fato fieri causis antecedentibus... hoc intellegi... causis adiuuāntibus et proximis, fat. XVIII.41). The proximate cause refers to external circumstances, which specifically determines the form of some presentation (fat. XVIII.42). Without an external presentation, there could not be any assent or dissent (necesse est enim assensionem uiso commouerī, fat. XVIII.42).

But how the soul actually moves in response to that presentation will depend upon the internal state of the soul. The soul’s own degree of internal tension or flaccidity constitutes the primary or perfect cause of assent (fat. XVIII.41).

In order to render this subtle distinction intuitive, Chrysippus employed an analogy between the soul’s degree of tension and the shapes of physical artifacts. Specifically, Chrysippus asked his interlocutors to consider the divergent motions of a cylinder and a cone, respectively, when struck by an identical force (fat. XIX.43).

Force here corresponds to those presentations fated to externally press in on a person. The cylinder will roll and the cone will spin when identical external conditions are applied. And although the cylinder received a push from outside (the external-proximate cause), that push did not bestow “rollability” (uolubilitatem autem non dedit, fat. XIX.43) upon the cylinder. So the primary cause of rolling, as opposed to spinning, lies within the cylinder itself.

Analogously, the vicious person cannot fall into passion without an external presentation. But the assent granted to that presentation and the duration of the

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ensuing passion directly follows from the specific lack of inner tension within each soul (fat. XIX.43). Herein lies primary causality and moral responsibility. This distinction between fated external causes and the internal cause of each person’s character preserves moral freedom and renders responsibility compatible with a world of thoroughly fated occurrences (fat. XIX.44).

In essence the Stoics defined the freedom of an action or belief in terms of willingness (as located in assent to the impulsive presentation) and not in terms of counter-factual possibility (which is not articulated as a competing theory until Alexander of Aphrodisias early in the third century A.D.).

Chrysippus’ distinction formed the backbone of Stoic responses to questions concerning the compatibility of free will and fate. But another analogy became common among Roman Stoic teachers in the context of moral exhortation. When Cleanthes hymns his praise to Zeus, acquiescing to whatever may be fated (SVF I.527), the Roman Stoics supply a metaphorically pregnant ending for the purposes of moral exhortation. “The fates lead the willing, and drag the unwilling” (Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt, Seneca, ep. 107.10).

External necessity will proceed as fated. But moral praise and blame are properly attached to the inner tension of persons within those fated circumstances. To willingly enter the fated hardship, to choose what fate dictates, amounts to following God (Epictetus Diss. III.10.18-19). This is morally praiseworthy (Diss. III.23.42). Those

who are unwilling to embrace fated circumstances are, nonetheless, dragged by external constraint. Blame rightly attaches to this mental state.

The key terms, as they appear in Augustine’s description of the four ages, derive from Seneca’s additions to Cleanthes’ hymn. But the analogy of the dog and cart is amplified in Epictetus’ applications of the hymn for moral exhortation (Ench. 53.1). Thereafter, the metaphor becomes a commonplace in Roman Stoic explanations of free will and determinism in contexts where moral exhortation is the overarching concern driving the resolution (Epictetus, Ench. 53.1, Seneca, ep. 107.10-11; uita beata 15.6…).

That Augustine knows the Stoic provenance of this metaphor, at least late in life, is clear from a direct quotation he offers of the Senecan lines in ciu. V.8. Of course, Augustine implies an early familiarity with Seneca’s corpus in his shocked memory of the dearth of Faustus’ reading (...et quia legerat aliquas Tullianas orationes et paucissimos Senecae libros..., conf. 5.11).

**Stoic Matrix of Key Terms in their Thought World II: Yielding vs. Consenting**

The second set of Stoic distinctions, which Augustine employs in describing the four stages of human existence, originates in a different setting. The distinction between yielding and consenting has a prehistory in early Stoic accounts of the psychology of action in non-rational and rational animals. But the distinction as Augustine uses it is native to the Roman Stoic project of distinguishing between passions and pre-passions. Augustine preserves this distinction between yielding and consenting in the context of the psychology of the passions. But he also maps it onto the Stoic metaphor of the dog and cart in a way the Stoics themselves did not.
Procedural Itinerary

Since this section will inevitably be complex, a brief statement of our itinerary may be helpful. First, we will offer a basic explanation of how three key distinctions of Roman Stoic psychology of the passions developed within their own thought world. This task comprises relating the early Stoic’s developmental usage of the yielding-consent distinction. With that in hand, we will explore the developments of the first movement-passion distinction in Roman Stoicism and their accompanying discrimination between movements located in the animus and the mens.

Second, we will observe how Augustine preserved the essence of these distinctions in his priestly period leading up to Simpl. I.2. Of course, Augustine has not yet formulated the four ages or employed the dragging-following distinction. So we will consider how the mens-animus distinction functions for Augustine in the context of morally appraising the passions without any consideration of how this fits into patterns of cosmic determination.

Finally, we will seek an account of how and why Augustine maps the yielding and consenting distinction onto the metaphors of being dragged and following. The Stoics – original authors of both distinctions – never made the connection, why did Augustine?

Native Habitat of Yielding and Consenting: Roman Stoic Theories of the Passions

The Stoics presented the only thoroughly rational psychology of action in the ancient world. All actions are rooted in impulses. Irrational animals automatically produce impulses when a presentation of something as desirable or repulsive strikes their senses. But the impulses of rational animals – gods and human beings over the age of fourteen or so – are theoretically free from determination by the presentation. The


ήγεμονικόν, if sufficiently healthy, can assent to or dissent from the implicit propositional content (λεκτόν) of the presentation. If the ήγεμονικόν gives assent to the λεκτόν of an impulsive presentation, i.e. a presentation of something as appropriately desirable or repulsive, the correlated impulse immediately proceeds.

Because rational assent is given or withheld from the λεκτόν (a meaning capable of being linguistically articulated), the capacity for linguistic elaboration of reasons for or against appropriate action forms the backbone of Stoic explanations both of human action and of moral responsibility.265 Children and beasts simply lack the cognitive equipment to be responsible and thus can be neither moral nor immoral. But some sort of cognitive activity must also connect presentations to impulses in animals and pre-rational human children.

Here the Stoics postulate a series of quasi-capacities including an analogue to assent in pre-rational children and beasts (SVF II.821; Seneca, ira. I.3.6; Varro, ling. Lat. VI.56; Plutarch, De sollertia animalium 961e-f).266 The old Stoics’ είξις / cedere seems to be something like an automatic production of impulse from an impulsive presentation, without judgment intervening (D.L. VII.51). Yielding is a symptom, within the psychology of action, of that sub-rational cognitive flaccidity more specifically located in a general inability to form or judge λεκτόν. In yielding, the beast or child cognitively

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endorses an impulsive presentation as such without reference to any propositional content implicit therein.\textsuperscript{267}

\textbf{A Second Use for Yielding: Recrudescence in Theory of the Passions}

To describe the context in which Augustine would have been introduced to the yielding-consent distinction, we must provide a basic introduction to Roman Stoic theories of the passions.\textsuperscript{268} It would be difficult to overemphasize the significance of Posidonius’ thought in accounting for the eventual shape of Roman Stoic accounts of the passions.\textsuperscript{269}

Chrysippus’ psychology was so thoroughly rational that no sources of impulse could be acknowledged as independent of the ἂγεμονικόν.\textsuperscript{270} Indeed, Chrysippus identifies impulses and assent so closely that the distinction almost collapses. Impulses,

\textsuperscript{267} for a text distinguishing assent and yielding in the context of impulse, see \textit{SVF III.459}


for all practical purposes, simply are judgments. So passions are misjudgments (SVF III.463-464). Chrysippus’ official definition provides a clear target. A passion is an impulse that overflows and is disobedient to the dictates of reason. But no impulse issues in rational animals without assent. Passions, on Chrysippus’ account, are acts of reason that exceed the bounds of reason. He postulates emotion as reason disobeying reason. At least, such was the criticism of Posidonius.

According to Galen’s testimony, Posidonius’ dissatisfaction with the Chryssipean theory of the passions sprang from his search for causes or sufficient explanation.

Posidonius’ question was simple. If a passion is an act of reason that exceeds the bounds of reason, what is the cause of excessiveness (F161, 164, 168)? Chrysippus’ theory seems to prevent any clear answer. By explicitly denying the existence of any non-rational sources of motion in adult humans, Chryssipus has required the whole of passion to transpire within the ήγεμονικόν. A passion is simply an impulse automatically following from a false judgment. But how would the impulse following on the heels of reason’s judgment disobey reason? The very component of excessiveness seems to imply the involvement of some forces in those human impulses named passions that lie outside reason’s act of assent.

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271 Πάθος δ’ εἶναι φασίν ὀρμήν πλεονάζουσαν καὶ ἀπειθή τῷ οὕρούντι λόγῳ…(SVF. III.378)

Likewise, if passions are essentially false judgments, why do some passions wear off over time regardless of continued assent to false λεκτόν (F165, 166)?273 If reason is the sole cause of its own excessive motion, that excessive motion should precisely match the temporal duration of the false belief. So what accounts for the abatement of my anger, for instance, when the belief that “Marcellinus intentionally caused me real injury” has not changed?274

**Posidonius’ Account of the Passions: A Moderated Stoic Psychology**

By Posidonius’ account, Chrysippus went wrong in denying the existence of non-rational dynamics within the human soul. Galen, always intent on championing the Platonists account, tells us that Posidonius affirmed Plato’s account of non-rational parts of the soul. There is good reason to question Posidonius’ ascription of “parts” to the soul.275 Galen’s polemical task should not be forgotten in reading his description.

But Posidonius does seem to find the resolution to his Chrysippean aporias in

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273 Of course, Chrysippus had postulated that an emotion could only proceed if the belief was “recent” (πρόσφατος, SVF III.463), but this only begged the question why? Cf. Sorabji, Richard. 2000. Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation. Oxford, ch.7

274 Posidonius also may have seen the Chrysippean account as creating a deficient account of human development from infancy to adulthood (F159, 166, 169a-b). What happens, Posidonius might ask, to whatever produces pre-rational, λεκτόν -free impulses of children when they reach the age of reason? For a near total disjunction emerges in Chrysippus’ theory between pre-rational impulses of children and rational adult impulses. Why the developmental discontinuity? Since reason’s assent alone seems too limited to explain the full experience of a passion, might there be some continuity between pre-rational impulse in children and the source of excessiveness in those adult impulses identified as passions (F159)?

acknowledging a multiplicity of dynamics within the soul, some of which are distinctly non-rational.

Posidonius’ term for these non-rational dynamics within the human soul is παθητικά κινήσεις (F153) or αἱ κατὰ πάθος κινήσεις (F158, 169.115). Pathetic movements on Posidonius’ reckoning were neither constituted by rational judgment (as in Chrysippus) nor followed from rational judgment (as with Zeno). Prior to either mental state, this pathetic dynamic of soul produced a variable “emotional pull” (παθητική ὀλκή) with which the ruling faculty must contend in making judgments (F169e).

Pathetic movements are wholly non-rational in origin. Appealing to an analogy with bodily momentum as the source of excess in athletic blunders, Posidonius construes the specific excessiveness of impulse in passion, which outstrips rational judgment, as due to the non-rational pressure of an underlying pathetic movement (F34).

Posidonius’ account advanced Stoic theory by allowing for continuity between pre-rational impulses in children and the ongoing pathetic movements within rational adults. Children and animals do, on Posidonius’ account, experience the same motions registered as anger and fear in rational adults. The source of excess is of one piece. An added layer of complexity and moral significance adheres to the passions of rational adults, but the source of non-rational excessiveness remains the same.

At this point, one might well ask why was Posidonius still considered a Stoic? The answer is simple. Despite acknowledging the existence of non-rational sources of motion in the soul and identifying the principle of passionate excess within it, for Posidonius there was no passion in the adult human without the assent of the ruling
faculty. Pathetic movements, in rational animals, are not passions. If non-rational motions could constitute full passions, Posidonius would have been a Platonist (at least as far as his psychology of action is concerned). The Platonist’s soul is so compartmentalized that a full passion could be underway in the appetitive part while the mind or rational part is free from passion (Enn.I.2.3-5; III.6.5). No Stoic could concur.

While Posidonius dissents from Chrysippus in acknowledging multiple, internal sources of motion, Posidonius is fully Stoic in affirming that passions proper only ensue when the false impression is assented to by the ruling faculty. While he envisions a different environment of judgment in which internal movements may press the ἡγεμονικόν to assent to a false impression, Posidonius still affirms that the ἡγεμονικόν is singular and the sole locus of moral responsibility. For this reason Posidonius is a Stoic indeed.

Seneca’s First Movements: How Chrysippus and Posidonius can both be accommodated

The earliest interactions of Romans with Stoic thought transpired through the favor of Posidonius’ teacher, Panaetius, in the Scipionic circle. Cicero later studied with Posidonius in Rhodes in 78-77 B.C. So through Cicero, Posidonius’ ponderous intellect shaped the earliest Latin philosophical writings.

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Posidonius’ thought posed a powerful challenge to Chrysippean Stoicism. But the Roman Stoics of the first century A.D. looked for ways to identify with the earlier school as a whole. Chrysippus and Posidonius both held valuable insights and the Roman Stoics sought to reconcile this intergenerational conflict.

Seneca’s theory of the passions demonstrates a nuanced effort to accommodate the leading lights of Stoic thought (Zeno, Chrysippus and Posidonius). His strategy is to incorporate the primary insights of each theorist into the storyline of a passion’s lifecycle. The result is an account of the passions in three movements (ira II.4.1-2).

The “first movement” (primus motus) of the soul is not yet a passion, but an involuntary (non voluntarius) momentary effect of a presentation (ira II.4.1). These movements are variously described by Seneca as “quasi praeparatio affectus” (ira II.4.1), or primus ictus animi (ira II.2.2) or agitatio animi (ira II.3.5). Whichever term one latches onto, the effect of these first movements seems to be primarily manifest in the bodily shock (corporis pulsus) and does not imply any consent of the principale (ira II.3.2). The doctrine of first movements seems crafted to subsume, in a more Chrysippean voice, the insights of Posidonius regarding pathetic movements.

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279 Seneca likens these movements to the stirring effects of dramatic or literary immersion and musical engagement (ira II.2.4-6). One feels alternate sinkings and expansions in the stomach based purely on impressions one knows to be fictional. Muscular tensions prepare for action before any assent issues in true fear or rage (ira II.2.4-6).

The second movement takes the soul across the threshold of passion by voluntarily (*cum voluntate*) assenting to the presentation (*ira II.4.1*). Herein reason commits itself by assenting to the false proposition implicit within the initial presentation. The *principale* misjudges by assenting to the proposition “*oporteat me uindicari, cum laesus sim*” (*ira II.4.1*). The nucleus of Chrysippus’ doctrines is nestled here. Misjudgment creates the passion proper. But no excess of motion has yet disobeyed the *principale* and its *ratio*. By isolating this as a moment within a narrative account, Seneca affirms the core of Chrysippus’ theory.

The third movement (*tertius motus*) of a passion involves the temporary abolition of reason (*rationem euicit, ira II.4.2*). Once reason misjudges an appearance, thereby handing over control, the passion-captivated soul can run beyond reason. This third motion explains why a rational act could lead to a state exceeding reason. Zeno had defined passion as disobedience to reason. The third and final movement of passion depicts the state of a soul in utter disregard and disobedience to reason’s commands.

**The Mens-animus Distinction: A Roman Stoic tendency in the Theory of Passions**

When discussing the distinction between first movements and passions, Seneca has a general tendency to attribute pre-passions to the *animus* alone (cf. *ira I.16.7*). Likewise, Cicero’s discussion of “bites” and “little contractions” tends to locate them in the *animus*

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primarily based on methodological skepticism concerning the use of a reconstructed source (such as Posidonius) as the assumed template by which to interpret the fulsome literary oeuvre of someone like Seneca. Sorabji’s later arguments for Posidonian influence (in Sorabji, Richard. 2000. *Emotion and Peace of Mind: from Stoic agitation to Christian temptation*. Oxford), without addressing Inwood by name, seem the stronger case. 

One might also consider how Seneca incorporates non-rational therapeutic modalities for children akin to Posidonius’, cf. *ira II.18.2-21.11.*
Their usage is far from technical consistency. But Augustine seems to have read their tendencies as loose approximations of a strict technical distinction more fully elaborated in Aulus Gellius.

Aulus Gellius, in his snippet concerning the sage caught in a storm (*Noctes Atticae XIX.1*), creates an impression of technically consistent terminology when translating a fragment of Epictetus’ Fifth Discourse into Latin. In translating Epictetus’ discussion, Aulus Gellius mapped three distinctions onto each other. Aulus Gellius consistently uses *animus* to designate the psychic location of pre-passions. Presentations (*uisa animi*) register in the *animus* and there evoke predictable, yet uncontrollable responses. Even the sage must undergo brief movements, contractions and pallor, simply because the response of the *animus* occurs so much faster than *mens* and *ratio* can perform their duty (*sapientis quoque animum paulisper moueri et contrahi et pallescere necessum est,... quibusdam motibus rapidis et inconsultis, officium mentis atque rationis praeuertentibus, Noct. Att. XIX.1.17*). Thus pre-passions transpire within the *animus* and full-blown passions (which require a misuse of consent as the *officium mentis*) envelope the *mens*.

Aulus Gellius’ translation further specifies the distinction between the pre-passion of the *animus* and the passion of the *mens* as amounting to different degrees of cognitive endorsement of the presentation. The *animus* of sage and fool alike moves involuntarily under the shock of sudden *uisa*. The difference lies in the bestowal of consent, whereby cognitive endorsement constitutes a change in belief. The fool thinks

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282 The paucity of professedly Stoic writings in Latin, outside Seneca, makes it impossible to determine whether this technical precision was indeed the Latin norm.  
283 Of course, we only have the first four *Discourses* in fairly complete form. So we have no original against which to compare Aulus Gellius’ translation.
the presentation, as initially received, is true and immediately gives his assent (*talia esse uero putat et eadem incepta, tamquam si iure metuenda sint, sua quoque adsensione adprobat καὶ προσεπιδοξάζει,..., Noct. Att. XIX.1.19). The sage, on the other hand, undergoes an identical initial disturbance in his *animus*, but does not consent to the appearance (*...uisa istaec animi sui terrifica, non adprobat..., Noct. Att. XIX.1.18*). Soon this withholding of consent is specified as refusing to change his belief about the indifference of the situation (*... sed statum uigoremque sententiae suae retinet..., Noct. Att. XIX.1.20*). Both are moved in *animus*, the sage retains his previous belief structure in his *mens* but the fool’s beliefs mutate with the moment.

A third layer of identification proves critical for Augustine’s reading of the Stoics’ psychology. As Aulus Gellius sums up the importance of his vignette, he lines up one more set of distinctions within this mapping of psychic events. The pre-passion, in the *animus*, which is not assented to and, thus, cannot change one’s beliefs now receives a new name to travel under. This structurally inevitable motion is simply a yielding and not consent (*... in eo tamen breui motu naturali magis infirmitati cedamus quam quod esse ea qualia uisa sunt censeamus, Noct. Att. XIX.1.21*).

Thus the old Stoic analogue to assent in animals and pre-rational children (*ἐξίτις / cedere*) re-emerges to label an important distinction between pre-passionate motions and full-blown passions. Yielding names the motion of soul that occurs without a change in belief or alteration in one’s structure of valuation. Thereby the Roman Stoics acknowledge the continued presence of a certain sub-rational flaccidity around the outer edges of the self where sensation transpires. The *animus* simply endorses presentations without judgment, like a child or beast. Even the sage is not immune at this level.
But yielding bears no moral significance in itself, for it is not “up to me” and thus occurs outside the invulnerable core of the principale. Only consent, firmly within the say of the principale, produces change of belief and thus full-fledged passion within the mens.

**Yielding-Consent and Mens-Animus Distinctions in Augustine prior to Simpl. I.2**

From Augustine’s late retelling of *Noct. Att. XIX.1* in *ciu. IX.4*, Augustine’s perception of Aulus Gellius’ three-layered mapping becomes apparent. Although Augustine steadily insists on referring to all motions of soul as passions (simply distinguishing vicious passions from virtuous passions), the substance of Aulus Gellius’ framework is preserved by steadily placing vicious passions within the mens and virtuous or innocuous passions within the animus. Indeed his overlaying of the animus-mens and cedere-consentire distinctions in *ciu. IX.4* makes the connection more explicit than Aulus Gellius’ text (*... stulti animus eisdem passionibus cedit atque adcommodat mentis adsensum; sapientis autem, quamuis eas necessitate patiatur, retinet tamen de his quae adpetere uel fugere rationabiliter debit ueram et stabilem inconcussa mente sententiam,* *ciu. IX.4*). While this demonstrates explicit textual derivation of the distinction from *Noct. Att. XIX.1* and Augustine’s clear perception at the time of a three-fold mapping of the distinctions, the passage is quite late. So we must seek independent indications of how Augustine used this set of distinctions prior to *Simpl. I.2*.

Although we find no “smoking gun” passages akin to *ciu. IX.4*, Augustine’s very early usage betrays a general affinity to the Roman Stoic distinction between motions in

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284 The indispensable commentary on this text, which prompted me to look more closely for the distinction in Augustine’s earlier works, is Byers, Sarah C. 2002. *Augustine’s Theory of Affectivity*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, pp.75-82
the animus and mens as found in Noct. Att. XIX.1. As early as his return from Cassicacum to Milan, Augustine describes the proper order of the human person in terms of ratio uel mens uel spiritus ruling over the inrationales animi motus, (lib. arb. I.18). Clearly, Augustine acknowledges irrational aspects of the soul and the origination of motions within that sphere. If irrational motions in the soul amounted to fully vicious passions, then Augustine would have hereby placed himself within a Platonist theory of the passions. This text, however, holds no evidence of such a conception. Indeed, these irrational motions seem to be lumped in with basic acts of sensation and appetitive motions of soul we share with the beasts (lib. arb. I.18).

Upon his return to Africa, Augustine continues to exploit the useful distinction. Augustine discerns, within the first chapter of Genesis, an allegorically encoded gradus of spiritual progress. The six days of creation figuratively relate the stages of spiritual growth from the first wobbling steps of faith to the spiritual fecundity of a mature adult. The divine admonition to exercise authority and rule over fish, flying things and crawling beasts entails an allegorical instruction to progressively subject omnes affectiones et motus animi to the dominion of reason (gn. adu. Man. I.31).

The progressive subjection amounts to domesticating the various bestial motions of soul until the non-rational motions, through the renovation of habit, also sate themselves on things morally praiseworthy and rational (pascuntur etiam nobiscum cognitione rationum et morum optimorum et uitae aeternae tamquam herbis seminalibus et lignis fructiferis et herbis uiridibus, gn. adu. Man. I.31). Peace of mind, indeed the happy life, comes when the non-rational motions have been fully domesticated (gn. adu. Man. I.31). One ascends the top rung of the gradus when mens achieves a stable rule over “motus omnes animi” (gn. adu. Man. I.43). In Moses’ figure, God has now produced
live soul from the earth. With the stable rule of mens, the affections serve justice and reason so that both female-emotive aspects and male-rational aspects of soul become the image of God and spiritual fecundity ensues.

In his early priestly period, Augustine immediately reaffirms his conviction that peace comes from the concord present when omnes animi sui motus are subjected to ratio and mens (s. dom. m. I.9). But a deeper affinity with the Roman Stoic theory now emerges as he explicitly distinguishes between vicious and virtuous passions and maps them onto motions in the mens and animus, respectively.

To explain the psalmist’s admonition, irascimini, et nolite peccare (Ps. 4.5), Augustine offers a gloss, “id est, etiam si surgit motus animi, qui iam propter poenam peccati non est in potestate, saltem ei non consentiat ratio et mens” (en Ps. 4.6). The key distinctions from Roman Stoic theory of the passions are all present. Non-vicious passion occurs within the animus and “non est in potestate.” Seneca’s description of first movements specifies that reason cannot control them (ira II.4.2) and Aulus Gellius twice says they are necessary (Noct. Att. XIX.1.13&17). The initial surge can be prevented from developing into a full passion by withholding consent in the mens or ratio. Of course, Augustine further specifies the source of these first movements in the penalty of Adam’s sin. No Stoic could have imagined that. But his basic psychology of vicious and innocuous movements adheres to Roman Stoic usage.

Augustine used the same distinction in psychic location (animus not mens) to identify both what the Stoics called “pre-passions” (motions of soul tending toward vice but not yet vicious) and what the Stoics called “good feelings” (motions of soul considered innocuous or even virtuous). Augustine thinks their refusal to use plain Latin, as it were, and call these motions “passions” amounts to mere pretense and
verbal smoke screening. But Augustine did embrace the underlying conceptual distinction between virtuous, innocuous and vicious motions of soul.²⁸⁵

The distinction comes out most clearly when Augustine considers the difference in the manifestly emotional responses recorded of Peter and Judas in the gospels (s. dom. m. I.74). Following the crucifixion, both register their sin through a movement of soul. But quali paenitentiae was known to God. Here the Roman Stoic distinctions come into play.

Petrine remorse serves as a paradigm of virtuous emotion. The motion is best described, Augustine thinks, as *ad humiliandum et obterendum cor*, which may be further specified as the movement of the *animus* begging forgiveness (s. dom. m. I.74). Earlier in the same text, Augustine commented on Jesus’ admonition to leave one’s sacrifice on the altar and go immediately to one’s brother for forgiveness. No literal motion of body is intended. Rather, Jesus is approving a virtuous motion of the *animus* toward one’s brother that is named humility (*non pedibus corporis sed motibus animi ut te humili affectu prosternas fratri..., s. dom. m. I.27*). Virtuous emotion transpires within the *animus*.

Judas’ remorse, on the other hand, serves as a paradigm of vicious emotion. Judas’ anger with himself (*sibi succensent*) overflows his *animus* to penetrate his *mens* (*quam mentis affectionem..., s. dom. m. I.74*). In keeping with the distinction found in *Noctes Atticae XIX.1*, Augustine glosses this mutation of the *mens* as generation of a false belief. Namely, Judas assented to the proposition that he was already damned (s. dom. m. I.74). Vicious emotions affect the *mens* through change of beliefs.

**Augustinian Permutations:**

**How Yielding and Consent Map onto Dragging and Following.**

The distinction between yielding and consenting is native to the Stoics’ psychology of the passions. The distinction between being dragged and following emerges within discussions of cosmic determination and freewill. The Stoics never linked the two. But Augustine, we have seen, maps them onto each other in the course of inventing the four ages or levels of human existence. Now we must consider how and why Augustine made this crucial identification when the Stoics did not.

One critical difference in usage immediately presents itself. The Stoics used the metaphor of dragging or following to describe the inevitability of externally determined circumstances despite internal resolutions to resist. The externality of force is essential for their resolution of freewill and determinism (cf. Cicero *fat. XVIII.41-XIX.45* and Aulus Gellius *Noct. Att. VII.2*). But, in mapping the dragging and following metaphor onto the psychological distinction between yielding and consenting, Augustine annexes the causal chain from external conditions to intra-psychic dynamics in conflict. The four stages of human existence portray the various relations of internal forces to a moral injunction. Constraining force has moved inward.

Augustine certainly was philosophically disposed to make this connection due to the post-Posidonian elements he found in Roman Stoicism. Already Augustine identified the object of assent in sin as pleasure or delight (*s. dom. m. I.34-35*). Like Posidonius, Augustine envisioned internal forces at work in tandem with external presentations and their implicit propositional content. Irrational movements of delight accompany the external presentation and beckons consent. Thus, moral pressure arises not only from
external presentation but also from inner compulsions. Vice only follows from consent, but a multiplicity of forces acting upon the *principale* complexifies the, perhaps, too elegant account of Chrysippus. Post-Posidonian Stoicism could countenance such a variegated psychology of action.

 Nonetheless, the key factor in this melding of metaphors is clearly Augustine’s concern to explain Paul’s peculiar descriptions of life before law and under law. To be precise, his reading of Paul leads Augustine to envision the internality, not only of morally relevant pressures, but even of necessity. We turn now to examine the Pauline thought behind Augustine’s momentous identification of the yielding-consent and dragging-following distinctions.

*Why Internalize dragging and following?: Pauline Reconfiguration of Fate in Augustine*

The metaphoric distinction between following and being dragged hails from theoretical attempts to reconcile Stoic fate and freewill. Stoic fate simply refers to a chain of antecedent causes that determines (Cicero *diu. I.55*). The universality of causation (by λόγος / ratio) issued in an affirmation of universal necessity (*SVF II.943, 945*). But Augustine discerned two chains of causation in Paul’s explanations of human history and life (esp. *Rm.5-8*).

Of course, the two chains are neither coeval nor co-extensive.

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286 Wolfson, Harry Austryn. 1961. “St. Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy” in Wolfson, Harry Austryn. 1961. *Religious Philosophy: A Group of Essays*. Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press., argues that Augustine’s late concept of freedom is simply a Christianized version of Stoic compatibilism. The patrimony Wolfson ascribed was correct; the simplicity of its baptism was not. He never saw the intricacy and history of that Christianization process. Although, in fairness, his essay was a pledge of further research which he did not live to produce.
But they are real sources of causation and thus necessity. And acknowledgment of necessity makes the dragging and following metaphor intuitively appropriate.  

The links of one causal chain stretch from Adam to each human being through the common condition of bodily mortality (ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.10-12; 36.5; 46.7; 50). The other causal chain is constituted by God’s grace in Christ. God’s grace pours the Holy Spirit into our hearts and supplies the strength to act on the good we intend (quod ergo credimus, nostrum est, quod autem bonum operamur, illius, qui credentibus in se dat spiritum sanctum, ex. prop. Rm. 60.12). Grace is the cause of meritorious action.

What is the principle of efficiency in these causal chains? Delight or love. Even as he uses telltale language of dragging and following to describe our various states of relation to God’s precepts and carnal desire, Augustine explicitly specifies what necessitates in human psychology of action (…quod enim amplius nos delectat, secundum id operemur necesse est... exp. Gal. 49).

The Adamic chain of desiderative causation is anchored in our ongoing state of mortality (ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.10-12; 36.5; 46.7; 50). Mortality creates desires for...

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287 Consider Augustine’s words, much later, in ciu.. V.1, “Quae si propterea quisquam fato tribuit, quia ipsam Dei voluntatem uel potestatem fati nomine appellat, sententiam teneat, linguam corrigat.” The word “fate” is tied into pagan assumptions about impersonal astral causation and must be discarded. But the necessitating chain of causation stemming from God’s choice turns out to be the reality of which “fate” was a shadowy distortion. Here Augustine does not hesitate to praise Seneca for his willingness to follow fate, or invincible God, “Ipsam itaque praecipue Dei summi voluntatem, cuius potestas insuperabiliter per cuncta porrigitur, eos appellare fatum sic probatur., ciu.. V.8. Divine election and grace, are Augustine’s words, late in life, for true fate.

288 This penal state of mortality so conditions our wills that Augustine admits “cum autem de libera voluntate recte faciendi loquimur, de illa scilicet in qua homo factus est loquimur., lib. arb. III.52. The cause of this penal state is the perverted will of Adam manifested in the first sin. But Augustine steadily refuses in this period to ask about the cause of the first sin (lib. arb. III.48; c. Fort. 21-22). Late in life, Augustine will venture that the possibility of sin stems from our creation ex nihilo. Such a being has the
temporal goods. It happens like this. Mortal bodies require provisions to stave off death, thus naturally and inevitably creating desires for those provisions. Bodily action is necessary to secure bodily provisions, which by definition are temporal goods. Thus a degree of desire for temporal goods is built into fallen nature since Adam. Paul’s has a special phrase for this natural pull toward temporal things due to bodily mortality – the law of sin and death (Simpl. I.1.13).

But natural desires are only the starting point for our present condition. By seeking temporal goods through bodily action we ingrain habits (Simpl. I.1.10). These constantly strengthen the inclinations of fallen nature. Habituated impulses produce a greater sense of deprivation when frustrated and a greater sense of pleasure when fulfilled than simply natural desires (mus. VI.33; s. dom. m. I.34-36; diu. qu. 66.3; 70). Moreover, habits rub off quickly in human society, due to the developmental necessity of imitation, so habit weighs down not only individuals but also intergenerational groups (exp. Gal. 8.2).

Together these factors – natura and consuetudo – form a causal chain so powerful that free choice of will is severely circumscribed and amounts to little in human beings apart from grace (Simpl. I.1.10). The only possibility without grace is to follow carnal desire or be dragged by it (diu. qu. 66.6). Seneca’s cart is associated in Augustine’s metaphorical mind with fleshly desires of mortal bodies. Adamic flesh fates those outside grace. Or, it almost does.

There remains one oddly undetermined moment in Augustine’s account prior to Simpl. I.2. The transitional moment from existence sub lege to life sub gratia turns on an possibility of turning again toward nothing, though this cannot be called a cause of sin (ciu.. XIV.26; corrept. 10.28-12.34).
utterly free decision to assent or dissent to God’s call (in libero autem arbitrio habet, ut credat liberatori et accipiat gratiam, ex. prop. Rm. 44.3; quod ergo credimus, nostrum est..., ex. prop. Rm. 60.12). Given the development of his account of necessitating desire and bodily mortality creating inevitable desires, this account can only be seen as exceptional. We must return to this observation below.

Life sub gratia follows from the imposition of a different causal chain in the form of a new found delight in God for God’s sake and justice for justice’s sake (exp. Gal. 4.6; 46.6-7). The new delight flows within, but only after one’s free choice opens the self to grace. This causal chain only attracts, never coerces. So one is now free from carnal servitude, and neither follows nor is dragged by the Adamic cart (ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.8-9 & 45-46). Conversely, one is free now to follow the newly infused delight in God. Not until after 418 does Augustine speak of being dragged by grace (e.g., en. Ps.87.13).

Two factors remain within the free choice of human beings: 1) the initium fidei (ex. prop. Rm. 44.3; 60.12) and 2) the ongoing decision to remain in the grace of the Spirit (ex. prop. Rm. 60.15).²⁸⁹ Both are destined to change. The first in short order. The second will rest undisturbed until roused late in the Pelagian controversy (cf. persue.).²⁹⁰

Before turning to the inevitable demise of Augustine’s early account of God’s predestination in subordination to foreknowledge of faith, we must complete our exposition of the four stages of human existence. Any adequate, genetic description of

²⁸⁹ quod si uocatus uocantem secutus fuerit...in quo permanens - quod nihilominus est in libero arbitrio - merebitur etiam uitam aeternam, ex. prop. Rm. 60.15
Augustine’s notion of the four stages must attend to how it incorporates his recently discovered, Dominical analysis of purity and duplicity of heart.

Pauline Differentiations: How the Four Stages map onto Purity of Heart

We have indicated how the acknowledgment of delight as necessity could prompt Augustine to annex metaphors of dragging and following from Stoic external constraint to intra-psychic dynamics. But why specifically equate dragging with yielding and following with consent? To answer this question, we must consider how Paul’s analysis of moral weakness in Rom. 7:5-25 interacted with the bits of Stoic anthropology Augustine used in explaining Dominical purity and duplicity of heart.

Paul’s account of moral weakness turns on a twisting or fracturing of consent and its relation to determinate impulse (Rom. 7:14-17). Human experience sub lege entails moments of inner contradiction, whereby assent fails to produce a determinate impulse to action and dissent does not in fact dissipate determinate impulses to action (sed ignoro sic dictum est hoc loco, ut intelligatur, non approbo, ex. prop. Rm. 43.2). Fresh from his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, Augustine immediately recognizes this as describing a heart in thorough disrepair. Indeed, Paul must be analyzing the psychology of action inherent in Jesus’ description of the duplex cor (s. dom. m. II.8-9, 40, 43. 49).


Signs of conceptual grafting are clear. We will consider in turn the role of consent, the function of intuited values and referentiality of action, and the centrality of precept in the Dominical admonitions and the four stages of human existence.

**Consent in the Four Stages**

The primary task of the Dominical heart is to produce intention as manifested in consent (*s. dom. m. I.34*). Divergence in modes and objects of consent mark the specific differences between the 3 stages of existence in *ista uita*. According to Augustine’s reading of Jesus, the doubled heart results from combining incompatible intentions. Mixed desires for temporal goods, especially reputation or bodily pleasures, and eternal goods, such as a divine pleasure and eternal life, split one’s inner tension in divergent directions. Dissipation of focus (*distensio*) and loss of moral strength ensue. The heart has lost its purity. When asked how this relates to consent, Augustine considers one has consented to temporal pleasure rather than divine precept (*s. dom. m. I.34-35*).

But Paul’s analysis demands a bit more nuance. Prior to the arrival of God’s law, human beings simply consented to pleasure and did so without a drop of reservation (*exp. Gal. 46.4*). But when God’s law came to persons of twisted desire, whole-hearted consent even to pleasure became impossible. Duplicity of heart runs deeper than Augustine initially expected.

According to Paul, the very act of consent bifurcates. Moral misconduct in *sub lege* existence involves simultaneously consenting to contradictory states of affairs. The *sub lege* human consents to the propositional content of God’s law (*ex eo quod scit consentit legi*) and simultaneously yields (gives weak assent or flaccid endorsement) to the delight of sin (*...ex eo autem quod facit cedit peccato, Simpl. I.1.10*).
Previously, Augustine had conceptualized the conflict between the heart’s present consent and the separable source of determinate impulse named habit. In roughly the same time period, Augustine picks up an unfinished text of *de libero arbitrio* and decides to complete it. The first book breathed a different air. Evil was simply – one might say, monolithically – in the will (*lib. arb. I.1*). In order to attain the good, all one has to do is choose it. And Evodius can barely contain himself with the thought of how easy blessedness could be (*lib. arb. I.29*). But in this final book, written amid his Pauline exegeses, willing isn’t so easy. *Opinio* and *consuetudo* are uncoupled and conflicted (*lib. arb. III.23*). One can know something is good and want to do something else (*lib. arb. III.23*). The new development is that habit’s production of a determinate impulse to action is now explicitly coupled with a sub rational form of consent (*Simpl. I.1.10*).

If habitual action involves a form of consent, there must be some implicit propositional content to which consent is granted.\(^{292}\) Paul portrays this propositional content of habit as a rival set of precepts or law for human life (*uideo aliam legem in membris meis repugnantem legi mentis meae et captiuanatem me sub lege peccati, quae est in membris meis, Rm.7,23; ex. prop. Rm. 45-46; *Simpl. I.1.13*). Bifurcation of consent corresponds to a duality of directives in life – trying to follow two laws, if you will. One set of laws offers directives for acquiring eternal goods and Paul calls this “spirit” or the law of the mind (*Simpl. I.1.13*). A shadow law provides directives for attaining temporal goods. Paul calls this flesh, or the law of sin embedded in mortal human bodies (*Simpl. I.1.13*).

\(^{292}\) One may conceptualize this in terms of the capacity to put the underlying desire into words, such as “another scoop of ice cream will calm my nerves.” Of course, one need not actually articulate desire in that way for it to be capable of articulation.
Augustine finds this deepened sense of cordial duplicity within Paul’s description of life *sub lege*. There is no surprise, then, that Augustine initially portrays *sub gratia* existence as equivalent to Dominical purity of heart. Therein, God’s grace provides the strength to no longer consent – even weakly – to fleshly pleasures (*ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.8-9 & 45-46*). Now eternal goods create greater delight and to them alone is consent granted (*diu. qu. 66.6*). In Paul’s language this is serving the law of God in one’s mind (*ex. prop. Rm.36.4*). But the thick description matches Dominical purity of heart. The identification may become clearer if we move to another aspect of cordial purity.

**Intuition and Reference in the Four Stages**

In *s. dom. m. II.1*, Augustine argued that two acts of heart lie back of consent – intuition and reference. The heart intuits or discerns the relative value of things eternal and temporal and then refers specific actions to differing ends, which correspond to intuited values.\(^{293}\) The various forms and combinations of consent in the three stages of existence in this life correlate precisely to estimation of relative value of temporal and eternal goods.

*Ante legem* existence is beneath duplicity for it attends only to temporal delight without any moral misgivings. One refers every action to temporal pleasure alone. *Sub lege* existence is explicitly described in terms of a doomed duplicity of intentional reference. *Prudentia*, in Paul, names the act of aiming or referring one’s actions toward a perceived good, while the genitive to follow identifies the target. So *prudentia carnis* means aiming for goods of flesh as ends in themselves (*exp. Gal. 46.2-3*). The *prudentia*  

\(^{293}\) Cf. discussion in chapter three above.
carnis cannot please God, because it approaches divine precept as a means to the end of temporal gain. When temporal goods are threatened by obedience, divine precept must be discarded (ex. prop. Rm. 48.2-3; exp. Gal. 46.2-3). Because the underlying cordial capacity to refer means to ends remains, prudentia carnis never completely disappears but transforms into prudentia spiritus like snow on heating transforms into water (ex. prop. Rm. 49.3-5).

Life sub gratia is experienced as a capacity, derived from infused delight, to intuit value and refer action to eternal goods alone (diu. qu. 66.6; exp. Gal. 46.6-7). The external deeds of the graced life, in some cases, may be identical to life sub lege. But the end sought differs - “sed alio fine, quo liberis ea facere decet, id est caritatis…” (exp. Gal. 43.2). Dominical purity of heart exists where action finds a singular end in the pure love of things eternal (s. dom. m. II.11). The capacity to value and refer one’s actions to things eternal now becomes the primary marker of life sub gratia. This change of spirit, moving one from sub lege to sub gratia existence, is now considered to be equivalent to believing (ex. prop. Rm. 53.16-21).

Of course, the residual motions of carnal habit and a mortal’s natural desire for things temporal create a strain for even the pure of heart. But the infusion of charity from the Holy Spirit allows one to serve the law of God with one’s mind, even as the law of sin tugs through one’s mortal body. This capacity sub gratia constitutes a transformation of mind or spiritus. Transformation of body, in pace, will eventually dispense with any natural desire for temporal things due to mortality (ex. prop. Rm. 53.16-21). Intuition and reference to eternal things will then proceed without competition.
Role of Precept in the Four Stages

Divine precepts, and the uses human beings make of them, play a critical role in identifying duplicity and purity of heart. Doubling of heart consists in enacting the bodily action prescribed by divine precept for reasons extrinsic to the goodness and God-giveness thereof. Purity of heart amounts to intending nothing in bodily action but the fulfillment of divine precept. The therapeutic strategy recommended for achieving purity of heart consists in focusing intently on the precept fulfilled in any action and blocking out thoughts of any other consequence or implication of action (s. dom. m. II.43, 56).

At base, the four stages of human existence comprise a historical schematic that centers in a series of changes in relation to divine precept (diu. qu. 66.3; ex. prop. Rm. 13-18; exp. Gal. 36). We start without precepts of law. When precept arrives, the first change in spirit or mind transpires (Simpl. I.1.2-4). We experience two different forms of mental relation to those precepts in this life. Finally, the promise of peace consists in removing the final source of resistance to law within the self, namely the mortality of the body. The substance of each stage is found in an analysis of what blocks or enables fulfillment of divine precept.

The continuing importance of precept should not be missed. The transition from sub lege to sub gratia existence does not involve dispensing with precept. Rather, the precepts move inward by God’s grace. On several occasions Augustine offers alternate terminology for life sub gratia that does not remove law. The one who becomes spiritual by God’s grace is no longer under law but “with law” (similis enim quisque factus ipsi legi facile implet, quod praecipit, nec erit sub illa sed cum illa, ex. prop. Rm. 41.2). Likewise,

294 See discussion in chapter three above.
the just man now lives sub deo (exp. Gal. 17.4) but the law remains. Only his relationship to law has changed. Instead of living under law, he now lives “in law” (in illa est enim potius quam sub illa, exp. Gal. 17.6; also diu. qu. 66.1). Because one’s desires sub gratia burn most ardently for things eternal, the bodily enactment of precept no longer registers as conformity to external demand. Rather, divine precepts simply sketch the external shape of the internal desires already present through grace.

Stoic moral theory had already elucidated a version of this experience through its infamous paradoxes. Solum sapientiem esse liberum, et omnem stultum seruum (par. stoic. V.33). Stoic virtue, goodness and knowledge are ultimately one. One might perform an appropriate action or duty (καθήκοντα / officium) without complete knowledge or even unwillingly (SVF III.495). But morally good or right acts (κατορθώματα / recte facta) require complete willingness, and thus perfect knowledge (SVF III.501). Only a sage can manage a morally good act. We fools merely approximate those actions in the form of duty. 295

But the same knowledgeable willingness, which makes a sage’s action morally praiseworthy, also makes him truly free in the midst of an utterly determined world (SVF I.222; III.355). Quid est enim libertas? potestas uiuendi ut uelis. Quis igitur uiiuit ut uult nisi... qui ne legibus quidem propter metum paret sed eas sequitur atque colit quia id salutare maxime esse iudicat, qui nihil dicit nihil facit nihil cogitat denique nisi libenter ac

295 The internal debate concerning the nature and possibility of progress in virtue (προκόπτειν / procedere) provides the context for analyses of the relative use of precepts (praeepta) and doctrines (decreta). Much of the primary material for the Old Stoics is collected in SVF III.127-168; 491-556. A burgeoning secondary literature is available today: Roskam, Geert. 2005. On the Path to Virtue: The Stoic Doctrine of Moral Progress and its Reception in (Middle-)Platonism. Leuven: Leuven University Press; also, the essays in Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, New York: Routledge.
libere... (parad. Stoic. V.34). The sage no longer needs precept, because perfect understanding obviates the use of any externally imposed command. Nonetheless, his every action would naturally embody true precept (SVF III.520, cf. also SVF III.297, 502). For the sage has internally chosen cosmic order, and his place therein must no longer be externally imposed.

An isomorphic freedom marks the life sub gratia.296 What one experienced as external compulsion under the law, now becomes free expression of graced desires (accedente autem gratia id ipsum quod lex onerose iussaret iam sine onere ac libentissime implemus, diu. qu. 66.1). The Stoics were right. An act committed unwillingly or slavishly cannot be morally praiseworthy. But they lacked the name for true freedom that Jesus supplies. Not omniscience but charity marks the boundary between external compliance and free obedience (iustitiae autem non serviliter, sed liberaliter seruiendum est, id est caritate potius quam timore., diu. qu. 66.1).297 One might manage duplicitous imitations of external precepts, but the central precept of loving God and neighbor cannot be fulfilled by anything but a pure heart. Only the pure, graced heart is truly free and truly obedient to divine precept.

Now we are in a proper position to say why Augustine equated dragging with yielding and following with consent. The metaphor of dragging and following proved


297 Notice that ἀμαρτήματα are frequently defined as actions not in accord with ὀρθὸς λόγος (SVF III.501). Only the omniscient sage can escape sin.
appropriate because Augustine discerned true causation and thus true necessity in Paul's account of human existence. But this necessity is complex. Two forms of obligation or law vie within fallen humans. First, we experience the natural obligation to provide for our mortal bodies with temporal goods. Second, the obligations of divine precept enter and direct us to seek eternal goods alone.

These obligations are distinguishable from, but related to, two sources of desire. Natural (and soon habitual) desires for temporal goods to sate and salve the mortal body are there from birth in mortal experience. Of course, they continue with varying degrees of dominance until the resurrection. But an infused, God-given desire for eternal goods is subsequently awakened by grace. These two desires as they relate to the two forms of obligation constitute distinct chains of causation.

But a gap exists between them. Precept, and with it a sense of obligation to seek eternal goods, intervenes before the corresponding desire is bestowed. The staggered sequence of differing obligations and desires, and the overlap between them, creates the thick texture of human existence portrayed in the four stages.

Desire determines action and belief. But it only does it through the vehicle of consent. Which chain of causation proves victorious (and thus truly necessary), therefore, turns on our graded acts of cognitive endorsement. When I flaccidly endorse impulsive presentations of fleshly desires despite approving the content of divine precept, Adamic flesh necessitates my existence. I am dragged in my yielding. When graced desire and divine precept line up, I rationally endorse the superior value of eternal goods and act accordingly. Grace has conquered. I follow God in my consent to his precept. While the key terms involved are Stoic, they converge here for the first time.
because the experiential terrain they are used to describe is distinctively Pauline, not Stoic.

**Ad Simplicianum I.2 and the Demise of a Distinction: Why Faith cannot Merit differently than Works**

We come at last to Augustine’s momentous realization reached in the midst of composing *Simpl. 1.2*. God’s choices of specific persons for salvation or damnation cannot be based on foreknowledge of their freely chosen faith, Augustine says (*Simpl. I.2.5*). But why?

Over the course of his reflections on Jesus’ teaching and Paul’s, Augustine has incorporated significant portions of Stoic anthropology. The result is a realization that belief and action (or, faith and works in Paul’s language) are not sufficiently distinct concepts to explain the justice of God’s choice. The problem was never simply that *foreknowledge* couldn’t explain a choice of faith rather than works. I doubt Augustine ever labored under the illusion that God’s foreknowledge could reach to seeing faith but somehow couldn’t pick out the works that naturally followed.

Rather, merit or desert is at issue in this context (*quomodo est enim iusta aut qualiscumque omnino electio, ubi nulla distantia est?, Simpl. I.2.4*). Stoic accounts of belief and action turn upon a common hinge – the act of assent. Over the course of three years, Augustine has intertwined this Stoic psychology of action and belief with Dominical and Pauline teachings. The locus of moral freedom and responsibility is identical in action and belief, thus merit must also be identical.

In action, an impulsive presentation (*suggestiones / admonitiones*), a presentation of something as desirable or repellant, presses in through outward senses
or the inner stock of memory and habit. Judgment of the presentation properly leads to assent or dissent. Of course, a weak soul may be overwhelmed by the presentation itself and yield without judgment (give weak assent). But full assent in whichever form leads to immediate action, unless external circumstance intervenes. Regardless, the morality of the act is found in assent (s. dom. m. I.34-35).

Likewise, in belief, propositional content is presented either implicitly through sensation and memorial imaginines or explicitly through the collection of scattered ideas within. Proper judgment is passed upon the propositional content presented by comparing it to the universal standards of divine Truth (uera rel. 64; diu. qu. 9; 30). If judged true, one assents. Of course, one can fail to judge properly and thus assent falsely. But the freedom and moral significance of belief is rooted in assent.

Pauline analysis has lead to a more complex picture. Wholehearted assent proves more difficult than originally imagined. Also, Augustine is now clear about the likelihood of conflicted partial assents leading to either paralysis or mere yielding (exp. Gal. 54.2). But despite the complexity of reaching assent, the appropriate locus of praise and blame remains the moment of assent, weak or strong.

This is the suppressed premise beneath Augustine’s rhetorical question at the precise moment he dispenses with his prior understanding of election according to foreknowledge (si igitur electio per praescientiam, praesciuit autem deus fidem Iacob, unde probas quia non etiam ex operibus elegit eum?, Simpl.I.2.5). Foreknowledge of human belief is no less problematic as a mode of just differentiation than foreknowledge of human action. For the morally significant component of both belief and action is assent, and Paul specifically links God’s choice to a time cum enim nondum
nati fuissent neque aliquid egissent bonum seu malum (Simpl. I.2.5; quoting, Rm. 9,11). So God’s choice must stand without reference to human assent and the merits thereof.

A second consideration also presses Augustine toward his new doctrine of election. Paul’s analysis of fragmentation in consent has foregrounded desire, natural and graced, as the engine of consent. Fallen humans typically face multiple, contradictory presentations and a fragmented person can assent in some form to both simultaneously. As different desires compete within us our fragmented acts of consent produce partial impulses and partial beliefs. The self is cracked. Dominant beliefs and actions eventually surface when one desire outstrips the others. So wrong things may be done by necessity (necessitate) when a person desires to do right, but has not enough desire to overpower a contrary desire (lib. arb. III.51, appealing to Rm.7:18-19 and Gal.5:17). The dominance of stronger desires over weaker desires constitutes an internal form of necessity in human life (exp. Gal. 49).

Indeed, Augustine has recently realized that the penal necessity of temporal desires specifically afflicts both of the modes of assent through ignorance and difficulty (lib. arb. III.52)298. Due to our penal state we often assent to false propositions unwittingly (ex ignorantia dehonestat error... adprobare falsa pro ueris ut erret inuitus, lib. arb. III.52). Likewise, this state handicaps our capacity to assent to the good and dissent from the bad. If we do manage, it is with difficulty (ex difficultate cruciatus adflight.... et resistente atque torquente dolore carnalis uinculi non posse a libidinosis

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The desires of our penal condition affect both modes of assent.

Moreover, the wellspring of inevitably wayward desires is the mortal state of our bodies since Adam. This traps human beings within the causal chain linked together by twisted desires and galvanized by inveterate habit. Augustine, based upon his reading of Rom.7:23-25, has asserted the impossibility of escaping these desires before bodies are remade immortal (ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.10-12; 36.5; 46.7; 51; diu. qu. 66.2-3). An enduring cause should have an enduring effect.

Given such considerations, Augustine realizes his earlier resolution of divine justice in predestination perches on a doubly unstable distinction. The merit of faith and the merit of works can only be distinguished at a surface, verbal level. Anthropologically, both are rooted in an identical act of assent. And, given the uninterrupted necessitating role of carnal desire, no psychologically coherent account could be provided for an ungraced divergence of assent when presented with an identical gospel. The cart of carnal desire should continue dragging our doggishly fragmented capacity for choice.

Under these conceptual circumstances, Augustine’s exceptional claim that the initium fidei lies within purely human capacity to choose cannot remain unrevised. The reason for God’s just choice, and for subsequent human divergence in assent, must ultimately reside within God, not human beings.

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299 Harrison, Simon. Augustine’s Way into the Will: The Theological and Philosophical Significance of De Libero Arbitrio. The Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp. 125-130 interprets Augustine here as arguing for an experiential touchstone whereby a deed I am committing, despite saying “nolo” actually becomes a passion rather than an action. However, Harrison misses the discussions in contemporaneous Pauline exegeses whereby Augustine clearly sees a simultaneity of inner uolo and nolo in these penally conditioned deeds.
Some causal difference must be postulated that originates with God. The interaction between Paul’s claims about God’s choices and the state of Augustine’s psychology of assent demand it. Grace has to be irresistible. However, two possibilities remain. God could sort this out from the inside (through altering human perception or desire) or from the outside (through altering the presentation received).

On the one hand, Augustine could postulate direct divine intervention in the internal process of human assent, thereby requiring severe circumscription or disposal of the idea of free choice. On the other hand, Augustine could attribute the differences in human assent to God’s regulation of the providential availability and/or force of external presentations without direct interference in the internal process of desire and assent. In fact, Augustine opts for the second explanation, at least for the meantime. But the interesting part lies in how he does it.

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301 Cary, Phillip. 2008. Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp.53-67 is very aware of the distinction between internal and external means of grace and helpfully highlights the contrast in this text. However, he fails to recognize the degree of interpenetration between Augustine’s psychology of belief and action (heavily indebted both to Stoicism and Pauline thought) and his Platonist hunches about delight and desire. Indeed, Cary tends to view Platonism and Stoicism as much too self-contained and distinct to match Augustine’s late antique world. So Cary reads Augustine as alternately drawing on assent and delight as causal explanations, apparently unaware of the intricate interweaving of those concepts in Augustine’s thought leading up to Simpl. I.2 (cf. s. dom. m. i.34 where assent in sin is to delight!).
Like the Stoics, Augustine is loath to relinquish free choice as rooted in the act of assent.\textsuperscript{302} But, also like the Stoics, Augustine now stands in the position of affirming an extra-psychic determinate cause of human choice.\textsuperscript{303} Fortunately, the dog and cart metaphor is not the only set of relevant distinctions available in the Roman Stoic patrimony.

Chrysippus’ distinction between levels of causation in fated choices now comes in handy (\textit{fat. XVIII.41}).\textsuperscript{304} At the macrocosmic level, external or proximate causes associated with presentations effect choices. But their efficiency proceeds through internal causes identified with individual character. The force of an external presentation can ensure assent (or at least yielding) without any direct impingement on the internal conditions of free choice (\textit{fat. XIX.44}).

Augustine now falls back on this line of explanation. The vehicle of God’s election is an irreducibly external presentation, or in biblical parlance a call (\textit{uocatio}, \textit{Simpl. I.2.7}). By matching the varying force of his call to the peculiar shape of each individual’s character, God ensures that free human choice will internally respond according to the divine choice. Augustine’s term for the matching of variable modes of presentation to

\textsuperscript{302} Notice Augustine’s need to repeatedly emphasize in his exegesis that Paul is not denying freedom of the will (\textit{ex. prop. Rm. 13-18.1; 44.1; 60.15; 62.1, 3, 13; diu. qu. 68.5}). His early interest in establishing freedom of choice was cultivated as an answer to the Manichean claim that evil had an independent existence which limited human choice and Divine action (\textit{retr. I.9.2}). So Augustine has much to lose in North Africa if he recants this claim.


individual character is _aptus_ (Simpl. I.2.13) or, in an active description, _congruenter uocare_ (Simpl. I.2.13).

Chrysippus’ old distinction between external-proximate and internal-primary causes resurfaces here. Human volitions turn out to be bivalent entities. Two causes are at work. In as much as external presentation and internal assent are bound together in the creation of a single volition, human willing is both God’s and ours (Simpl. I.2.10). Human volition is caused by God at the level of presentation or call and by individual humans at the level of assent or following (_ut uelimus enim et suum esse uoluit et nostrum, suum uocando nostrum sequendo_, Simpl. I.2.10).

**Analysis of Consent in the Initium Fidei: What happens internally in response to a suitable call?**

Ironically, Augustine’s difficulty is the inverse of Chrysippus’. Chrysippus needed to explain how a passion could be both fated (and thus externally caused) and culpable because free (and thus internally caused). Chrysippus’ example assumed a natural fit between the external power of a presentation and the internal, culpable weakness of

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the fool’s mind. The fool’s flaccid *principale* was already primed to move wherever fate’s presentations dictated (*fat. XVIII.43-XIX.44*).

Augustine, on the other hand, has to explain how a fool is set on the path to wisdom by means external to himself. Indeed, how he is immeasurably and instantly improved by a presentation against which he is already internally opposed.

The strangeness of Augustine’s project here proceeds from his need to explain what happened with Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road (*Simpl. I.2.22*). Saul’s narrative forbids Augustine the unspoken assumption of prior compatibility between external call and internal assent (*quam rabida uoluntas, quam furiosa, quam caeca*, *Simpl. I.2.22*). For in Saul’s case, limit condition though it be, the human will was steadfastly set in opposition to the divine call.

Augustine’s difficulty becomes apparent in the telltale slippage of his term “congruity.” Initially Augustine describes the call as congruent with human character and thus effective (*Simpl. I.2.13*). But when God’s call proves ineffective, the human being has proved incongruent (*Simpl. I.2.13*). Human beings who prove incongruent have been called but not chosen, otherwise they would have followed (*Simpl. I.2.12-13*).

Augustine even considers the person so hardened as to be insensitive to any manner of calling. Perhaps his state is the sign of God’s prior choice not to suitably call

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earlier in life (Simpl. I.2.14) and Augustine wonders if this is Pharaoh’s situation (Simpl. I.2.15). But this answer cannot persist, for it hedges God’s freedom to call when he pleases (...quia nullius deus frustra miseretur, Simpl. I.2.13). Saul’s narrative stands as the limit condition Augustine’s doctrine of election must explain.

So what would a suitable external call do to the inner assent of a hostile human person like Saul? Augustine relates the effect of God’s suitable call using the peculiar linguistic distinctions he inherited to describe the difference between innocuous passions (akin to Stoic pre-passionate motions) and vicious passions.

Any change to the self, especially from outside the self, is by definition a motion of soul. The question is, which kind? Prepassionate yielding, or innocuous passion, occurs in the animus but does not change the structure of a person’s beliefs (en. Ps. 4.5-6; s. dom. m. I.74). Full, vicious passions go deeper. The initial yielding is compounded by a corresponding change in belief, which constitutes an alteration in the mens (s. dom. m. I.74; cf. also later ciu. IX.4).

Here is Augustine’s predicament. Since yielding neither changes stable patterns of belief nor constitutes a fully volitional motion, the initium fidei cannot properly be conceptualized as a yielding. Movement in the animus seems too shallow. Conversion has to go deeper. On the other hand, the movement of the mens through change of belief under the pressure of an external presentation constitutes vicious passion in the fullest sense. How can Augustine account for a suitable external call changing human belief?

Augustine casts the initium fidei as a singularity. Here alone one finds the supreme virtue coming through means of a full-blown passion. Augustine’s analysis of the initium fidei specifies that the depth of motion follows from a usum or presentation touching the very mens (Simpl. I.2.21). The suitable call not only shakes the animus, it
reaches in to untwist and correct the very belief structure of the *mens* (*qui tamen una desuper uoce prostratus occurrente utique tali uiso, quo mens illa et voluntas refracta saeuitia retorqueretur et corrigeretur ad fidem*, *Simpl. I.2.22*)

Paradoxically, Augustine has saved the internal freedom of human assent by postulating human salvation as an overwhelming from without of that very internal faculty. In other words, Augustine has found the psychological structure of the first coming of faith to be isomorphic to that of a passion.

There lies Saul, blind and trembling, prostrate next to his donkey on the Damascus road. His beliefs have changed in a lasting way. They have not changed without his assent, to be sure, but, just as certainly, their change was not due to the power of his judgment. His capacity to assent has been overwhelmed by the power of an external presentation specifically suited to rewire his internal makeup (*Simpl. I.2.22*).
Summary Conclusion Part II – Augustine’s Discovery of Redemptive Action

In the above analyses we followed the second crucial complex of anthropological developments in Augustine – his discovery of a positive psychology of action. Largely through enthusiastic immersion in Jesus’ and Paul’s teachings, read in constant dialogue with Stoic psychologies of action, Augustine comes in his priestly period to an impressively nuanced psychology of action that fills the gap left in his earlier platonising account of the soul. Four primary conclusions are warranted.

First, Augustine’s philosophical conception of the heart and his newfound interest in the psychology of action emerge together and from the beginning appeal irreducibly to both Dominical and Stoic teaching. Jesus’ teaching drives Augustine to reconsider the role of action in the purgation and continuing happiness of soul. Not finding any Platonist conceptuality suitable to the task, Augustine turns to the Stoic psychology of action for aid in conceptualizing the anthropological implications of Jesus’ emphasis.

Second, these texts display a substantial integration of Stoic and Platonist elements from the beginning. By transposing the Stoic act of judgment, as the locus of intentional purity and moral evaluation, onto a Platonizing ontological backdrop of eternal and temporal goods, Augustine constructs a distinctive psychology of action.

Purity of heart in action becomes possible, within Augustine’s psychology of action, through a modification of the Stoic spiritual exercise of προσοχή or vigilant self-awareness. The Stoics achieved singularity of intention through keeping precepts ready
in mind and referring every intermediate action to the end of fulfilling precept. Tied up with Augustine’s first distinctive conception of the heart as the totality of present self-awareness, we find him prescribing the precise formula for purgation offered by the Stoic προσοχή.

However, Augustine’s account of referentiality in action insists that reference always depends upon a prior intuition of value structures. Both the act of intuition and the schematic structure of valuation as eternal distinguished from temporal sink their roots into Platonist soil. So Augustine’s Platonizing ontology provides the specific difference that sets his first positive psychology of action apart from the Stoics’. But, of course, his psychology of action undergoes rapid development through his priestly period.

The third conclusion is multifaceted. More intricate incorporation and transformation of elements from the Stoics’ psychologies of action ensues through Augustine’s Pauline exegeses beginning in 394. The locus of moral freedom and responsibility are still found in the act of assent, evaluated in relation to an ontological schema of values eternal and temporal. Augustine’s detailed picture, however, of how that happens and the psychological components involved becomes much more complex in four specific ways. Each complexification directly rises from reading Paul in terms of the Stoics and the Stoics in terms of Paul. So four subpoints follow concerning complexification of assent relating to the four stages, bodily mortality, disintegration of assent and the pervasiveness of consensual disintegration encompassing both belief and action.

The most basic complexification comes when Augustine maps his earlier account of cordial purity onto the four stages of human existence implied in Paul. The original
concept was synchronic, but Paul’s account is both experiential and historical. So various forms of assent and relation to divine precept emerge through existence *ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia* and *in pace*.

Also in reading Paul, Augustine finds an irrevocable limitation to single hearted assent to divine precept in this life specifically attached to the state of human bodies. Bodily mortality now sets a limit on cordial purity because mortality creates a natural pull toward and ineradicable desire for temporal goods. Habit intensifies this predilection. The result is Augustine’s first admission that blessedness, in the fullest sense of the term, simply cannot be achieved in this life, in this body.

The psychological effect of bodily mortality also requires a novel disintegration of Stoicising assent. In reading Paul, Augustine finds the conflict between habit and mind in the presence of divine precept to imply more cognitive dimensions to habit than previously imagined. Since habit creates a determinative impulse to action, there must be some implicit form of weak assent. This assent could only be to an implicit propositional content and Paul describes that propositional content of fleshly habit as the “law of sin and death.” Thus Paul describes the bifurcation of the psychological faculty of judgment. Human beings can assent to multiple, contradictory things at once. The determining question therefore becomes which form of assent is stronger?

The pervasiveness and strength of corruption by nature and habit compromises the integrity of assent in both forms – belief and action. As a result we are plagued by ignorance and difficulty. Integral assent in belief is no more within our power than integral assent in action. An ethical consequence follows. Since moral praise and blame of both belief and action are rooted in the self-same psychological act of assent, merit
cannot accrue more truly to belief than to action, or vice versa. This leads to the fourth and final conclusion.

Fourth, when Augustine alters his anthropology to accommodate a Paulinizing Stoic psychology of action, the immediate theological consequence is his production of a new doctrine of election. And, in constructing his doctrine, we again find Augustine revising and employing Stoic conceptual distinctions to reconcile human freedom of choice and the irresistibility of God's call for the elect.
Part 3

The Cracked Self and Beyond: Augustine’s Anthropology in the Confessiones

Biographical Bridge

Within a year of his elevation to bishop in 396, Augustine offers his Confessiones to those who murmured and those who cheered at news of his consecration. Augustine’s labor in thirteen books calls forth his first mature synthesis of the disparate philosophical streams explored in his Christian thought to date.

To recap our journey thus far, Augustine’s very early writings teemed with inchoate articulations of a Neo-Platonic vision of the human being as essentially an inviolable, incorporeal soul. Contemplation is the singular concern of Platonic soul, even in its newly baptized form. The body is a prison. Action is nothing but distraction and temptation. Of course, revisions are discernable following his reception of the creed and baptism from Ambrose. But the clearest change comes when Augustine is forcefully ordained in 391.

The priestly writings breathe a new air. Not only is scriptural exegesis increasingly central, the philosophical resources Augustine calls upon are different. Neo-Platonic accounts of non-corporeal being still emerge when needed and Augustine makes pains to integrate them piecemeal with his emergent anthropology. But the focus has clearly changed. His priestly writings must come to terms with the concern for ethical human action Augustine finds in Jesus and Paul. The Platonists lack an adequate psychology of action and passion, so Augustine begins to incorporate and transform Stoic psychologies of action through his interpretation of Jesus’ and Paul’s teachings.
This ferment of Stoic and scriptural psychologies of action leads to momentous changes in Augustine's anthropology and theology of grace.

So in 396, as he bears witness to his peregrine past and God's grace in pursuit, Augustine must show how the disparate streams of his earlier thought flow together into a single torrent of bishop-worthy teaching. The two streams always correlated to distinct areas of his anthropology.

The Neo-Platonists provided crucial elements of his ontology and his account of non-corporeal soul in contemplation. About this time Augustine writes to Paulinus of Nola and requests copies of a work Ambrose composed during Augustine's time in Milan (ep. 31.8). Ambrose's *de sacramento regenerationis siue de philosophia* presented a rebuttal of those who claimed that Jesus profited by reading Plato's writings (ep. 31.8). Ambrose's argument turns on pointing out the residual disorder of sin in human action (c. iul. 2.15) and claiming that true continence only comes through the sacrament of baptism (c. iul. 2.14). Thus the philosophers could manage only a parody of that true continence achieved by the baptized alone (c. iul. 2.24). Clearly, Augustine is revisiting the Milanese Christian Platonism of his earliest Christian formation and seeking an integrated perspective.

The Stoics offered a lucid account of the soul as agent, which Augustine needed to articulate an anthropology suited to a fully Christian account of the love of neighbor.

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308 *libros beatissimi papae Ambrosii credo habere sanctitatem tuam; eos autem multum desidero, quos aduersus nonnullos inperitissimos et superbissimos, qui de Platonis libris dominum profecisse contendunt, diligentissime et copiosissime scripsit, ep.31.8; cf. also, doctr. chr II.28.43 and retr. II.4.2

in and through bodies integral to human personhood. Of course, the Stoicism Augustine employs is not that of Chrysippus. Rather, Middle and Roman Stoic psychologies of action and passion provide a jumping off point for Augustine’s exegetical theorizing. Intricate transformations ensue as he interprets Jesus and Paul through the Stoics and the Stoics through Jesus and Paul.

In the *Confessiones* Augustine brings the streams together. The transformed Platonist and Stoic elements are fused in a distinctively Christian account of the human person as constitutively designed for both action and contemplation. In this section we will trace Augustine’s account of the human person acting and contemplating in both twisted and redemptive ways. Since Augustine begins with the roots of human action, we will too.
Chapter 5

Mirror of Fallen Nature:

Commendatio to Action and its Perversion in Confessiones I

Hellenistic and Roman philosophical anthropologies, concerned as they were with competing psychologies of action, routinely started with accounts of human infancy (cf. Cicero, fin. III.V.16; Seneca ep. 121). Augustine, in his first mature synthesis, is no exception to this rule. Confessiones I presents an account of human infancy and childhood that betrays a nuanced understanding of the philosophical issues underlying previous depictions and offering a rich alternative in theologically and philosophically


Stock, Brian. 1996. Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press., pp. 23-33 provides a detailed interpretation of elements of Confessiones I in terms speech acquisition and Augustine’s early education in reading and writing. Stock’s use of Quintilian, in reading book one, is as exemplary as it is rare.
nuanced fashion. In the following pages we will seek to place that philosophical debate in clear, developmental relief and then read *Confessiones* I within that context.

**Nature as Native: The Philosophical Contest over Infancy**

Cicero’s dictum summarizes the general function of infancy accounts in these philosophies. Philosophical descriptions of human infancy and childhood constitute a “mirror of nature,” if you will, within which one can witness the pre-conventional impulses of the (almost) human animal

(indicant pueri, in quibus ut in speculis natura cernitur., fin.V.22.61).

A seminal distinction hailing from pre-Socratic times, between convention (νόμος) and nature (φύσις), guided this search for indirect reflections. Although the earliest usages of the convention (νόμος) versus nature (φύσις) distinction tended to view them as poles of a continuum, the rhetoric of the first Sophistic quickly turned them into antitheses effective in swaying opinion concerning everything from existence of the gods, to political organization, division of human races, slavery, the character of language and the very existence of moral standards.

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Emerging on the far side of Athenian ascendency, the Hellenistic philosophies could manage neither the naïve hubris found in the Classical Sophists’ praise of convention nor their caviler projects of explicit moral constructivism.\textsuperscript{314} Convention and the forms of discursive reason shaped thereby could only be seen as flawed and perverse.\textsuperscript{315} But therein lies the conundrum. If our very powers of reasoning have been shaped by the conventions of a diseased society, where could we find a salutary clue to the healthy state of nature we left behind? Where are nature and her norms to be found?\textsuperscript{316}

The Hellenistic philosophies’ contested accounts of impulse in infants (as well as in beasts and barbarians) find their raison d’être in the prevailing perplexity about discovering nature and her norms.\textsuperscript{317} In particular, Hellenistic accounts of infancy served the construction of a psychology of action and the ethical norms embedded

\textsuperscript{314} For an account of how moral relativism tends to appeal more readily with social projects of democracy see Roochnik, David. 2004. \textit{Retrieving the Ancients: An Introduction to Greek Philosophy}. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub.


\textsuperscript{317} The contemporary project of evolutionary psychology, with studies of intergenerational patterns of parent-child abuse in rhesus monkeys and the like (e.g. Dario Maestripieri, Tanja Jovanovic & Harold Gouzoules. 2003. “Crying and Infant Abuse in Rhesus Monkeys” in \textit{Child Development} 71:2 pp.301-309) strikes me as isomorphic in function to the Hellenistic obsession with infancy.
therein.\textsuperscript{318} Differing schools, particularly the Stoics and Epicureans, engaged in an ongoing debate concerning the first natural impulse of the human animal.

Two points of agreement between opposing schools circumscribed the zone of debate. First, societal convention as currently experienced is diseased, so normative ethics must be rooted in an account of what is natural.\textsuperscript{319} Second, since nature must be found in examples untainted by convention, one should look to the behavior of those not yet acculturated, particularly those just born. So nature must be native.

Twin doctrines occupied the epicenter of this debate. The doctrine of οἰκείωσις, “appropriation,” describes the state of nature prior to social corruption, which is expected to manifest itself in the “first impulse” (ἡ πρώτη ὀρμή) or “first things according to nature” (τὰ πρῶτα κατὰ φύσιν).\textsuperscript{320} Such a claim tacitly implies its


conceptual twin, the doctrine of διαστροφή or “corruption,” which accounts for the near universal perversion of human beings despite their birth into a pristine state of nature.321 The twins seem to have genetic links to pre-Hellenistic philosophy, both Platonic322 and Aristotelian.323 However, since the lineage is obscure, much controverted and not essential to our purposes, it will not detain us here.324


322 Plato particularly offers precursors to diastrophic theory, e.g., Rep.549Cff possesses an account of the son of a good father being corrupted by the grumbling of mother and slaves. Antiochus of Ascalon claimed that Polemon, third successor to Plato’s Academy and sometime teacher of Zeno of Citium, was the true source of the doctrine of οἰκείοσις. He was the first to urge ethical life “in accordance with Nature” and described the first impulse of any creature’s existence as self-love issuing in self-perseveration (testimony in Cicero, fin.V.26). For discussion of Antiochus and his significance, cf. Dillon, John M. 1977. The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220. London: Duckworth, pp.40-41.

323 von Arnim, Hans. 1926. Arius Didymus’ Abriss der peripatetischen Ethik. Wien Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky was the first to argue, based on the fragment in Arius Didymus, that Theophrastus was the originator of the doctrine and Zeno acquired the concept through Polemon’s mediation.

Deducing Infancy: Old Stoic Doctrines of οἴκείωσις and διαστροφή

The earliest extant use of the specific term οἰκείωσις, not its cognates, comes in the fragmented testimonies to Chrysippus' writings. The most extensive witness appears in Diogenes Laertius (D.L. VII.85 = SVF III.178):

They say the first impulse of a living thing is to preserve itself, because nature from the beginning is appropriating (οἰκειούσης) it, just as Chrysippus says in his first book On Ends. There he says, the first possession (οἰκείου) of any living thing is its own constitution and its awareness thereof. For it would not be likely either that nature would consider the living thing foreign, nor that having made it, she would neither alienate nor appropriate it to itself. Therefore it follows that in constituting the living thing she would appropriate it to itself. And thus it thrusts away harmful things and accepts things that are proper to it (τὰ οἰκεία). (D.L. VII.85).

ς ἦν δὲ πρώτην ὀρμήν φασὶ τὸ ζῷον ἰσχεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ τηρεῖν ἑαυτό, οἰκειούσης αὐτῷ τῆς φύσεως ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, καθά φησιν ὁ Ἀρχάριος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ τελών. πρῶτον οἰκεῖον λέγων εἶναι παντί ζῷῳ τὴν αὐτοῦ σύστασιν καὶ τὴν ταύτης συνείδησιν οὔτε γὰρ ἀλλοτριῶσαι εἰκὸς ἢν αὐτό (αὐτῷ) τὸ ζῷον, οὔτε ποιῆσασαν αὐτό.

325 I am tempted to render the substantive οἰκείωσις by a verbal phrase in English to the effect, “The first claim any living thing stakes is to its own constitution and its awareness thereof.”
This is the seminal statement of Stoic oikeiôsis. In making living things, Nature appropriates them to herself, and consequently causes the creatures to possess a sort of proprietary attachment to themselves (D.L. VII.85). Chrysippus further specifies that attachment to self entails two elements. First, a living thing is attached to its specific composition (σύστασις) or, in other words, the way its parts fit together. Second, some implicit consciousness of that constitution is implicitly active in the very attachment. With this sort of innate self-attachment the living thing naturally embraces what is akin and appropriate and repulses what might damage it. Thus oikeiôsis manifests in the first impulse of self-preservation (D.L. VII.85). So far, so good.

But Chrysippus’ strategy in this text immediately strikes anyone who has read the full range of testimonies to Stoic oikeiôsis as somehow odd. Later accounts move from descriptions of infant behavior to conclusions about natural impulse. Their procedure moves from the bottom up.

But Chrysippus simply asserts that the first impulse is self-preservation and proceeds to deduce his claim from the assumption that Nature made all living things.326 Since Nature made them it is unlikely that she would be indifferent or hostile to them.

326 The logically deductive character of Chrysippus’ doctrine has led Troels Engberg-Pedersen to an ingenious argument for the coalescence of personal and social oikeiôsis, see Engberg-Pedersen, Troels. 1990. The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press. The flaw, however, in Engberg-Pedersen’s argument is its success requires his disregard of the twin doctrine of διαστροφή and the possibility of substantial development in the twin Stoic doctrines between Chrysippus and Seneca.
Thus, postulating that she appropriates or considers them her own in the act of making them. Next, Chrysippus considers it unlikely that having considered her creatures as her own, Nature would make them indifferent to themselves (alienation to self is tacitly rejected as unthinkable). Thus Chrysippus deduces that Nature must have made creatures with an attachment to themselves (D.L. VII.85).

This top down approach seems to die with Chrysippus. Later Stoics will have to defend their account against counter-descriptions that Chrysippus, at least in extant texts, does not confront. We will consider the most cogent counter descriptions in due course. But first we must explore a second aspect of Old Stoic οἰκείωσις.

The Stoics also claimed a natural οἰκείωσις to all human beings and thus to society. This appropriation of human society formed the basis for Stoic cosmopolitanism. How this social οἰκείωσις relates to the earlier οἰκείωσις to self-constitution and coherence has long exercised interpreters327 and provided targets for philosophical opponents.328 But perhaps the immediate connection is rather simple and organic.


328 Cf. Carneades’ plank (Lact. inst. V.17) discussed below
Consider the progression in Plutarch’s terse summary of Chrysippus’ claim. Immediately upon birth we are appropriated to ourselves, our members and our offspring” (οἶκειούμεθα πρὸς αὐτούς ἐύθυς γενόμενοι καὶ τὰ μέρη καὶ τὰ ἔκγονα τὰ ἐαυτῶν., de Stoic. Repugn. 12.1038b = SVF III.179). The progression of attachment moves from self, to bodily members constituting the self, and then to offspring. The several competing embryologies of the time all make room for viewing offspring as essentially extensions of oneself – fragments of the same corporeal soul, as it were. Thus appropriation to self and my members would naturally imply a similar affection for my offspring. Perhaps, Chrysippus’ initial claim went no further.

But more extensive claims certainly followed. Based upon this initial appropriation of children as other selves, one could presumably reason backward and forward to find some degree of corporeal-psychic continuity with every human being. And since humans as rational animals contain a spark of Nature’s rational fire, that bond of social solidarity extends through the gods above to every rational animal. Thus for the Stoic nothing rational is alien (SVF I.262-263; III.314-348). And the entire cosmos forms one grand society within the singular design of Nature.


330 A consistent failure in more global accounts of unity between the two forms of οἰκείοσις is the tendency to rely heavily on the testimony of Cicero’s fin. IV-V for Chrysippean doctrine. In fact, Antiochus of Ascelon and Posidonius have heavily colored Cicero’s account. Cf., White, Nicholas P. “The Basis of Stoic Ethics” Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 83, pp.143-178 and the discussion of Roman Stoic commendatio below.

Specific ethical consequences follow. Some find them deep, others contradictory. It seems the appropriation of nature that begins by making an animal attached to its own individual welfare ends by inclining the same rational animal to the welfare of all human beings. This formed the basis of Stoic cosmopolitanism in ethics. By nature rational animals set the common advantage before their own (fin. III.64).

Carneades seems to be the first to attack the two forms of Stoic ὀἰκείωσις as inconsistent (Lactantius Inst. V.17). How can two forms of ὀἰκείωσις, one fundamentally egocentric and its counterpart other-oriented, be reconciled? Carneades poses a hypothetical dilemma. Imagine a sage among a crew that suffers shipwreck. Suddenly the sage finds himself in the water with another man and a single plank of wood that is only sufficient to keep one man afloat. The sage must kill the other man or drown. What will he do? In other words, which form of ὀἰκείωσις goes deeper?

Resolution of this predicament proved fruitful for the Stoics, but that resolution bears the marks of a later generation of Stoic thinkers and will be dealt with in its appropriate place.

**Old Stoic Doctrine of διαστροφή**

Since the Stoics imagined human beings as born in a state of nature, which inclines them to virtues of self-care and societal care (ἐπεὶ ἡ φύσις ἄφορμᾶς διδόσιν

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333 Cicero’s *de res publica* contained the primary witness to Carneades’ two speeches in Rome on successive nights, the first in praise of justice and the second arguing no state is possible without injustice. The second speech contained this paradox. The primary witness to Cicero’s text is Lactantius’ *Inst. V-VI.*
one might wonder why human life is routinely found in such a sorry state. The conceptual twin to a doctrine of human nature as native manifests in the Old Stoic doctrine of διαστροφή, or “corruption,” which describes a fall from nature in the very transition from infancy to adult, rational animal.

Chrysippus puts it this way. A rational animal is corrupted when it incorporates false beliefs in one of two ways. On the one hand, corruption of reason occurs when one succumbs to the seductiveness of external matters (διαστρέφεσθαι δὲ τὸ λογικὸν ζῷον, ποτὲ μὲν διὰ τὰς τῶν ἐξωθεν πραγματειῶν πιθανότητας., D.L. VII.89 = SVF III.228). All externals are indifferent. But, evidently, some have an aura of goodness. If one is persuaded by appearances because he lacks the strength of reason to properly judge and dissent, error ensues and corruption begins. Since reason only functions when consistent (ὁμολογία) with itself (SVF III.459), introducing a single false belief amounts to infecting the ἡγεμονικόν with a viral error (SVF III.548-556). Vice follows inevitably and pervasively (SVF III.657-670). This form of corruption begins within the individual, but comes later and constitutes a deviation from innate nature (ἐπεὶ ἡ φύσις ἀφορμᾶς διδόσιν ἀδιαστρόφους., D.L. VII.89 = SVF III.228).

Another mode of corruption stems from social interaction (κατήχησις τῶν συνόντων). In this second mode of διαστροφή, rational animals pick up false beliefs through the corrupting influence of human speech. As people listen to their associates and echo back their distorted judgments, reason degenerates and produces further vice (διαστρέφεσθαι δὲ τὸ λογικὸν ζῷον... ποτὲ δὲ διὰ τὴν κατήχησιν τῶν

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334 διαστρέφεσθαι δὲ τὸ λογικὸν ζῷον... ποτὲ μὲν διὰ τὰς τῶν ἐξωθεν πραγματειῶν πιθανότητας... 
335 Cf. the discussion of “yielding” in chapter 4.
This second form of corruption constitutes a twisting that somehow works through the second form of οἰκείωσις to human society.

**Natural Inclination to Pleasure: Epicurean Counter-Descriptions of Infancy**

Of course, Chrysippus’ descriptions of native nature could not go unopposed. A perusal of the extant writings of Epicurus reveals that his account of pleasure as the principle and end of a happy life required no appeal to infancy (D.L. X.121-135).\(^3\) As one would expect in a post-Aristotelian account of nature, Epicurus’ arguments in his *Letter to Menoeceus* pictured a rational adult, reflecting upon his experience of pleasure and pain, as the arbiter of nature. However, this approach left Epicurus’ doctrine substantially exposed to polemical arguments that education, not nature results in this orientation to pleasure.

This deficiency was soon remedied in the Epicurean tradition and retroactively attributed to Epicurus in the doxographical tradition (D.L. X.137; Sextus *Pyrr. hyp.* III.194-195; *adu. Math.* XI.96; Cicero *fin.* I.30; I.71).\(^4\) In all likelihood, the Epicurean

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\(^4\) Aristotelian nature is always defined by the actual, mature example of a species. So infancy is mere potency for becoming an adult male, *Eth. Eud.* II.1219b5; *Pol. I.*1260a14; *VIII.1336a10 - 1339a30; Pr. X.46.898a19

account of infancy was first evoked as a counter-description to the Stoic doctrines of ὀικείωσις and διαστροφή. The Epicureans could also appeal to the infant and the beast as so many pre-conventional mirrors of nature. All living things are born with an immediate, innate disposition to pursue pleasure as an end and to pull back from pain. So the first natural impulse is to seek pleasure and avoid pain (D.L. X.137; Sextus Pyrr. hyp. III.194-195; adu. Math. XI.96; Cicero fin. I.30; I.71). Through their counter-description the Epicureans specifically sought to dismantle the Stoic description of what is innate and what is corrupt. So they claimed the impulse to pleasure for precisely that period which is as yet untainted by discourse (χωρίς λόγου, D.L. X.137) and as yet not perverted (ἀδιάστροφα ὄντα, Sextus Pyrr. hyp. III.194-195).

In proposing their counter-description, the Epicureans had a long tradition of commonplace assumptions on their side. According to received wisdom, children, women and slaves lack the determinate form of reason and thus are characteristically given to the passions (Plato, Rep. IV.431c; leg. VII.808c-809a). The explanations for this observation varied widely. Perhaps children still possessed too much fire and thus were

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339 Of course, the Epicureans shared the basic distinction, although they differed radically on which elements of human experience would fit into which category. Cf, Epicurean’s version of διαστροφή through incorporation of empty desires (κενοί ἐπιθυμίαι) and their punning distinction between canonical preconceptions and false assumptions picked up from society (οὐ γὰρ προλήψεις εἰσίν. ἀλλὰ ὑπολήψεις ψευδεῖς..., D.L. X.124).

given to chaotic motion (leg. II.664e). Whatever the reasons, children are easily swayed by influence of pleasure and sorrow (Rep. IV.431c; VII.808d).\textsuperscript{341} This much was agreed upon and lent the Epicurean counter-description an immediate air of self-evidence.

In light of the Epicureans’ challenge, Chrysippus’ deductive account of what infancy must be appeared overly vulnerable to allegations of question begging. The Stoics needed a new argument to secure their claims to innate nature. An innovative solution was forthcoming, but it proved as frightening to the Stoics as to the Epicureans.

\textit{Middle Stoic Adaptations: Posidonius’ Threelfold Theory of οἰκείωσις}

The Middle Stoics (Panaetius and Posidonius) wanted to bring Stoicism up to date.\textsuperscript{342} In so doing, they strategically sought mediating positions between the most robust and paradoxical claims of Chrysippus and the intuitively obvious positions of competing schools. And to make room for their revised positions, both tended to emphasize the novelty of Chrysippean accounts over against Zeno, the early Peripatetics and the Early Academy, which were viewed as a generally cohesive unit named the Ancients (οἱ παλαιοί).\textsuperscript{343}

\textsuperscript{341} For similar reasons, Aristotle considered children primarily as unformed potencies of adult males (Eth. Eud. II.1219b; Pol. I.1260a; VIII.1336a-1339a). Plato’s metaphor of children being like wax tablets – malleable and impressionable – already moves in this direction (leg. VII.789e; Rep. II.377a-b).


\textsuperscript{343} This recovery project also directed the aspirations of the Middle-Platonists beginning with Antiochus of Ascelon, see Dillon, John M. 1977. \textit{The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220}. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
A good example of this process occurs in Panaetius’ revision of indifferents as lesser goods, and his explicit introduction of the progressor (προκόπτων) to mitigate the radical disjunction between sage and fool. Likewise, Posidonius is well known for his impulse to seek empirical verification for Stoic theories and his willingness to revise established theories when his observations so demanded (de placitis IV.390; Strabo geo. II.3.8).

Posidonius was determined to find a due cause or explanation (αἰτία) for everything (de placitis IV.390; Strabo geo. II.3.8; F18, F95, F164, F187). And his most famous revisions come through seeking an explanation for passion as an excessive impulse (F159). The Chrysippean doctrines of οἰκείωσις and διαστροφή are meant to explain the universality of passion in a world of those born in a state of nature. Posidonius thinks Chrysippus’ theory fails (F169). In particular, Chrysippus’ account lacks the capacity to ascribe an adequate cause to passion’s excess. If human beings were born without any innate tendency to passion, why would the errors of people around them possess any enticement for them (F169.54-57)?

By postulating a distinct mechanism through social corruption, Chrysippus has pushed the question back a notch, but continues to beg rather than answer it. For the question now becomes why do human beings so readily succumb to external

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346 ἐγὼ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἐκατέρας αὐτῶν ἀποροῦ καὶ πρώτης γε τῆς ἐκ τῶν πέλας γινομένης. καὶ γὰρ διὰ τι θεασάμενα καὶ ἀκούσαντα παράδειγμα κακίας οὐχὶ μισεῖ τούτο καὶ φεύγει τῷ μηθεμίαν οἰκείωσιν ἔχειν πρὸς αὐτό... F169.54-57
corruption? Consequently, by reworking the idea of oikeiωσις, Posidonius intends to present a form of Stoicism with greater explanatory power.

Posidonius’ revision is thorough and revolutionary. By bringing the roots of διαστροφή into his account of oikeiωσις, Posidonius incorporates and re-describes the common observations that gave currency to Epicurean counter-descriptions of infancy. He also provides a rational explanation for the excessiveness of passionate impulses (F34, F168, F187).

Posidonius argues for three distinct forms of oikeiωσις (F169.18-21). Children, as yet untaught, have a natural attachment (oikeiωσθαι) first to pleasure (πρός ἡδονήν), then to victory (πρός νίκην), and finally develop a natural attachment to the morally good as they come to the age of reason (πρός τὸ καλὸν ἔχει τινὰ φυσικὴν οἰκείωσιν, F169.18-21).

Each form of oikeiωσις fulfills an important role in Posidonius’ project of explanation. The first two in particular are worth further consideration. They both relate to infancy and childhood, and share two common features.

First, they are naturally diastrophic, one might say, in that they tend toward distortion and passion (F169). Together they form the irrational dynamic of the soul and exert an emotive pull (παθητικὴ ὀλκή) to explain the momentum underlying passionate excess (F169). The attachment to pleasure provides a causal explanation for...

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347 Of course, as Augustine later realized when refusing to postulate an efficient cause for Adam’s fall, a rational explanation of vice tends to simultaneously expunge. For this reason Posidonius’ explanation will not reign undisputed in Roman Stoic thought.

348 οὕτως οὖν οἰκειούσθαι καὶ τὰ παιδία φαίνεται καὶ πρός ἡδονήν καὶ πρός νίκην, ὥσπερ ὡστερὸν ποτε δείκνυσιν, ἐπειδὰν προβαίνῃ κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν, ὧτι πρός τὸ καλὸν ἔχει τινὰ φυσικὴν οἰκείωσιν. (F169.18-21)

349 παθητικάι κινήσεις (F153) οὐ αἱ κατὰ πάθος κινήσεις (F158, 169.115).
excess in appetitive passion. The second attachment to victory names the cause of passionate excess related to aggression and domination.

Second, they occupy part of the same conceptual space as the two forms of Chrysippean οἰκείωσις. The non-rational impulse to pleasure dovetails with some of the duties that Chryssipus’ first οἰκείωσις to self-preservation, but concedes a place to the Epicureans’ observation about infantile inclination to pleasure and avoidance of pain as the first natural impulse (D.L. X.137; Sextus Pyrr. hyp. III.194-195; adu. Math. XI.96; Cicero fin. I.30; I.71).

Presumably, Posidonius is not merely capitulating, for he remains opposed to the Epicurean doctrine of pleasure as the end of human life. Posidonius’ ethic and psychology of action remain essentially Stoic, for he insists that no passion overtakes an adult human without assent of the ἡγεμονικόν. But Posidonius also knows that even Chrysippus explicitly denied rationality to children.

Posidonius seems to be granting that seeking pleasure and avoiding pain constitute the first inchoate elements of a non-rational desire that retrospectively, from the vantage of reason’s onset, can be seen as a component of the desire for self-preservation.

The impulse to victory likewise occupies some of the conceptual space claimed by Chryssipus’ second οἰκείωσις toward relation with other human beings. Competition, domination and battle are, after all, ways of relating, diastrophic though they may be. Here Posidonius may be responding to the criticism of Carneades (Lactantius, Inst. V.17) by incorporating competition as an inchoate, non-rational

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350 See discussion in chapter 4 above.
impulse within his account of social attachment. After all, competition requires some degree of social awareness.

Again, Posidonius does not advocate unbridled pursuit of victory, but sees the impulse to dominate as the non-rational precursor to a fuller impulse to social attachment. On the far side of reason’s advent one can look back and see the inchoate beginnings of an impulse that reason can temper into a genuine concern for all human beings.

Posidonius’ complex thought pattern might be obliquely manifest by considering one fragment more closely (F169.26-34). Posidonius reportedly explained that in their theories of οἰκείωσις, Epicurus only saw the worst and thus described an οἰκείωσις to pleasure only; Chryssipus only saw the best and thus described an οἰκείωσις to what is morally beautiful and good. The ancients alone theorized all three forms of attachment (F169.26-34).

Two points surface immediately. First, Posidonius’ critique contends with perceived implications and not explicit claims of Chrysippus’ theory. Posidonius senses an incapability between Chrysippus’ doctrine of infancy and his doctrine of emergent rationality, and here articulates the implications. For Chrysippus did not, according to any extant fragment, claim a specific οἰκείωσις to the good per se. Rather, οἰκείωσις served an ostensibly more remedial function of showing continuity between the first natural impulse and the norms of rational human life to come. Chrysippus’ doctrine of

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351 τριών οὖν τούτων ἡμῖν οἰκείωσεων ὑπαρχουσῶν φύσει καθ’ ἐκαστὸν τῶν μορίων τῆς ψυχῆς είδος, πρὸς μὲν τὴν ἠδονήν διὰ τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν, πρὸς δὲ τὴν νίκην διὰ τὸ θυμοειδές, πρὸς δὲ τὸ καλὸν διὰ τὸ λογιστικὸν Ἐπίκουρος μὲν τὴν τοῦ χειρίστου μορίου τῆς ψυχῆς οἰκείωσιν ἔθεασε τὸ μόνον, ὁ δὲ Χρυσίππος τὴν τοῦ βελτίστου φάμενος ἡμᾶς οἰκείωσθαι πρὸς μόνον τὸ καλὸν, ὅπερ εἶναι δηλονότι καὶ ἀγαθόν. ἀπάσας δὲ τὰς τρεῖς οἰκείωσεις θεάσασθαι μόνοις τοῖς παλαιοῖς ύπήρξε φιλοσόφοις. F.169.26-34.


olkeiws was always tied to infancy (D.L. VII.85), and since infancy is non-rational
there was no question of explicit attachment to the moral good. Only after reason fully
emerged around age fourteen (SVF I.149; II.83), through the assembling of a sufficient
quantity of notions and concepts (SVF II.841), was a human rational and thus capable of
moral goodness or vice (SVF II.841).

Likewise, pleasure and victory are neither evil nor good, but indifferent
according to Stoic ethics (SVF III.71; III.117-123). All things being equal and in
conformity with Nature’s dictates, the Stoic could rationally prefer victory to defeat, and
bodily pleasure to pain. So Epicurus’ preference for pleasure would not have to be bad
at all if detached from the more pervasive, erroneous claims about pleasure as supreme
end. And by Chrysippus’ theory a non-rational animal such as an infant, which lacked
the full capacity for judgment and assent, could be neither vicious nor good in tending
toward pleasure.

So what is Posidonius’ point? His critique seems to be this. By tacitly projecting
the rationality of adult humans back on infancy and childhood, Chrysippus artificially
purified olkeiws and homogenized the human psyche. As a result, Chrysippus could
no longer adequately explain the passions (F161; F164; F168). Likewise, Epicurean
theories of pleasure as the first impulse were just fine when left in infancy. What else
could be expected from an, as yet, non-rational animal? The Epicureans only became
vicious when they insistently refused to rise above that affinity when emergent reason
dictated.352 Thus Posidonius strengthens Stoic ethics by vaccinating it with elements of
counter-observations from competing (Epicurean and Academic) schools.

352 For a more sympathetic and internal perspective on the Epicurean school, I suggest
starting with the life in D.L. X, then the overviews provided in Hadot, Pierre. 2002. What
Transcendental Arguments from Infancy: Roman Stoic Synthesis and Correction

Generally speaking, the Roman Stoics sought to re-claim the Old Stoic accounts by synthesizing and correcting the accounts of Chrysippus and Posidonius. Indeed, the tension between the Middle and Old Stoic accounts drove the Later Stoics to truly innovative philosophical work. In the previous chapter, we saw Seneca hard at work synthesizing Old and Middle Stoic accounts of the passions. Seneca strategically arranged Posidonius’, Chrysippus’ and Zeno’s primary definitions within a narrative account of three movements in the life cycle of a passion. Similarly thoughtful work led to several philosophical advances in Post-Posidonian accounts of οἰκείωσις and διαστροφή.

Latinizing the Stoics: Some Philological Correlations

Since the bulk of our textual evidence now shifts to Latin, a few philological correlations must precede our exploration of Late Stoic accounts. Cicero first brought the Stoic doctrines of οἰκείωσις and διαστροφή over into Latin. Having studied with Posidonius in Rhodes (78-77 B.C.), Cicero incorporated and revised substantial sections of Stoic

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ethics in his own writings. Several sections of *de finibus III* not only translate, but
Latinize and appropriate the Stoic terms. For οἰκείωσις Cicero supplies a Latin
phrase *conciliatio et commendatio*, “a joining together and approval” (*fin. III.V.16*).
Seneca prefers the verbal formula *conciliari sibi*, “to be joined to oneself” (*ep. 121.14*).
Aulus Gellius employs the phrase *amor et caritas nostri*, “love and care for ourselves” (*Noctes Atticae XII.V.7*).

A similar diversity of terminology marks the Latin reception of διαστροφή.
Cicero again employs a few terms to copiously communicate this idea as *deprauation*,
“distorting” (*Tusc. III.I.12*) or *prauitas*, “crookedness” (*Leg. I.11.31*). His most vivid and
poetic depictions envision corruption spreading from very early in life as we drink in
deception with the nurse’s milk (*cum lacte nutricis errorem suxisse*, *Tusc. III.I.2*) or
suffer staining and bending at the hand of tutors (*... qui teneros et rudes cum acceperunt,
inficiunt et flectunt, ut volunt...*, *leg. I.17.47*). Seneca too uses a rich variety of language,
preferring to describe the process of corruption rather than simply translate technical
terms. His descriptions will be explored below when we consider Roman Stoic
peculiarities in adapting this doctrine. But one more Latin translator must be
mentioned. Chalcidius in his *commentarius ad Timaeum* 165-168 provides a protracted,

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354 For the Roman project of not only transmitting but replacing Greek thought, cf. the
Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval

355 Note his methodological statement – *nec tamen exprimi verbum e verbo necesse erit,
ut interpretes indiserti solent, cum sit verbum quod idem declarat magis usitatum; equidem soleo etiam, quod uno Graeci, si aliter non possum, idem pluribus verbis exponere
(fin. III.4.15).*

356 For a discussion of Roman notions of physical character transference through milk,
which addresses a complementary aspect of this text, cf. discussion in chapter 2 above.
and conceptually convoluted, exposition of the Stoic doctrine of διαστροφή. Therein Chalcidius glosses διαστροφή as *peruersio*.\(^{357}\)

**Post-Posidonian Conciliatio et Commendatio**

Cicero and the Roman Stoics quickly reaffirm separate doctrines of *commendatio*\(^ {358}\) and *peruersio*\(^ {359}\) in response to Posidonius’ substantial collapsing of the doctrines.

Post-Posidonian accounts share a common strategy. While incorporating large sections of Posidonius’ more empirical account, post-Posidonian Stoics proceed by arguing that a revised Chrysippean οἰκείωσις supplies the conditions for possibility beneath the Epicurean and skeptical counter-observations, which Posidonius had conceded. No doubt they considered this a verbalization and extension of Chrysippus’ tacit assumptions. But it certainly constituted an advance in Stoic doctrine.

So in Cicero’s fullest account of *commendatio*, Cato explicitly rejects the Epicurean and Posidonian accounts of the first natural impulse because of the ethical dangers inherent to ceding that position (*fin. III.V.17*).\(^ {360}\) Cato provides an analytic

\(^{357}\) Calcidius’ gloss has become standard in modern scholarship because von Arnim used it to subtitle the section of fragments referring to διαστροφή as *De peruersione rationis* (*SVF III.V.3*).

\(^{358}\) For the sake of fidelity to our Latin writers, and acknowledging the significant developments in the doctrine, I will use *commendatio* to refer to Latin Stoic accounts of the doctrine earlier Stoics developed as οἰκείωσις.

\(^{359}\) Likewise, for ease of reference I will generally refer to Latin Stoic theories of διαστροφή as accounts of *peruersio*. To produce an adjectival version I use a range of terms, from diastrophic (playing off the Greek) to perverse, twisted or bent playing off various Latin equivalents. Of course, in discussing quotations I will use whatever term the specific author prefers, again in the interest of interpretive fidelity.

\(^{360}\) *In principiis autem naturalibus plerique stoici non putant uoluptatem esse ponendam; quibus ego uehemente assentior, ne, si uoluptatem natura posuisse in iis rebus uideatur quae primae appetuntur, multa turpia sequantur.*, *fin. III.V.17*
refutation of the Epicurean pleasure thesis. Cato, as a post-Posidonian Stoic, argues that the search for pleasure might explain rooting for the breast after the first nursing session. But why would the newly born root? The first impulse precedes any experience of pleasure, what could underlie that impulse?

Appetite itself, whether for pleasure or preservation, presupposes a deeper sense of self and affection for that self (*fieri autem non posse ut appeterent aliquid nisi sensum haberent sui et eoque se diligerent*, fin III.V.16). Thus, the first impulse must correlate to the most elemental form of self-love, which is not pleasure but preservation of self-integrity and health (*nec uero ut uoluptatem expetat natura mouet infantem, sed tantum ut se ipse diligat, ut integrum se saluumque uelit*, fin. II.xi.33). Pleasure is only the aftermath of satisfying a requirement for self-preservation. If you get beneath pleasure and pain you will find that its condition of possibility is commendatio as self-love (*ex quo intellegi debet principium ductum esse a se diligendo*, fin. III.V.16-17).

So Cicero’s summary statement of the first impulse draws together the implications of self-care. From birth, animals are joined to themselves and approve of their own preservation (*simul atque natum sit animal (hinc enim est ordiendum), ipsum sibi conciliari et commendari ad se conservandum, fin. III.V.16*). More specifically, they

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361 In this discussion, I will highlight the continuity between Cicero’s usage and the Roman Stoics. For the peculiarly Ciceronian adaptations of commendatio and the fine points of his dissent from the Stoics, I refer the reader to Noe, David Craig. 2003. *Oikeiosis, ratio, and natura: the Stoic Challenge to Cicero’s Academism in De finibus and Natura deorum*. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Iowa, 2003


363 *Placet his... quorum ratio mihi probatur, simul atque natum sit animal (hinc enim est ordiendum), ipsum sibi conciliari et commendari ad se conservandum et ad suum statum eaque quae conservantia sunt eius status diligenda, alienari autem ab interitu iisques rebus quae interitum videantur affere (fin. III.V.16).*
love their *status* or condition and thus the things that preserve that condition. Likewise, they are set at variance with destruction and things that seem to lead to ruin (*fin. III.V.16*).

Seneca, asking what would be the condition for seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, finds self-possession of one’s constitution underneath (*ep. 121.17*). Actions, as distinguished from mere motions, conform to patterns of referentiality. This is done for the sake of that (*debet enim aliquid esse, ad quod alia referantur, ep. 121.17*). So the Epicurean observes that we seek pleasure and flee pain. Yes, but seek and flee for whom? For me. *Ergo mei curam ago (ep. 121.17)*. And if I do all things for the sake of self-care, self-care is prior to all actions. Again, *commendatio* to self-care forms the condition for the possibility of seeking pleasure and shunning pain.365

This transcendental strategy of argumentation also underscored relevant counter-examples in early childhood. If attaining pleasure and avoiding pain were the natural end of action, then a basic feature of animal development would be inexplicable. Consider, Seneca proposes, the infant’s impulse to attain natural, adult motion (*ep. 121.8*). The fledgling toddler will repeatedly endure the pain of collapse and press himself through tears until he attains the capacity to stand and walk. Likewise, the tortoise when turned on its back feels no pain, yet will not rest until it turns itself over (*ep. 121.8*). These impulses stem from a deeper sense of one’s constitution and its

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365 A similar argument is found in the fragments of Hierocles, a Hellenistic post-Posidonian Stoic. The first sensation upon birth is self-perception of corporeal soul in one’s particular body, which provides the implicit knowledge for the first impulse of self-preservation. Cf. Hierocles *Elements, papyrus col.* I.34-39, 51-57, II.1-9.
proper function (*ep. 121.9*). Desire for full functionality is entailed in the innate impulse to self-preservation. Thus pleasure and pain, abstracted from replenishment and injury, are simply extraneous accretions to *commendatio*.

**Three Stage Commendatio: Incorporating Posidonius’ Developmental Schema**

Cicero and the Roman Stoics emphatically rejected Posidonius’ collapsing of οίκείωσις and διαστροφή. However, once they removed the diastrophic seeds from his account through transcendental argumentation, they found his threefold developmental schema of *commendatio* worth retaining.³⁶⁶

Like Posidonius, Seneca claims a distinct *commendatio* to reason (*ep. 121.14*). And the derivation is not mysterious, Seneca confesses Posidonius’ stimulus in the opening lines to Lucilius (*ep. 121.1*). Seneca projects an imaginary voice of dissent into this letter on Lucilius’ behalf in order to drive the argument deeper.³⁶⁷ Evidently Seneca claims that every living thing is attached to its own constitution (*omne animal primum constitutioni suae conciliari...*, *ep. 121.14*). Thus far Seneca travels in Chrysippus’ company. But a human being’s constitution is rational and thus humans attach to themselves not only as living, but also as rational beings. At this point Posidonius’ third, distinct form of οίκείωσις emerges in Seneca’s teaching.

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³⁶⁶ In the previous chapter, we saw Seneca strategically arranging Posidonius’, Chrysippus’ and Zeno’s primary emphases within a narrative account of three movements in the life cycle of a passion. There are clear signs of the same narrative fusion of Chrysipean and Posidonian elements in Seneca’s doctrine of *commendatio*.

So Lucilius, in his imagined voice, asks the crucial question. How can an infant, that lacks reason, attach itself to a rational constitution? *(quomodo ergo infans conciliari constitutioni rationali potest, cum rationalis nondum sit?, ep.121.14).* With that question the stage is set for Seneca’s signature synthesis of Chrysippean and Posidonian thought.

Seneca introduces a timed, narrative element into the theory. *Commendatio* is always to one’s constitution, but constitutions change over time. And Seneca names those times. Significantly, only four of six ages are mentioned with reference to the human constitution – infancy, boyhood and adolescence all in contrast with old age *(alia est aetas infantis, pueri adulescentis, senis... ep. 120.16).* The traditional ages of youth and maturity *(iuuentus et grauitas)* are first omitted, and then lumped together with old age. Seneca’s assumption seems to be that the first three developmental stages, corresponding to infancy, childhood and adolescence, possess distinctive constitutions. Posidonius’ threefold οἰκείωσις lurks in the background.

Seneca only deals with the first *commendatio* to self-preservation at length. And there he demonstrates that any inclination toward pleasure and away from pain is epiphenomenal to an underlying desire for health or self-preservation *(amor salutis; ep. 120.20).* But that selectivity of emphasis was set from the beginning when Seneca proposed to examine whether all animals possess a sense of their own constitutions *(ep. 121.5).*

One might wonder if the same procedure was ever applied to the other two modes of Posidonian οἰκείωσις. We find no explicit arguments aimed at unearthing structural conditions for an impulse to victory. However, the imagery, found in Cicero *(off. I.XVII.53-58)* and Hierocles (Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 4.671), of social attachment being
gradated like concentric circles goes a long way toward answering Carneades’
conundrum of the shipwrecked sage.

Likewise, by synthesizing accounts of self-preservation and human attachment
within a narrative account of appropriation, the concentric circles make room for
Posidonius’ observation of innate competitiveness in children without making victory
itself a primary natural object.

Because human attachment moves in concentric circles, one would expect
competitive impulses to naturally arise in interactions with the outer rings in a context
of scarcity. Moreover, the moral admonition found in Hierocles’ account that one should
seek to move people from outer to inner rings assumes that awareness of attachment to
successive rings proceeds through time. So a narrative strategy seems to undergird
post-Posidonian accounts of the second form of commendatio.

Extending the doctrine of commendatio beyond childhood to the age of reason is
uniquely Posidonian, but Cicero and Seneca clearly adopted a distinct third form of
commendatio (fin. III.V.17-18; ep. 121.14-17). In Seneca the commendatio to reason
emerges only in adolescence, as the child constitutionally develops into a rational animal
(ep. 121.14-17). Cicero does not accept the technical Stoic account of reason, and thus
finds inchoate expressions of reason even in children, which he uses to argue for a
commendatio to knowledge. Children delight in rational discovery by themselves apart
from any consideration of utility (fin. III.V.17-18). This continues to develop so that we
consider acts of cognition (cogitationes) appropriate to engage in for their own sake,

1996. Stoic Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. provides a helpful
discussion.
because they interact with and contain a degree of truth (fin. III.V.17). Herein lies the anthropological basis for the sciences (fin. III.V.18).

**Reasserting Peruersio: Roman Stoic Rehabilitations of external διαστροφή**

The Roman Stoic project of reconstructing a transcendental doctrine of *commendatio* underlying corruption required a similar reconstruction of the old doctrine of διαστροφή. Posidonius argued that Chrysippus’ purely external doctrine could not account for corruption as manifested in passionate excess.

The Roman Stoics emphatically distinguished *commendatio* from *peruersio*.

Consider Seneca’s statement. We are wrong to consider faults as inborn and natural. Rather like an enemy they “overtake us” or like bad food we “ingest” them (*Erras enim, si existimas nobiscum uitia nasci; superuenerunt, ingesta sunt., ep. 95.55*). Error and vice come from the outside in. So much Chrysippus could have said, but a post-Posidonian Stoic needs to explain two things in more detail. First, how can external things so easily penetrate and corrupt innate goodness? Or, why would the innately pure be tempted? Second, by what mechanism does corruption happen early enough to account for Posidonius’ observations of impulses to pleasure and competitive domination in children?

Chrysippus had already conceptualized a twofold mechanism of διαστροφή (*D.L. VII.89*). The first mechanism, namely the persuasiveness of external affairs, operated by a failure of an individual’s faculty of judgment, but envisioned an adolescent already enmeshed in society as the agent of that misjudgment (*D.L. VII.89*). Cicero picks up this internal failure of judgment, but after Posidonius the Stoicizing theorist needs to specify
how very early experience of externals already persuades to misjudgment. So Cicero specifies the mechanism of deception as vice's partial imitation of virtue (*Leg. I.11.31*).

The first corrupting misjudgment stems from the levity and charm of pleasure bearing a genuine but partial resemblance to goodness (*Leg. I.11.31*). Likewise, reputation easily masquerades as good character through a confusion of effect for its cause (*Leg. I.11.32*). The inherent deceptiveness of external appearances to a mind not yet equipped with a full capacity for proper judgment allows *peruersio* to almost immediately overtake native *commendatio*. The distinction between *commendatio* and *peruersio* is secured through transcendental argumentation, but scarcely a hair's breadth separates them in human experience.

The second Chrysippean mechanism, κατίχησις, explicitly attributes corruption to the verbalized judgments of societal peers (*D.L. VII.89*). After Posidonius, the Roman Stoics must produce an account of how verbalized misjudgments corrupt in a much earlier stage of life. Their general strategy is to read the societal sources of corruption back into very early, post-natal experience.

For instance, Cicero describes how the little spark (*igniculos*) of health and virtue instilled in us at birth is overwhelmed first by the deception we drink in with our nurse’s milk, probably the evil of calling pleasant feelings good (*Tusc. III.1.1-2*).369

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Parents, teachers, the poets, and public opinion – the whole educational project of a perverted society – subsequently reinforce and entrench that deception (Tusc. III.II.3). Corrupt habits and foolish opinions twist and divert our minds from the path Nature originally set them on (leg. I.29). As a result the soul becomes gravely ill with vicious beliefs and finds itself in dire need of philosophical therapy (Tusc. III.III.5-7).

Seneca also emphasizes the social transmission of peruersio (ep. 94.53-55, 68). Even as a person ingests badness, he passes it on to others (ep. 94.54). Parents and slaves propel little ones into distortion. Parents instill within us admiration for silver and gold as goods, and that seed sprouts and grows with the child (ep. 115.11). Through such twisted examples and verbalized misjudgments we come over time to have our chests filled with evil talk which we must clear out and replace with moral precepts (ep. 94.68).

**Augustinian Infancy: Nature as Creational and Fallen Nativity**

In composing his account of infancy in Confessiones I, Augustine displays a nuanced awareness of the philosophical issues underlying Stoic accounts of commendatio and peruersio and crafts his own depiction in a subtle, critical interaction with them.

Of course, Augustine’s world is not fundamentally Stoic. His ontology is emphatically non-corporeal in its depths, having gratefully and critically learned from Platonist accounts of non-bodily substance (conf. VII.9.13-17.23). Likewise, human beings are designed both for receiving eternal truth through contemplation and for temporal effectiveness through action (s. dom. m. II.71 Cum enim beata uita actione et

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370 For Plotinian doctrine see Enn. VI.4-5; VI.9 and IV.2; cf. also an. quant. 6; c. ep. Man. 16.20; Ep. 166.4 for Augustine’s appropriation.
cognitione compleatur, actio facultatem urium, contemplatio manifestationem rerum desiderat; cf. also s. dom. m. I.38; exp. Gal. 19.9; conf. XIII.18.22; c. Faust. 22.27-28; ciu. VIII.4). The Stoics have a lot to say about action, but nothing about contemplating things non-bodily and immutable. So Augustine’s fruitful interaction with the Stoics is confined to the realm of the psychology of action.

But Augustine cannot simply embrace the Stoics’ psychology of action unaltered. Human nature, on a Christian reading, now has a crack in it. While that flaw does not go all the way back to creation, it certainly precedes any individual human experience (conf. I.7.11). So the nature distinct from peruersio, which the Hellenistic philosophers sought, is found in primordial creation alone (cum autem de libera voluntate recte faciendi loquimur, de illa scilicet in qua homo factus est loquimur, lib. arb. III.52). The innate is already diastrophic or perverse (conf. I.7.11). Infancy mostly provides a mirror of fallen nature.

However, with that theological qualification the following is clear. When discussing infantile psychology of action, Augustine’s account of human life largely conforms to a Roman Stoic account of commendatio to three forms of action emerging sequentially with constitutional changes throughout infancy and boyhood. Indeed, the orderly emergence of a threefold commendatio provides the basic structure for

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371 Of course, according to Stoic ontology anything unchangeable, either through action or passion, is non-bodily, and anything non-bodily is non-existent.
372 Cf. chapters 3 and 4 for discussion of specific alterations.
373 Augustine follows Cicero in finding the early emergence of a commendatio to knowledge in boyhood. This works for Augustine in part because of a very non-Stoic distinction between the commendatio to temporal knowledge and the emergence of contemplative reason, which orients always to eternal wisdom (conf. XIII.21.31). For a discussion of this peculiar distinction and the role of contemplation it implies, see chapter 6 below.
Confessiones I.6.7-10.16, at which point Augustine shifts the primary focus to an account of socially transmitted peruersio.

At the end of Confessiones I, Augustine draws the three forms of commendatio together for the reader and distinguishes the underlying creational impulses from their innately perverse expressions (conf. I.31). Augustine also intimates a process of redeeming commendatio that further reveals how created commendatio corresponds to Roman Stoic transcendental forms of commendatio (conf. XIII.21.31). We will examine these texts in detail in due course, but offer a short summary now as a grace to the reader.

**Commendatio and Peruersio: Augustine's account in nuce**

The human being sequentially manifests three created forms of commendatio in an already perverted manner. There is no temporal, developmental distinction between commendatio and peruersio in human experience on Augustine’s telling. First, the impulse to self-preservation of bodily health emerges already twisted into the search for carnal pleasure (conf. I.6.7). A correlative aversion to pain and injury comes with this impulse. Next, the impulse to relate socially emerges wrapped up in a thirst for victory, domination and eventually reputation (conf. I.6.8-8.13). Correlatively, aversion to defeat, frustration and shame manifests. Finally, the created impulse for temporal knowledge emerges as perverse curiosity or craving for sense experience in itself irrespective of truth (conf. I.9.14-10.16). Even in the throws of curiosity, human beings find themselves averse to being deceived and falling into error. Thus the natural patterns of commendatio emerge already corrupt and east of Eden, if you will.
The innate perversion of commendatio does not render the doctrine of peruersio irrelevant or useless for Augustine. For the Roman Stoics had passed down two mechanisms of peruersio – namely, first-hand errors of judgment caused by the deceitfulness of appearances and the verbalized misjudgments of society echoed back in distorted judgments by the individual (Cicero, Leg. I.11.31-32; Tusc. III.1.1-3.7; Seneca, ep. 94.53-55, 68; ep. 115.11).

Augustine has two similar categories of corruption: natura and consuetudo (Simpl. I.I.10). Augustine names our innate tendencies to fall into deception and perverse action as the penalty of ignorance and difficulty borne in our fallen nature (lib. arb. III.52). This much is natura after the fall, and it entirely subsumes the first mode of peruersio in Roman Stoic thought.

However, the second, social mode of peruersio finds a distinct place in Augustine’s account that is clearly continuous with its function in Roman Stoic thought. We receive and socially transmit twisted forms of consuetudo (exp. Gal. 8.2). These galvanize the chain of the will constituted by penally mortal nature. As in Cicero, the verbalized judgments of society, imbibed through interaction with parents, teachers, poets and public opinion, pollute and corrupt people in their very early formative periods (cf., Tusc. III.1.1-3.7 in relation to exp. Gal. 8.2; en. Ps. 136.21). Specifically, diastrophic formation finds social embodiment in the late Roman schools.

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374 Segregatur quodammodo de ventre matris, quisquis a carnalium parentum consuetudine caeca separatur, acuescit autem carni et sanguini, quisquis carnalibus propinquis et consanguineis suis carnaliter suadentibus assentitur, exp. Gal. 8.2
375 Later Augustine will use the notion of early post-natal peruersio to describe the plight of those born into schismatic families, en. Ps. 30.2.2.8; 64.6.
remnants of the *cursus honorum* charting ascendency in public life, and finally the contemplative pretensions of pagan philosophy. Thus, while no period of human life is free from *peruersio*, a distinct added role of socially transmitted *peruersio* clearly manifests in human experience according to Augustine (*conf. II.B.16*).

The scriptures provide Augustine with warrant for finding a perverse manifestation of the Roman Stoics’ threefold *commendatio*. Do not love the world, warns 1 John 2:16, for everything in the world can be summed up in three forms of perversion - *concupiscentia carnis, concupiscentia oculorum* and *ambitio saeculi* (*cf. uera rel. 70; conf. X.30.41; X.35.54; ep. Io. tr. 2.11-13*). The three perversions of *commendatio* map onto the three things of the world without remainder, albeit with a

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377 Cf. the discussion below in chapter 6, subtitled “Diastrophic Shades of Ecclesial Formation: The Hexaemeron of Confessiones XIII and the Structure of Confessions I-VII”.

378 Augustine sometimes uses the more general term for desire. *cf., sed non diligamus mundum, neque ea quae in mundo sunt. quae enim in mundo sunt, desiderium carnis est, et desiderium oculorum, et ambitio saeculi [1 Io 2,16].(ep. Io. tr. 2,11).*
need to revise the order. Augustine regularly alternates between the scriptural order and the developmental order of *commendatio*.

So turning from healthful provision for the body to seeking pleasure in self and creatures translates into *concupiscientia carnis* (*conf. I.20.31*). Twisting the God-given desire for temporal knowledge into curiosity or a lust for sensation per se produces *concupiscentia oculorum*. And, when the created impulse to associate degenerates into the quest for victory, domination and reputation, *ambitio saeculi* has taken over the reigns.

The essence of *peruersio*, both original and concurrent, lies in inverting the proper order of human duplex engagement. By creation, we are designed to contemplate and act, in that order (*c. Faust. 22.27*). We receive eternal truth then act...
temporally in keeping with it. Distortion occurs by privileging temporal action over contemplation of the eternal and thus detaching action from truth (mus. VI.40). Such was Adam’s prideful sin.\textsuperscript{382} Now all are born fallen and human development follows an inverse progression (as the Stoics described). East of Eden, we necessarily learn to act before we learn to contemplate. And this developmental inversion of capacities makes authority a redemptive requirement.

This leads to one last important contrast. For Augustine, all three modes of commendatio constitute aspects of the psychology of action (conf. XIII.21.31). Stoic psychology in its totality applies merely to the lower dimension of the soul, because even the commendatio to knowledge orients humans to temporal knowledge.\textsuperscript{383} The higher, contemplative functions will be discussed only in the next chapter where we consider Augustine’s allegorical deciphering of an ecclesial program for human formation within the scriptures.

\textit{Three Stages of Commendatio in Confessiones I}

Augustine’s account of infancy begins by setting up a backdrop of penal ignorance and divine provision east of Eden (conf. I.6.7). Augustine remembers neither infancy nor the period of gestation in his mother’s womb whereby God fashioned a body for him in

\textit{imperanti, sicuti est quamdiu peregrinamur a Domino; siue per speciem, quod erit cum similes ei erimus, quoniam uidebimus eum sicuti est, c. Faust. 22.27.}

\textsuperscript{382} Note the scriptural connection in I John 2. Love of Father, who gives eternal life, is set in opposition to the three lusts that constitute the world. John says the world is passing away, so the choice for temporal over eternal is embedded in the Johannine text. This inversion of temporal love over eternal love lies at the base of peruersio of the threefold commendatio.

\textsuperscript{383} However, we have already seen in chapter 1 & 2 that Augustine’s lower soul has a distinctive role, setting it apart from Plotinus’. For the lower soul, not the higher, constitutes the ontological retainer that prevents the fallen soul from descending entirely into nothingness.
time. So Augustine’s story starts with a bleak oblivion already awash in temporality.384

But God’s provision overshadows this period of forgetfulness (conf. I.6.7).

And Augustine’s emphasis of divine provision is crucial, because the innate perversion of commendatio after the fall consists in trying to fulfill the three created impulses out of creaturely resources alone (hoc enim peccabam, quod non in ipso, sed in creaturis eius me atque ceteris uoluptates, sublimitates, ueritates quaerebam, conf. I.20.31). So before Augustine describes his first impulse, he sets the stage by recounting the abundance of milk from breasts that did not fill themselves.385 God’s care abundantly supplies nourishment and grants Augustine to not want more milk than God

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384 For the Plotinian depiction of lower soul awakening after the fall, confused and forgetful, in a particular body, cf. Enn. IV.8.1-2, 8. For a discussion of the Plotinian theme of amnesia in the background to this passage cf. O’Connell, Robert J. 1969. St. Augustine’s Confessions; the Odyssey of Soul. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Note also, however, the sparse, superficial reading O’Connell must offer of Augustinian infancy and infantile psychology of action (only four pages for Confessiones I), because his monocural reading through Plotinus leaves a gaping blind spot over Augustine’s subtle interactions with Roman Stoicism.

385 Doubtless quasi-sacramental, maternal fluids play a larger, anagogic role in Augustine’s tale. For Monica’s tears foretell his predestination (conf. III.12.21), even as he had imbibed the name of Christ with her milk (conf. III.4.8). Just as Monica had made pains to ensure Augustine considered God, rather than Patricius, his Father (conf. I.11.17), so in the end she realizes her role is complete in seeing Augustine safe within mater ecclesia and so her sojourn on earth is appropriately complete (conf. IX.10.26).

The deep roots of the mater ecclesia theme – developed from a reading of Gal. 4:26, probably in Asia Minor – are elucidated through a detailed conceptual excavation in Plumpe, Joseph Conrad. 1943. Mater ecclesia; an Inquiry into the Concept of the Church as Mother in early Christianity. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

For a less allusive way into Augustine’s thought pattern consider the roughly contemporary words in s. 22.10 – quia duo parentes nos genuerunt ad uitam, duo parentes nos genuerunt ad uitam. parentes qui nos genuerunt ad mortem, Adam est et Eua. parentes qui nos genuerunt ad uitam, Christus est et ecclesia. et pater meus qui me genuit, Adam mihi fuit; et mater mea Eua mihi fuit. nati sumus secundum istam progeniem carnis, ex munere quidem dei - quia et istud munus non est alterius sed dei - et tamen, fratres, quomodo nati sumus? certe ut moriamur. praecessores genuerunt sibi successores. numquid genuerunt sibi cum quibus hic semper uiuant? sed tamquam deceessuri, qui illis succederent genuerunt sibi. deus autem pater et mater ecclesia, non ad hoc generant. generant autem ad uitam aeternam, quia et ipsi aeterni sunt. et habemus hereditatem promissam a Christo uitam aeternam.
has supplied (conf. I.6.7). Later Augustine will turn his attention to this fact as truth cries out both inside and outside him (conf. I.6.7).

**First Stage of Commendatio: Bodily Provision Distorted into Seeking Pleasure**

But infancy begins with a distortion of attention (note the contrasting animaduerti postmodum, conf. I.6.7). The impulse to preserve bodily health is a gift from God by which we maintain a trace of divine unity (conf. I.20.31). God himself implanted the urges that would lead to bodily unity and safety (tu itaque, domine deus meus, qui dedisti uitam infanti et corpus, quod ita, ut uidemus, instruxisti sensibus, compegisti membris, figura decorasti proque eius universitate atque incolumitate omnes conatus animantis insinuasti, conf. I.7.12). Notice the similarity between Augustine’s account of created commendatio and the Roman Stoic accounts of a transcendental commendatio to self-preservation recounted above.

But in the midst of God’s abundant supply through his nurse’s milk, Augustine the infant knew only the two motives that the Epicureans and Posidonius related as the first natural impulse (D.L. X.137; Sextus Pyrr. hyp. III.194-195; adu. Math. XI.96; Cicero fin. I.30; I.71). He knew to suck and be quieted by carnal pleasure (nam tunc sugere noram et adquiescere delectationibus... [carnis meae], conf. I.6.7). And he knew to cry when his flesh was bumped or frustrated (...flere autem offensiones carnis meae, nihil amplius., conf. I.6.7). So the impulse to bodily preservation emerges already twisted. The

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infant’s attention is drawn toward the affective accrualments of action, not the proper end of action in bodily health (conf. I.6.7).³⁸⁸ And the infant’s consciousness seems sealed inside its flesh, with cries purely reactive to bodily stimuli and, as yet, unlike future intentions to communicate.³⁸⁹ Thus Augustine completes his depiction of the first stage of commendatio and moves to the very early appearance of the second stage.

**Second Stage of Commendatio: Association Distorted into Domination**

The second stage of commendatio to personal interaction and social cohesion likewise emerges already distorted with innate desires for domination and manipulation (conf. I.6.8-8.13). This second stage Augustine relates in two phases, one thoroughly speechless (conf. I.6.8-9) and the other transitioning toward speech and boyhood (conf. I.6.10-8.13).

A triangular contrast between God’s eternal ordering of temporal change (conf. I.6.9), Edenic bodily transparency as the created basis for personal relation (gn. adu.

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³⁸⁸ One place this commendatio to bodily preservation appears in Augustine’s later work is in his steadfast insistence that an instinctive fear of death, as bodily dissolution, was natural and ineradicable (e.g., ciu. I.11-26; XIX.4). However, the natural impulse to bodily preservation produces a fear equivalent to a pre-passion and not a full passion of the mens. Thus, even fear of death may be surmounted in faithful action and belief.

³⁸⁹ This stage matches the Epicurean account of language origins as purely natural expulsions of air to match the physiological impact of an impression. So Epicurus (Letter to Herodotus in D.L. X.75-76) explains that names were not invented by coining, rather varying expulsions of air naturally followed upon human’s feelings producing differing sounds or names. These names are later extended by convention. Note also, Lucretius nat. rerum V.1028-1090. For secondary discussions see Stevens, Benjamin E. 2008. “Symbolic Language and Indexical Cries: A Semiotic Reading of Lucretius 5.1028-90” American Journal of Philology 129, pp. 529-557, and Reinhardt, Tobias. 2008. “Epicurus and Lucretius on the Origins of Language” Classical Quarterly 58:1, pp. 127-140. Of course, very soon the infant will move from purely reactive expulsions to more complex expressions of appetite and aversion in relation to other human beings as potential suppliers of desiderata.
Man. II.32), and the penal condition of opaque mortal bodies (gn. adu. Man. II.32) creates a rich conceptual backdrop throughout this section (conf. I.6.8-8.13).\footnote{A discussion of the relevant concepts of Edenic embodiment and the Fall through intentional action is provided in chapter 2 above.}

Augustine’s account begins by relating an infantile trace of lost bodily transparency.\footnote{For partial expressions of bodily transparency in this fallen state, cf. besides the performative descriptions in conf. I.6.8ff, Augustine’s accounts in diu. qu. 47 and cat. rud. 2.3; 4.7.} About this time the infant begins to smile (Post et ridere coepi... conf. I.6.8). The infant’s grin is a pale spark of the created impulse toward human association and a vestige of the bodily transparency that God originally designed to foster association. The connection, in Augustine’s mind, between smiling and the associative impulse is clear. For soon after smiling the infant begins to sense his location among other humans (paulatim sentiebam ubi essem) and wills to make his volitions known (et uoluntatas meas uolebam ostendere... conf. I.6.8).

Similarly, the way Augustine links the futility of that desire to an impasse between interior and exterior sensation elucidates the vestigial allusion to primordial bodily transparency (conf. I.6.8). After the Fall, a gap exists between human persons that God did not create (gn. adu. Man. II.32). The weakness of each soul’s sensation, coupled with the opacity of mortal bodies, incapacitates adequate communication between two souls through the created medium of bodily expression (et non poteram, quia illae intus erant, foris autem illi nec ullo suo sensu ualebant introire in animam meam, conf. I.6.8). The intus-foris impasse Augustine here describes marks the penal condition within which infantile association first emerges.

But an innate peruersio manifests itself more basically in the infant’s volitions (conf. I.6.8). The second commendatio to human association emerges as an already
twisted desire to dominate other persons (*et cum mihi non obtemperabatur*...), *indignabar non subditis maioribus et liberis non servientibus*) and to use people for the sake of satisfying carnal desires (*et voluntates meas uolebam ostendere eis, per quos implerentur*...,*conf. I.6.8*). To love one’s neighbor as oneself in God’s presence, the created end of a *commendatio* to association, seems a long way off.

The perverse appearance of the second *commendatio*, in the context of penal bodies, leads directly to the first, inchoate use of signs (*signa...pauc a qua e poteram, qualia poteram, conf. I.6.8*). And these inchoate signs correspond to the two forms of *peruersio* found in the first expression of a *commendatio* to association.

The first signs are used to manipulate and attain objects of the infant appetite (*conf. I.6.8*). So the infant thrashes about with limb and voice producing an embryonic anticipation of language that more closely matches the erratic state of an infant’s volitions (*iactabam membra et uoces, signa similia voluntatibus meis...*, *conf. I.6.8*), than really resembling the objects of its desire (*non enim erant ueresimilia*, *conf. I.6.8*).

When inchoate signs inevitably fail to secure obedience, the second impulse to domination finds expression through a use of crying to avenge (*et cum mihi non obtemperabatur... me de illis flendo uindicabam*, *conf. I.6.8*). Thus language finds its deep roots in a natural associative desire to overcome the penally imposed *intus-foris*

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impasse, but actually emerges as a crude externalization of already perverse desires (conf. I.6.8).

Before moving on to describe the transition from infancy to boyhood in language acquisition (...et signa, quibus sensa mea nota aliis facetem, iam in fine infantiae quaerebam, conf. I.6.10), Augustine once and twice circles back to contrast human beings changing constitutions and innate sinfulness with the eternity of God (conf. I.6.9-10). Though Augustine cannot access any life before the womb through memory, whatever might be there is secure in God’s care. For God holds the unchanging causes of all changeable things (conf. I.6.9) in a self-sameness humans can scarcely understand (conf. I.6.10).

Reflection upon divine self-sameness leads naturally to an inquisition concerning infantile sin (conf. I.7.11). For temporal mutation, driven by the soul’s shifting of loves, specifically names the condition of the fall for Augustine (gn. adu. Man. II.7; uera rel. 38; s. dom. m. I.35). So there is no surprise that Augustine begins this reflection by explicitly contradicting the Stoic assumption of innate natural goodness (...nemo mundus a peccato coram te, nec infans, cuius est unius diei uita super terram..., conf. I.7.11).394

But this interrogation concerning the sins of infancy leads Augustine back to early attempts to sign using the natural language of bodily performance and descriptions of infantile traces of bodily transparency (conf. I.7.11). The little one casts longing eyes while crying (inhaibam plorans), uses tears to ask (flendo petere), tries to injure by hitting (feriendo nocere) and, finally, exhibits with his body competitive jealousy by glaring white with bitterness (intuebatur pallidus amaro aspectu..., conf.

394 Cf. Seneca’s dictum, erras enim, si existimas nobiscum uitia nasci; superuenerunt, ingesta sunt, ep. 95.55
These pre-conventional attempts to sign employ remnants of a bodily transparency lost (gn. adu. Man. II.31; diu. qu. 47; cat. rud. 2.3; 4.7) combined with externalizations that partly perform associative frustration and partly point toward the denied object.

The failure of pre-conventional signing to cross the intus-foris divide and thus secure obedience leads directly to the first attempts to grasp at conventional signs with the memory (cum gemitibus et uocibus uariis et uariis membrorum motibus edere uellem sensa cordis mei, ut voluntati pareretur, nec ualerem quae uolebam omnia nec quibus uolebam omnibus. prensabam memoria..., conf. I.8.13). The infant calls the ostensive reference of conventional signs by attending to a mixture of vocalization and vestigial bodily transparency in adults. Human language originates in an inherently slippery triangulation of inner desires, external objects and vocal sounds. But that correlation requires a third element to supply the initial sense of internal desires (conf. I.8.13).

Specifically, adults use various vestiges of bodily transparency to make the most basic inner volitions known (conf. I.8.13). By use of bodily movement, gesture, facial expression, casting of eyes and tone of voice the adult transmits two basic affections – acquisitive desire or repulsive rejection (hoc autem eos uelle ex motu corporis aperiebatur tamquam uerbis naturalibus omnium gentium, quae fiunt uultu et nutu oculorum ceteroque membrorum actu et sonitu uoci indicante affectionem animi in petendis, habendis, reiiciendis fugiendisque rebus., conf. I.8.13). By combining bodily expression of affect with concomitant sound and ostensive gesture or bodily movement, the infant’s mind begins to correlate conventional vocal signs with affects and objects (prensabam memoria, cum ipsi appellabant rem aliquam et cum secundum eam uocem
corpus ad aliquid mouebant, uidebam, et tenebam hoc ab eis uocari rem illam, quod sonabant, cum eam uellent ostendere., conf. I.8.13).

Through this process the infant’s constitution morphs into childhood, gradually accumulating a stock of words in their sentient places and learning to exercise his will through oral signing. So Augustine completes his account of the second commendatio to human association pursued east of Eden through acquisition of language from the scattered remnants of created bodily transparency. And, before moving to the third form of commendatio, Augustine explicitly reconnects the acquisition of language with the impulse to society such as it is east of Eden (sic cum his, inter quos eram, uoluntatum enuntiandarum signa communicaui et uitae humanae procellosam societatem altius ingressus sum pendens ex parentum auctoritate nutuque maiorum hominum., conf. I.8.13).

Third Stage of Commendatio: Knowledge Distorted into Craving for Experience

With the advent of boyhood, Augustine moves into his account of the third commendatio to knowledge (conf. I.9.14-10.16). God fashioned human beings with a created impulse to seek sufficient know-how of temporal things to effectively love their neighbors as themselves (conf. IX.9.21) and move toward a loving knowledge of God

395 Augustine’s thought here shares a certain kinship with the Stoic notion of reason being constituted by a sufficient stock of concepts and notions (SVF II.841). The differences are important, however. First, Augustine’s realist non-corporeal ontology frees him from the Stoic notion of reason as a body and thus a composite. And, second, based upon this distinction, the commendatio to knowledge remains distinct in Augustine’s mind from subjection to eternal reason (conf. XIII.21.31).
396 Beginning of I.8.13 hints forward to the emergence of boyhood, but then reverts to complete his account of language acquisition as the transition from infancy to boyhood. The third commendatio and boyhood Augustine takes up in earnest at I.9.14
397 N.B., the taming of Monica’s third commendatio results in repeating only those elements of other’s divulgences that are useful for making peace between them (conf. IX.9.21). This passage will be discussed below.
That much is God-given (conf. I.20.31). And God granted to Augustine the appropriate measure of memory and native ability for this purpose (non enim deerat, domine, memoria uel ingenium, quae nos habere uoluisti pro illa aetate satis…, conf. I.9.15).

After repeated lamentations of infancy's memorial inaccessibility, a new accessibility accompanies this period (non enim eram infans, qui non farer, sed iam puer loquens eram. et memini hoc… conf. I.8.13). With a sufficient command of language in hand, Augustine the child produces memories the bishop can still access. And so, with language acquisition, the oblivion shrouding Augustine's deep past begins to lift. Augustine has retained a Stoic sense of how memories need λεκτα/ to be real memories, and thus non-rational animals, such as infants, can only possess quasi-memories (Plutarch, De sollertia animalium 961e-f). For this reason linguistic facility and the first accessible memories turn out to be coeval (conf. I.8.13).

Memory and linguistic facility mark the first stirrings of an inchoate impulse to temporal knowledge, and with it the beginnings of the third commendatio (conf. I.9.14). According to human custom, schools are designed to harness and direct the budding and first flower of the human commendatio to knowledge. So Augustine begins his discussion of the commendatio to knowledge and a differentiated account of its peruersio with the advent of elementary education (conf. I.9.14).

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398 This need not contradict his rather loose attribution of memory to beasts in conf. X.17.26. For in context Augustine is seeking to move beyond memory itself, not just one form of memory. And Augustine most certainly would not claim brutes also contain liberal disciplines, numbers and memories of memory in their faculties. All Augustine alludes to is a sort of knowledge implicit to migratory success, the very sort of knowledge at issue in the Stoic attribution of a quasi-memory to animals.
For the first time a specific differentiation is required. External, institutionalized forms of *peruersio* now become a significant aspect of Augustine’s formation. The Stoic doctrine of *peruersio* that is socially transmitted through κατίχησις or *diuulgatio famae* finds its place here (*D.L. VII.89; Tusc. III.1.1-3.7; leg. 1.29; Sen. ep. 94.53-55, 68; ep. 115.11*), not as the origin of corruption but as an exacerbation of native twistedness. Augustine makes the distinction clear. His native *peruersio* manifests as a love of play (*sed delectabat ludere*) that makes him hate the discipline of studying (*conf. I.9.15*).

Lurking within those studies, however, was a second form of *peruersio* constituting the very program of human formation ensconced in the schools. The program of right living presented to Augustine there was completely immersed in temporality (*quandoquidem recte mihi uiure puero id proponebatur, obtemperare monentibus, ut in hoc saeculo floremen, conf. I.9.14*). One must obey those who admonish in order to flourish by means of verbal prowess leading to reputation and riches, both distortions of the first two forms of *commendatio* by Augustine’s lights (*et exxellerem linguosis artibus ad honorem hominum et falsas diuitias famulantibus, conf. I.9.14*). In the next section Augustine will enter a long and detailed exposition of this form of socially transmitted *peruersio*.

But, first, Augustine confesses his native perversion of the *commendatio* to knowledge (*conf. I.10.16*). As a boy he resisted study because, like all children, he emerged indigenously twisted toward love of play (*non enim meliora eligens inoboediens eram, sed amore ludendi*) and public shows (*spectacula, conf. I.10.16*). So desire for sense experience itself trumped any desire for true knowledge, thus twisting the third
commendatio in the vice of curiosity (mor. 1.38; gn. adu. Man. 1.40; II.27; mus. VI.39; VI.48; conf. X.35.54-57).399

Augustine’s depravity was also compounded by a proud desire for victory and for having stories spun about it (amans in certaminibus superbas uictorias et scalpi aures meas falsis fabellis..., conf. I.10.16). So the perversion of the impulse to knowledge is further aggravated by a corruption of the impulse to association. Thus Augustine completes his account of the three sequentially appearing forms of commendatio, each one emerging with an innate peruersio. At the end of Confessiones I he will circle back to close his first book with an affirmation of created commendatio in distinction from their perverse manifestations in fallen humans. But now Augustine launches into a complex of comparisons that will carry him through the first half of the Confessiones.400

The Ecclesial Program for Human Formation and its Perverse Parodies in Conf. I

Confessiones I.11.17-18.29 proceeds by systematically contrasting the diastrophic program of human formation to which Augustine was entrusted with the latent, God-given program for human formation found in the pilgrim society named church (conf. XIII.12.13-34.49). Indeed, the contrast continues through Confessiones VII and forms one of several overlaid principles of organization used in composing the Confessiones. By tracing the lineaments of the contrast one can see the expansive use Augustine made of the second form of peruersio.


400 For a summary account of Augustine’s submerged schematic, cf. chapter 6 below.
**A Deferred Baptism: Diastrophic Shades of Day One**

So Augustine recounts the deferral of his baptism (*conf. I.11.17-12.19*). After stomach pains and fever seized young Augustine, he begged for baptism and Monica almost consented (*conf. I.11.17*). But a sudden relief of symptoms caused his baptism to be postponed and thereby withheld Augustine from the first stage of God’s program for human formation in the church (*conf. I.11.17; XIII.12.13-14.15*).

Spiritual reading of the six days of creation provides Augustine with an itinerary for human reformation within the church (*conf. XIII.12.13-34.49*). The first day’s light, called forth over the deep, symbolizes repentance and baptism (*conf. XIII.12.13*). Baptism would have constituted a repentant acceptance of the humility of Christ and, by restraint of wayward impulses, would have initiated the process of moral transformation that culminates in full contemplation of God (*conf. XIII.12.13-14.15*).

Instead, through deferral of baptism, the reins of sinning were relaxed for Augustine (*quasi laxata sint lora peccandi; conf. I.11.18*). Augustine’s imagery is neither haphazard nor innocent. The primary task of philosophy in the realm of action is to restrain or bridle wayward impulses thus producing continence (*conf. X.31.47; c. Faust. 22.28*). Later, Augustine will relate how Monica’s conductress faithfully reined in (*frenabat*) the first distortion of *commendatio* in Monica— the impulse to pursue pleasure over bodily health – by severely restricting access to water outside mealtimes (*conf. IX.8.17*). By delaying his baptism and repentance, Augustine’s mother has unwittingly set her son’s feet moving down the diastrophic path of human custom.

What learning Augustine did accomplish transpired only under duress (*non enim discerem, nisi cogerer*, *conf. I.12.19*). His innate perversion set him against any form of
discipline. But the school’s coercion was not wholesome in intent. For it was driven by temporal lust for wealth and fame (illi enim non intuebantur, quo referrem quod me discere cogeant praeterquam ad satiandos insatiabiles cupiditates copiosae inopiae et ignominiosae gloriae. conf. I.12.19). Nonetheless, God used it to provide the rudiments of reading and writing, which would later be turned to good use in the ecclesial program of human formation.

Presumably, the ecclesial program of formation would also instill the rudiments of linguistic facility at this developmental stage. Indeed, the laborious task of learning to read, count and write are named as part of the penalty of Adamic flesh east of Eden (conf. I.9.14). The ecclesial program of repentance and constraint of impulses by turning to the humble one would properly coincide with the humble task of rudimentary studies. These were truly valuable, Augustine affirms (conf. I.13.20). It is the later studies with which he will find great fault.

Poetic Authority: Diastrophic Shades of Day Two

Augustine’s progression from rudimentary studies to reading the poets with the grammatici (conf. I.13.20-17.27) provides a shady semblance of the ecclesial training conveyed spiritually in the second day of creation (conf. XIII.15.16-16.19). Augustine makes the contrast explicit (conf. I.13.21-22).

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401 For an indication of these early, pre-grammatical studies in Roman society see Quintillian inst. I.1.
402 In this context of his first exposure to the poets, Augustine also brings the imagery of echoing and verbal transmission of vice – the second form of Stoic peruersio through κατηχησις or insusurro / divulgatio famae – to the surface (conf. I.13.21). From the vantage of an ecclesial formation, these whispers become shouts of defiance (conf. I.13.22), and Augustine must pray for God's help lest he be shouted down in his confession.
By reflecting on his newfound love for the Latin poets in contrast to his loathing of both primary Latin studies and the Greek poets, Augustine highlights how his delight in style and mythic fancies was utterly disconnected from truth and moral worth. The earlier studies were unquestionably more valuable as proved by their dependability and indispensability (conf. I.13.20). Likewise, Greek and Latin forms of poetry are equally vain and immoral (conf. I.14.23). Yet, Augustine’s soul gravitated to the ease of Latin poetry and shrank from the bitter effort required to make sense of its Greek equivalent (conf. I.14.23).

Thus Augustine’s indigenous perversion reasserts itself as an inert leaning toward ease of action, broken off from any sense of truth or goodness (cf., uera rel. 72). Likewise, his affective sensitivities are all askew. Augustine manifests a hypersensitivity to temporal affections coupled with sheer numbness to the disease and death of his own eternal soul (conf. I.13.20). Augustine’s misreading of Virgil whereby he identified affectively with Dido tells it all.

Virgil composed the Aeneid between 30 and 19 B.C and had already drunk deeply from the popularized Roman Stoicism of his day. The particular tale Augustine draws out for mention is Aeneas’ seven-year liaison with Dido Queen of Carthage and her subsequent suicide. Augustine the bishop knew its literary context well. A prophecy has told Aeneas that he is to establish a race in the west and build a city that will rule the world in peace and prosperity. The entrance of Dido is, on Virgil’s telling, a temptation for Aeneas to shirk the hardships of duty in favor of private pleasure and ease. Aeneas must learn to make and accept sacrifices in order to fulfill a destiny for the good of his descendants and the honor of his father. For seven years, Aeneas errs. The
triumph of reason’s acquiescence to fated duty is accomplished when Aeneas heeds Mercury’s words and leaves Carthage in search of his western homeland to be.

But all Augustine identifies with are the lover’s pains of Dido and the drama of her suicide when duty is again triumphant. But Augustine’s own tears flowed for her self-destructive ways. Yet, he missed Aeneas’ triumph of rationality and duty in the Virgilian text. Likewise, he could not see the irony of not lamenting his own misery apart from God (conf. I.13.21).

The twisting of moral value and truth were not Augustine’s alone. The conventional program of study with the grammatici manifests a general commitment to cultivating affective style in disregard of veridical and moral substance. To Augustine this inversion reveals much. In the next section, he will describe how this commitment shapes the formation of social groupings and standing therein (conf. I.18.28-29). But first Augustine reflects on how the same inversion involves a rejection of any standard of authoritative, eternal Truth above temporal affect (conf. I.16.25).

Augustine draws one set of incompatible claims to the surface for consideration. Of course his choice is metaphorically pregnant and deliberately chosen to highlight the poets’ perverse imitation of the scriptures (cf. conf. XIII.15.16-16.19). Jupiter, the poets claim, is both thunderer and adulterer (conf. I.16.25). The image of the thunderer as one speaking from the authority of the sky above directly contrasts with the allegorical

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403 Dyson, Julia T. 1996. “Dido the Epicurean.” Classical Antiquity 15:2, pp. 203-221 provides a powerful reading of Virgil’s depiction of Dido as a failed Epicurean. By tracing allusions between the Aeneid and Lucretius’ De Natura Rerum, Dyson illustrates the ironic dissolution of Dido’s attempted Epicureanism. Dido fails because her “philosophy” is proved false in the story. The gods do intervene. Fate, especially Aeneas’ fate, does impinge upon her life. And, by the gods’ nefarious schemes, she is felled by the very vices of immoderate sexual passion her philosophy eschews.

404 The allegation that public schools corrupt morals is old and well known to those who theorized the Roman school, cf. Cicero, Tusc. III.1.1-3.7; Quintillian inst. I.2.
place of scripture as firmament (conf. XIII.15.16-16.19). Augustine makes the conceptual contrast clear by naming Jupiter’s false thundering as a parody of authority from the heavens (... ut haberet auctoritatatem imitandum uerum adulterium lenocinante falso tonitru., conf. I.16.25).405

Authority and mediation are the substantive issues underneath the aerial metaphors. For human submission to the authority of the scriptures constitutes the spiritual referent of God hanging the solid firmament in the heavens on day two (conf. XIII.15.16). And the scriptures’ placement between highest heaven and earth points spiritually to their mediation of God’s mercy in time (conf. XIII.15.18). The poetic fictions, on the other hand, provide a false, twisted form of mediation that is more truly like pimping (lenocinante falso tonitru., conf. I.16.25). For the poets’ false mediation ascribes divinity to shameful deeds and thus allows human perversion to masquerade as imitation of celestial deity (sed hominibus flagitiosis diuina tribuendo, ne flagitia flagitia putarentur et ut quisquis ea fecisset, non homines perditos, sed caelestes deos uideretur imitatus., conf. I.16.25).

Those who peddle the diastrophic program for human formation claim the practice of ennarratio poetarum is utterly necessary for action and knowledge.406 By

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405 The theme of demonic imitation of divine authority, and the malice underneath, runs throughout Augustine’s thought. A particularly accessible and thorough account can be found in diuin. daem., esp. 6.10-10.15

406 According to Quintillian, grammar is divided into two parts – “Haec igitur professio, cum breuissime in duas partes diuidatur, recte loquendi scientiam et poetarum enarrationem... (inst. I.4.2).” His account of these two parts (inst. I.4-8) provides an essential point of departure in reading conf. I. For a running comparision between Quintillian and Augustine, cf. Stock, Brian. 1996. Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, pp. 23-42. The references to Quintillian are relegated to the corresponding notes on pp. 305-315. For a succinct account of Quintillian’s prescription for the grammatici, cf. Colson, F. H. 1914. “The Grammatical Chapters in Quintillian I.4-8” Classical Quarterly
their account it provides both the eloquence to persuade people concerning important matters and the capacity to unravel meanings (hinc uerba discuntur, hinc adquiritur eloquentia rebus persuadendis sententiisque explicandis maxime necessaria., conf. l.16.26). But Augustine disagrees.

Twice in this section Augustine intimates a contrasting program, a uia tuta, for educating children (conf. l.15.24). The second allusion specifies that the alternative to ennarratio poetarum would be exercises in the praise of God from the Scriptures (conf. l.17.27).407 This is the next step in the ecclesial project of human formation spiritually described as the second day of creation (conf. XIII.15.16-16.19).

Clinging to the firm authority of scripture provides a normative trajectory toward Truth. At this stage the little ones cannot understand truth beyond time. But clinging to scriptural authority moves them toward eventual understanding by first mediating the stories of God's merciful action in time (conf. XIII.15.18). Thus by submission to scriptural authority a person embraces moral truth even before she can grasp it intellectually.408 And these writings are divinely effective. No other books possess chaste words with such power to persuade human beings to humility (conf. XIII.15.17). While the poets parade a false authority used to seduce men to adultery, and


through their use in rhetorical contests entrench moral dissolution and ambition,\textsuperscript{409} the church’s scriptures convince little ones to humbly bow their necks to Jesus’ gentle yoke and thus worship God without thought for personal ambitions (\textit{conf. XIII}.15.17).

\textbf{Merging with the Temporally Ambitious: Diastrophic Shades of Day Three}

Having sufficiently contrasted the educational practice of \textit{enarratio poetarum} with the study of Christian scriptures, Augustine moves on to describe the perverse mode of social solidarity fostered among those who hold the temporally ambitious to be proper exemplars of human life (\textit{conf. I}.18.28-29). This process of assimilating to the temporally oriented social grouping contrasts, in Augustine’s mind, with the social solidarity among those who refer all temporal matters to eternal ends.\textsuperscript{410} And in this contrast Augustine depicts the next stage of his life as a perverse parody of the ecclesial solidarity spiritually described as day three of creation (\textit{conf. XIII}.17.20-21).

Conventional processes of formation now present the schoolboy, already attached by perverse loves to a false poetic authority, with exemplars for imitation (\textit{conf. I}.18.28). Paragons of temporal society are forthcoming and provide an image of social life devoted to temporal happiness. These cling tightly to a conventional \textit{pacta litterarum et syllabarum} but have no interest in the \textit{aeterna pacta} (\textit{conf. I}.18.29). The

\textsuperscript{409} Notice how Quintillian praises the very competitions Augustine here condemns, and for precisely the same reason, \textit{scilicet} their capacity to inflame ambition (\textit{inst. I}.2.18-25).

result is an ever-present, latent project of competition for honor for the sake of which meticulous care of speech may be used to destroy one’s neighbor (conf. I.18.29). Augustine alludes to the contrasting, ecclesial program throughout. The bitter, dark waters of social arrangements directed toward temporal ends alone (conf. XIII.17.20; cf. en. Ps. 64.9) contrast with the dry land referring to souls who thirst for the eternal amid temporal society (conf. XIII.17.21). Day three’s spiritual meanings and scriptural images govern Augustine’s descriptive metaphors of this stage.

Temporally oriented social arrangements were deep waters and darkness out of which God graces to draw Augustine (et nunc eruis de hoc immanissimo profundo... nam longe a uultu tuo in affectu tenebroso, conf. I.18.28). Augustine’s soul was immersed in those waters. But his thirst for eternal delights and his search for God’s face foreshadow his eventual place among those on the dry land of eternally oriented society (et nunc eruis de hoc immanissimo profundo quaerentem te animam et sitientem delectiones tuas, et cuius cor dicit tibi: quaesiui uultum tuum; uultum tuum, domine, requiram [Ps 26,8], conf. I.18.28).

This dry longing, when socially consolidated, leads to fruitfulness through obedience to divine precept (conf. XIII.17.21). When the devout follow scripture’s precept to love neighbor, the dry land produces fruit both in the simple provision of temporal needs and the more robust enforcement of social justice (conf. XIII.17.21). But in the bitterness of Augustine’s sea-swept condition, the only witness, deep and muted, to that land and its fruit is the non-syllabic writing of conscience that one should not do

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411 The implicit social solidarity behind speech is perverted, and thus rendered demonic by using speech in service of personal ambition (conf. I.17.27). For an account of this pact with demons in another context see Markus, R. A. 1994. “Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory” Revue des Études Augustiniennes, 40, pp. 375-388
to another what one wouldn’t want done to oneself (conf. I.18.29). And, of course, that witness is ignored (conf. I.18.29).

Augustine’s depiction of diastrophic parodies and ecclesial realities of day three is not complete. He continues in Confessiones II with a contrast between perverse twisting of companionship and the salutary restraint of divine precept, followed by reflection on the sham, stolen fruit cast up by the waves of temporally ordered social solidarity. But before continuing with his confession, Augustine deems it necessary to seal his account of commendatio in distinction from socially transmitted and innate peruersio (conf. I.19.30-20.31).

**Commendatio: Diastrophic and Created**

Augustine summarizes his youthful state as adherence to a diastrophic belief that the good life consisted in winning societal favor (conf. I.19.30). The result is thoroughgoing perversion of the threefold commendatio. Augustine doubly distorted his commendatio to knowledge by lying (dissimulating truth) in order to free himself to play and take in spectacles (seeking experience in itself, conf. I.19.30). Augustine, likewise, distorted his commendatio to bodily preservation by stealing to satisfy gluttony (conf. I.19.30). Stealing also contributed somewhat to his perversion of the commendatio to human association. For he stole to bribe his playmates to include him and then further perverted that association into domination by means of cheating (conf. I.19.30).

But Augustine’s peruersio, both innate and socially transmitted, is not the last word concerning the roots of human action. In thanksgiving, Augustine now turns to delineate the creational gift of the threefold commendatio underlying his perverse

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412 Cf. discussion in chapter 6 below.
manifestations thereof (sed tamen, domine, tibi excellentissimo atque optimo conditori et rectori uniuersitatis, deo nostro gratias [2 Cor 2,14], conf. I.20.31).

Following the order of I John. 2:16, Augustine relates the created commendatio to bodily preservation in terms quite at home in Roman Stoic transcendental accounts, although explicitly interpreted within the framework of a Christian-Platonic ontology (uestigium secretissimae unitatis, ex qua eram, conf. I.20.31). So the first creational commendatio constitutes a sensation of healthful bodily unity, which is itself a trace of divine unity, and a care to keep it from danger (sentiebam meamque incolumitatem, uestigium secretissimae unitatis, ex qua eram, curae habeam, conf. I.20.31). Avoiding pain serves the proper function of self-preservation (fugiebam dolorem, conf. I.20.31).

The creational commendatio to knowledge likewise resembles Cicero's Stoicizing account of an underlying impulse to discovery of truth even in children, which grows to provide the anthropological basis for the sciences (fin. III.5.17-18). So the third creational commendatio (by Stoic ordering) consists in maintaining the inner sense by which external stimuli are integrated, and in finding delight in thinking about truth to the degree constitutionally possible (custodiebam interiore sensu integritatem sensuum meorum inque ipsi paruis paruarumque rerum cogitationibus ueritate delectabar., conf. I.20.31). The contrary is also entailed. By created constitution, humans avoid being deceived, draw back from ignorance and develop memory to aid in the process (falli nolebam, memoria uigebam,... fugiebam... ignorantiam, conf. I.20.31).

The created commendatio to human association consists primarily in the underlying impulse to communicate and find soothing comfort in friendship (locutione instruebar, amicitia mulcebar, conf. I.20.31). Since both social rejection (fugiebam...
abiectionem) and absorption of identity (confusiones) oppose proper association, created commendatio flees from those states (conf. I.20.31).

In these three created forms of commendatio Augustine finds much worthy of praise and wonder (quid in tali animante non mirabile atque laudabile?, conf. I.20.31). God made these underlying dimensions of the self and they are good (at ista omnia dei mei dona sunt. non mihi ego dedi haec: et bona sunt et haec omnia ego., conf. I.20.31).

The peruersio of sin does not reside in the created inclinations. Sin enters with the attempt to fulfill our created affinities through direct action and thus out of created resources alone (hoc enim peccabam, quod non in ipso, sed in creaturis eius me atque ceteris uoluptates, sublimitates, ueritates quaerabam, conf. I.20.31). In so doing we invert the proper order whereby contemplative adhesion to the eternal always precedes temporal action. As a result, our diastrophic quest for pleasures (uoluptates) ends in sorrows (dolores), our search for social distinctions (sublimitates) ends in absorptive loss of identity (confusiones), and our grasping for temporal truths (ueritates) yields only errors (errores, conf. I.20.31).

Peruersio comes from privileging temporal action over contemplative reception of the eternal (mus. VI.39; VI.48). So Augustine’s prayer ends this first book of the Confessiones with thanksgiving for the contemplative mediation of action that God enables (conf. I.20.31). Thereby God becomes our primary sweetness, honor and epistemic confidence (gratias tibi, dulcedo mea et honor meus et fiducia mea, deus meus, gratias tibi de donis tuis...) allowing these created roots of action to grow and reach their appropriate ends (...et augebuntur et perficientur quae dedisti mihi, conf. I.20.31). But the description of how that works requires an examination of Augustine’s understanding of contemplation in the Confessiones, to which we now turn.
Chapter 6

Augustine’s Account of Contemplation:

Perverse and Redemptive Ascents in the Confessiones

Contemplation in the Confessiones, like impulses to action, comes in two forms. The fallen self can rise through a self-fueled ascent to the very heights of knowledge and thus attain a brief glimpse of God’s non-corporeal substance (conf. VII.10.16; VII.17.23; VII.20.26). But these ascents always prove abortive and morally non-transformative.

Platonic contemplation, as Augustine understands it, falls into this category.

On the other hand, God has provided an indirect mode of graced ascent as a part of Christ’s body, which is every rising to join his divinity (conf. VII.18.24). God’s indirect route incorporates seasons of contemplation, but does not proceed by contemplation alone. Even graced contemplation does not last forever in this life, but in tandem with ecclesially directed reformation of action, it does heal and transform. And the goal, like the mode, of this graced contemplation turns out to be substantively different. So in the Confessiones Augustine proposes a distinctively Christian form of post-Platonic contemplation.413

413 By “post-Platonic contemplation” I refer to an account of contemplation that would not be imaginable without prior incorporation of Platonic theories, yet cannot be reduced to, or fit without remainder within, a Neo-Platonic understanding of contemplation. Augustine’s theory owes much to Plotinian thought, but introduces distinctly novel elements that cannot be construed, with interpretive fidelity to Augustine, as merely extraneous.
Presumptive Contemplation: Glimpsing the Creator through Creatures

The key to identifying Augustine’s account of Christian and Platonic contemplation lies in noticing two related points in his thought.

First, Augustine subtly distinguishes two possibilities in the direction of mediation. For Augustine the issue is not whether one thing will mediate for another. God fashioned souls in an ontologically middling position (ep. 18). By their very constitution humans will mediate between immutable God above and bodies below (ep. 18). By virtue of this middling position, human souls are capable of immediately interacting with one or the other level of reality, but not with both simultaneously.

Angelic intelligences also occupy this middling class, albeit without any fall into sin (conf. XII.9.9). The question is in which direction will the mediation flow? If humans approach creatures immediately, God’s presence is mediated (and somewhat mitigated) thereby (conf. X.27.38). When humans approach God immediately, they encounter

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414 Contemporary philosophical theologians have criticized Augustine for living within a “dream of immediacy.” A good example is Smith, James K.A. 2000. The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic. Downer’s Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press., pp. 133-148. But Smith has not read Augustine closely enough, for much nuance is missed. Augustine does not imagine immediacy all around, as it were, to God and other human beings. Rather, Augustine’s account of primordial speechlessness is a complex notion of immediate interaction of the human mind with God that maintains humans in their created, bodily state wherein unfallen bodies effortlessly perform fully functional mediation between human souls under God (gn. adu. Man. II.22-32). Thus the production of significant sound was obviated by virtue of a superior form of mediation between human beings. Likewise, Augustine has distinguished created embodiment, and thus ‘finitude’, from penal mortality of body (e.g., ex. prop. Rom. 13-18.10-12; 36.5; 46.7; 50), a point of which Smith seems unaware.

415 For a fuller discussion of the soul’s middling position in reality and the relevant literature, cf. chapter 2 above.
creatures through the mediation of God, who contains their unchanging causes, and nothing of the creature is lost thereby (conf. XIII.31.46).416

The second point fleshes out the first. Platonic contemplation rises unaided through the residual strength of action rooted in the third commendatio to knowledge. Augustine clearly distinguishes between this form of commendatio, which constitutes an ingenium (conf. V.3.4), and reason proper to which it must be subjected (conf. XIII.21.31).417 For the human being’s innate inclination to knowledge, when untouched by grace, approaches things from the outside in and seeks through interrogation or exploration of temporal things to obtain their unchanging forms (homines autem possunt interrogare, ut inuisibilia dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciant [Rm 1,20], conf. X.6.10). But the very choice to consistently pursue knowledge of creatures immediately, and thus from the outside in, constitutes a perverse love of creatures above their creator.418 By that love we loose our judicial capacity as image of God419

416 Cf., also Augustine’s account of angelic knowledge in gn. litt. IV.20ff.
417 et serpentes boni non perniciosi ad nocendum, sed astuti ad caudum et tantum explorantes temporalem naturam, quantum sufficit, ut per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta [Rm 1,20] conspiciatur aeternitas. seruiunt enim rationi haec animalia, cum a progressu mortifero cohibita uiuunt et bona sunt (conf. XIII.21.31).
419 Augustine’s early doctrine of the imago dei conceived the Word as image of God and the human mens as created to the image of the Word (gn. litt. inp. 16.60). The relation of imaging means that no other nature need mediate between the mens and the Word who is Truth (gn. litt. inp. 16.60; diu. qu. 51.2). Of course, his understanding of creation progressed by the time of the Confessiones to discerning a trinitarian image in the mens (conf. XIII.11.12), but this immediacy of the mind to God remains vital to Augustine’s understanding. Note his late appeal to the immediacy of the mind to God in ciu. 10.2. A good introduction to Augustine’s doctrine of the image may be found in Bonner, Gerald. 1984. “Augustine’s Doctrine of Man: Image of God and Sinner” Augustinianum XXIV, pp.495-514. A helpful comparison of Augustine’s early doctrine with the synthesis of
(conf. XIII.22.33) and creatures become increasingly opaque to our interrogative gaze 
(sed amore subduntur eis et subditi iudicare non possunt. nec respondent ista 
interrogantibus nisi iudicantibus..., conf. X.6.10).

So in the famous sero te amaui passage, the beautiful things of creation once held 
Augustine back far from God (ea me tenebant longe a te) precisely because Augustine 
was approaching them directly, from the outside in (conf. X.27.38).420 As we will see 
below, the distance does not deny intellectual vision, only moral likeness. It is possible, 
on Augustine's account, to rise unaided through the mediation of creatures to a partial, 
intellectual vision of God.

Within a few years of the Confessiones Augustine will describe alterations in the 
direction of mediation in spiritual creatures' knowing as producing eventide and 
morning knowledge, respectively (gn. litt. IV.22.39-24.41).421 Already in the Confessiones 
Augustine conceptualizes two directions of mediation in human contemplation and

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420 et ecce intus eras et ego foris et ibi te quaerebam et in ista formosa, quae fecisti, 
deformis inruebam. mecum eras, et tecum non eram. ea me tenebant longe a te, quae si in 
te non essent, non essent (conf. X.27.38).

421 For discussion of Augustine's account of angelic knowledge, cf. Gorman, Michael 
Murray. 1974. The Unknown Augustine: A Study of the Literal Interpretation of Genesis 
(de genesi ad litteram). Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, ch. 1. Also, Augustin, 
Eugène Tréhorel, and Aimé Solignac. 1962. Oeuvres de Saint-Augustin. Les Confessions, 
livres I-XIII. 14, Dieu et son oeuvre. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, pp. 613-617.
describes how they lead to very different destinations. The distinguishing characteristic, and critique, of Platonic contemplation appears through Augustine’s peculiar use of Paul’s analysis in Rom. 1:20.

**Three Uses of Rom 1:20 in Augustine’s Thought**

Augustine uses Paul’s text differently depending on the rhetorical occasion at hand. But the attentive reader will discern three primary uses of Rom 1:20 in Augustine’s thought.

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422 Later Augustine will describe the two possible directions of mediation, in reflection upon John’s words, as the difference between finding joy in wisdom obtained on one’s own and finding joy in the wisdom God gives, *...quod est hoc gaudium? gaudio gaudet propter uocem sponsi [Jo 3,29]. intellegat ergo homo non se gaudere debere de sapientia sua, sed de sapientia quam accepit a deo. nihil plus quaerat, et non amittit quod inuenit., Io. eu. tr. 14.3*


In the end, Kenney reads Augustine as endorsing a form of contemplation that is phenomenologically identical to what Augustine thinks the Platonists are engaged in. The only difference is that Augustine thinks contemplation yields only knowledge but not salvation. The distinction between epistemic certainty and salvation is true to Augustine, as I will demonstrate in this chapter. However, three weaknesses prevent Kenney from seeing the Augustinian distinction between Christian and Platonic contemplation as determined by the direction of mediation.

First, Kenney assumes the allusions to Rom. 1:20 in *conf. VII.10.16; VII.17.23 and VII.20.26* signify Augustine’s endorsement of this contemplation as a Christian enterprise (cf. Kenney. 2001, p. 209 and Kenney. 2005. pp. 61ff). By thus missing Augustine’s uniformly critical use of Rom. 1:20 in polemics against pagan philosophy, Kenney assumes the account of *conf. VII* must be a paradigm of Augustinian contemplation.

Second, Kenney betrays no sense of the hexaemeral template by which Augustine structures *conf. I-VII* as parodies of the ecclesial program of human formation. Thus he cannot recognize Augustine’s literary cue to read *conf. VII.10.16ff* as a parody of Christian contemplation.

Third, although Kenney notes the “moral axis” as unchanged in the contemplation of *conf. VII*, he does not recognize the modified Stoic elements of the psychology of action as key to Augustine’s critique of Plotinian failure therein (cf. Kenney. 2005. pp. 67, 73-76).
The first common usage assimilates the Pauline text into a discussion of the three forms of vision (bodily, spiritual, intellectual), often in anti-Manichean or anti-Arian rhetorical contexts (e.g., *c. Adim. 28; trin. II.25; s. 126.3*).

The second usage becomes common in later works. Augustine appeals to Rom 1:20 as justification for rising by analogy from a mental triad to discussion of the divine Trinity (*s. 52.15; ep. 120.12; trin. XV.3*). If God makes his eternal attributes intellectually visible through creatures, how much more would God reveal himself through contemplation of that creature fashioned in God’s image! As one might expect, Augustine tends toward a rhetorical forgetfulness of Paul’s accompanying critique in these contexts (e.g., *s. 52.15; ep. 120.12; trin. XV.3*).

Augustine’s third usage, however, is by far the most common and covers all the relevant allusions in the *Confessiones*. Paul’s words in Rom. 1:20 allow Augustine to categorize both the possibility and the culpability of the pagan philosopher’s knowledge of God (*conf. V.3.3-4.7; VII.10.16; VII.17.23; VII.20.26; s. 68.3-8; s. 141; s. 241.1-3; s. Dolbeau 26.27-40; lo. eu. tr. 2.2-6; trin. XIII.24*). Very often in these contexts Augustine interweaves his reading of Paul with appeals to Wis. 13:1-13424 and Matt. 11:25.425

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424 *uani sunt autem omnes homines quibus non subest scientia Dei et de his quae uidentur bona non potuerunt intellegere eum qui est neque operibus adtendentes agnouerunt quis esset artifex sed aut ignem aut spiritum aut citatum aerum aut gyrum stellarum aut nimiam aquam aut solem et lunam rectores orbis terrarum deos putauerunt quorum si specie delectati deos putauerunt sciant quinto dominator eorum speciosior est speciei enim generator haec omnia constituit aut si uirtutem et opera eorum mirati sunt intellegant ab ipsis quonium qui haec constituit fortior est illis a magnitudine enim speciei et creaturae cognoscibiliter poterit horum creator uideri sed tamen adhuc in his minor est querella et hi enim fortasss errant Deum quaerentes et volentes inuenire etenim cum in operibus illius conversentur inquirunt et persuasum habent quoniam bona sunt quae uidentur iterum autem nec his debet ignosci si enim tantum potuerunt scire ut possent aestimare saeculum quomodo huius Dominum non facilius inuenierunt infelices autem sunt et inter mortuos spes illorum est qui appellauerunt deos opera manuum hominum aurum et argentum artis inuentionem similitudines animalium aut lapidem inuilem opus manus
turn now to consider the key passages in which Augustine reads Platonic contemplation through the critical lens of Rom. 1:20.

**Knowing God in Iniquity: Pagan Philosophy and Rom 1:20**

Given the trajectory of Augustine’s very early thought, it should cause little surprise that his earliest use of Rom. 1:20 comes without a Pauline critique attached. Indeed, his first account simply equates ascent with attaining to eternal stability and thus being transformed (\textit{haec est a temporalibus ad aeterna regressio et ex uita ueteris hominis in nouum hominem reformatio, uera rel. 101}). Since contemplation provided the exclusive and sufficient pathway to happiness in his earliest anthropology, this conflation is to be expected.

Augustine does not make use of this Pauline passage again until the *Confessiones*. Four times therein, while describing pagan philosophers, Augustine incorporates a quotation or strong allusion to Rom. 1:20 by way of critique (\textit{conf. V.3.3-4.7; VII.10.16; VII.17.23; VII.20.26}). The most expansive example comes before Augustine encounters the books of the Platonists and provides an intra-textual foundation for interpreting his

\begin{quote}
\textit{antiquae aut si quis artifex faber de silua lignum rectum secauerit et huius docte eradat omnem corticem et arte sua usus diligenter fabricet uas utile in conversatione uitae reliquias autem eius operis ad praeparationem escae abutatur et reliquum horum quod ad nullos usus facit lignum curum et verticibus plenum sculpat diligenter per uacuitatem suam et per scientiam artis suae figuret illud et adsimilet illud imagini hominis} (\textit{Sap. 13.1-13})
\end{quote}

\footnote{in illo tempore respondens Iesus dixit: confiteor tibi, pater, domine caeli et terrae, quia abscondisti haec a sapientibus et prudentibus \textit{(Matt. 11.25)}}

more concise references when recounting the Platonic mode of contemplation (conf. V.3.3-4.7).

The Natural Philosophers and Rom 1:20

Though the natural philosophers provided more reliable accounts of the celestial creation than the Manicheans, their knowledge stemmed from a proud curiosity which prevented them from discovering God (nec inueniris a superbis, nec si illi curiosa peritia numerent stellas et harenam et dimetiantur sidereas plagas et uestigent uias astrorum., conf. V.3.3). Although they performed very precise measurements of things temporal and bodily, their search was not conducted with a religious spirit, for they did not seek out the source of their innate commendatio to knowledge (non enim religioso quaeerunt, unde habeant ingenium, quo ista quaeerunt, conf. V.3.4). This is Augustine’s critique of the natural philosophers that do not know God.

But Augustine does not stop there. And the Pauline allusions begin now in earnest. Even if the pagan philosophers discover their Creator, they are unwilling to give themselves over to the God who made them (et inuenientes, quia tu fecisti eos, non ipsi se dant tibi, conf. V.3.4). If they had, God would have preserved his creation by accepting the sacrificial death of the sort of self they had made for themselves (se ut serues quod fecisti, et quales se ipsi fecerant occidunt se tibi, conf. V.3.4). Then Augustine delineates what sort of self these philosophers had made by recounting the three perverted forms of commendatio (exaltationes suas... et curiositates suas...luxurias suas, conf. V.3.4).

Their specific defect lies in their ignorance of the Way who is the Word (sed non nouerunt uiam, uerbum tuum, conf. V.3.5; cf. also s. 198.41; Io. eu. tr. 2.4). The incarnate
one, who mediates a way of return to immediate knowledge of God, at once channels
the creation of all numerable, temporal things (*per quod fecisti ea quae numerant, et
ipsos qui numerant et sensum, quo cernunt quae numerant, et mentem, de qua numerant*)
and remains eternally beyond all numerable, temporal change (*et sapientiae tuae non
est numeros* [Ps 146,5], *conf. V.3.5). As such the Word provides the only possible
pathway to return to eternal stability.

But the philosophers prefer their own perverse *ingenium* to the humble path laid
out by the *unigenitus* that requires descending in order to ascend (*ipse autem unigenitus
factus est nobis sapientia et iustitia et sanctificatio* [1 Cor 1,30] *...non nouerunt hanc uiam,
qua descendant ad illum a se et per eum ascendant ad eum, conf. V.3.5). Pride, through its
love of independent effectiveness, bars them from accepting a graced mode of ascent to
wisdom (*cf., also s. 141; s. 68.7; Io. eu. tr. 2.2-6; s. 241.3; s. Dolbeau 26.27-40*).

Pride always precedes a fall. The natural philosophers were no exception. By
considering themselves independently wise, they in fact became fools (*non nouerunt
hanc uiam et putant se excelsos esse cum sideribus et lucidos, et ecce ruerunt in terram, et
obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum* [Rm 1,21], *conf. V.3.5; cf. also s. 241.3; s. 68.3-8*). In
reality, they were only temporally knowledgeable concerning creatures (*et multa uera
de creatura dicunt et ueritatem*), and the *ingenium* by which they inquired and
calculated the outsides of creatures was itself a gift of God (*conf. V.3.5*).

Because the natural philosophers refused to acknowledge God’s gift in gratitude,
even those who discovered something of the Creator subsequently disappeared into
their own thoughts rather than receiving God’s revelation (*aut si inueniunt,
cognoscentes deum non sicit deum honorant aut gratias agunt et euanescunt in
cognitionibus suis* [Rm 1,21], *conf. V.3.5*). By attributing wisdom to themselves, they had
claimed to possess what belongs to God alone (et dicunt se esse sapientes [Rm 1,22] sibi tribuendo quae tua sunt, conf. V.3.5; also s. 68.3-8; s.141; s. 241.1-3).

Full inversion inevitably ensued as manifested in pagan poetry and cultic devotion (s. 141; s. 241.1-3; s. Dolbeau 26.35-37). As they faded away into their own thinking, they not only attributed divine qualities to themselves but also attributed creaturely qualities to God (ac per hoc student peruersissima caecitate etiam tibi tribuere quae sua sunt, conf. V.3.5). The poets’ fables of lying deities and the pagan cultic distortions that picture God as human-like or bestial stand as concrete cultural witnesses to the foolishness of those who love the creature above the Creator (conf. V.3.5; cf. also conf. I.16.25).427

All these critiques, and one more, Augustine applies to the pagan natural philosophers and the Platonists alike. Having delineated the perverse manner of discovering God through creatures, Augustine turns to differentiate between knowledge and blessedness (conf. V.4.7; cf. also s. Dolbeau 26.29 a few years later on 1 January 404). Knowledge, in and of itself, does not endear a person to God (numquid, domine deus ueritatis [Ps 30,6], quisquis nouit ista, iam placet tibi?, conf. V.4.7). Nor does knowledge of temporal things possess any inherent connection to human happiness, positively or negatively. A human being that knows all things temporally, but does not know God would be unhappy (infelix enim homo, qui scit illa omnia, te autem nescit, conf. V.4.7). Likewise, one who knows God and clings to God (inhaerendo tibi) while ignorant of creatures would still be blessed (beatus autem, qui te scit, etiamsi illa nesciat, conf. V.4.7).

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427 mendacia scilicet in te conferentes, qui ueritas es, et immutantes gloriam incorrupti dei in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et uolucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium [Rm 1,23], et conuentunt ueritatem tuam in mendacium [Rm 1,25] et colunt et servuiunt creaturae potius quam creatori [Rm 1,25], conf. V.3.5.
And adding knowledge of creatures to the mix would not increase beatitude, for a grateful, loving knowledge of God is not only necessary but also sufficient for human flourishing (qui uero et te et illa nouit, non propter illa beatior, sed propter te solum beatus est, conf. V.4.7).

Thus Augustine characteristically concludes his reflections on the pagan philosopher’s knowledge. In summary, pagan philosophers rise up by the power of their own ingenium granted in the created commendatio to knowledge. Their prideful refusal to give themselves over to God causes them to reject the graced way provided by the incarnate word. By attributing wisdom to themselves, they become foolish as is visibly manifested in the perversion of the pagan cult. Finally, Augustine categorizes their knowing by explicitly distinguishing knowledge and salvation. All these aspects recur in Augustine’s account of Plotinian contemplation to which we now turn.

Platonist Contemplation and Rom 1:20 (conf. VII.10.16; VII.17.23; VII.20.26)

Augustine devotes much of Confessiones VII to recounting his initial encounter with the books of the Platonists. These books led Augustine to successfully rise to a partial, intellectual vision of God in the manner he considered standard for Platonist contemplation. Two passages specifically describe the culmination of Platonic ascent,

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428 In scholarly accounts, these attempts are usually interpreted as unsuccessful. This interpretive posture sinks its roots into the old, anachronistic attempt to reconstruct whether the “historical Augustine” was initially converted to Neo-Platonism or Christianity. The assumption was that Augustine encountered a rather pure form of Plotinian philosophy. That assumption is simply erroneous (cf. Courcelle, Pierre Paul. 1950. Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin. Paris: E. de Boccard on Milanese Christian Platonism). Furthermore, the second passage (conf. VII.17.23) very explicitly tells us that Augustine indeed achieved a vision of id quod est. According to Augustine’s
and both interpret that achievement through the lens of Rom. 1:20 (*conf. VII.10.16; VII.17.23*).

Augustine famously describes what he found in the books of the Platonists in terms of fragments of Christian scripture, the ideas of which they did or did not contain (*conf. VII.9.13-14*). The Platonist’s books taught about the one God, who is prior to all things, and his Word generated from God’s own substance and the nature of non-corporeal substance itself (*conf. VII.9.13-14*). However, what they did not contain closely correlates to the defect of the natural philosophers (*conf. V.3.3-4.7*). Augustine did not find there any teaching about the immanence of God’s action in the world or the humble way that the incarnate one opened up for human salvation by his life, death and bodily resurrection (*conf. VII.9.13-14*).

And Augustine’s analysis of why the Platonists lacked this knowledge replicates his analysis of the natural philosophers with the same appeal to Rom. 1:21-25 (*conf. VII.9.14*). The Platonists, proud through love of their own accomplishments, refuse to humble themselves and accept divine instruction and aid (*cf. also s. 141; s. 68.7; Io. eu. tr. 2.2-6; s. 241.3; s. Dolbeau 26.27-40*). Their attachment to active production of knowledge shines through Augustine’s use of scriptural metaphors of labor on one’s own contrasted with the rest available in bowing to Jesus’ yoke. Like the natural philosophers, the Platonists did not show gratitude in their knowledge and by claiming to be wise, attributed divine attributes to themselves (*etsi cognoscunt deum, non sicut understanding of Plotinus, no more could be expected of a Platonic ascent. Cf. Augustine, and James Joseph O’Donnell. 1992. *Confessions*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, xxxiii.; and Kenney, John Peter. 2005. *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading The Confessions*. New York: Routledge pp. 61-72.

429 Although much has been made of this rhetorical strategy, note this is Augustine’s normal strategy for describing philosophical texts with measured usefulness. Consider his description of the *Hortensius’* contents in terms of Col. 2:8ff (*conf. III.4.8*)
**Augustine’s Platonic Contemplation: Hearing and Seeing God de longinquo**

Continuing to describe his own inward turn, Augustine in retrospect knows that God led and enabled him (conf. VII.10.16). In naming the soul’s faculty of intellectual vision as *oculus animae*, Augustine associates this capacity with the lower, active dimension of soul. Through this innate capacity Augustine rises to a vision of non-corporeal substance ontologically superior to his soul. He saw being, but in that vision Augustine realized that he did not yet have being (... *esse quod uiderem, et nondum me esse qui*

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430 Of course, the irony in Augustine’s personal history that gives rise to the genuine ambivalence of his assessment of the Platonists is this. The very philosophers who freed him from the Manicheans’ conceptual idolatry turn out to be idolaters of a more base kind. For the idolatry entailed in the Manichean’s phantasms, see conf. VI.7.12, and Teske, R. J. 1993. “Augustine, Maximus and Imagination” Augustiniana 43, pp. 27-41, and Teske, R. J. 1994. “Heresy and Imagination in St. Augustine” Studia patristica 27, pp. 400-404.
The Platonist vision highlighted Augustine’s dissimilarity to God and caused him to fall back (et reuerberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei radians in me uehementer, et contremui amore et horrore: et inueni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis, conf. VII.10.16).

But the ascent had produced its intended result. Augustine now possessed indubitable knowledge of incorporeal being, having achieved it through intellectual vision of things made (unde dubitarem faciliusque dubitarem uiuere me quam non esse ueritatem, quae per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta [Rm 1,20] conspicitur., conf. VII.10.16). The reference to Paul’s analysis foreshadows a critique of his own Platonic vision, which Augustine will unpack in conf. VII.20.26–21.27. But first he turns to elucidate the positive work this vision and its epistemic certainty performed in freeing him from the Manichean heresy.

In light of his newfound certainty concerning incorporeal being, Augustine turns to reconsider the unfinished, quasi-being proper to creatures (et uidi nec omnino esse nec omnino non esse, conf. VII.11.17). By more clearly defining the relation between non-corporeal being and the partial expressions of being in creatures, Augustine dissolves the Manichean’s problem of evil. Corruptibles are good to the extent that they exist, but because they are not Being itself neither are they Goodness itself (conf. VII.12.18). And evil merely subsists as a parasite, a privation of being, in the sorts of things that fall between Being and nothingness (conf. VII.13.19-15.21). Iniquity therefore turns out to be nothing but a perverse will twisted away from the highest divine substance toward the lowest, throwing away what is inside and swollen in arousal for what is outside (et

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Having stated clearly the source of evil in twisted volitions, Augustine proceeds to explain how he could at once rise to an intellectual vision of *id quod est* and lack the volitional stability to stay there in love (conf. VII.17.23). Terms and explanations from Augustine’s psychology of action reemerge here. Augustine lacks the standing or staying power to love God for God’s sake (*et mirabar, quod iam te amabam, non pro te phantasma, et non stabam frui deo meo.*, conf. VII.17.23). The weight that pulls Augustine down from enjoying God is carnal habit (*et pondus hoc consuetudo carnalis.*, conf. VII.17.23).

Through intellectual vision he has passed beyond any doubt concerning the existence of incorporeal being, but his incapacity to cling to incorporeal divinity has not changed thereby (conf. VII.17.23, cf. also, s. Dolbeau 26.29). And, again, the reason is rooted in his psychology of action. The penal state of his mortal body weighs down his soul and drags his awareness into a multiplicity of thoughts (*quoniam corpus, quod corrumpitur, aggrauat animam et deprimit terrena inhabitatio sensum multa cogitament*).

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432 Note the reoccurrence of the theme of standing in Continence’s exhortation immediately preceding Augustine’s conversion: *quid in te stas et non stas? proice te in eum, noli metuere; non se subtrahet, ut cadas: proice te securus, excipiet et sanabit te* (conf. VIII.11.27).

433 For the role of *consuetudo* in Augustine’s psychology of action see chapter 3, “Augustine’s Invention of the Heart.” Also, cf. chapter 4 for the Pauline revision when Augustine finds an analysis of fallen psychology of action in Rom. 7. Specifically, a disconnect surfaces between consent to the propositional content of law and the determinative impulse to action. Thus two laws and two consents vie with each other – one in the mind and the other in the bodily members.
[Sap 9,15], conf. VII.17.23). So Augustine’s bodily condition, which produces necessity and difficulty in action, renders stable contemplation impossible.

**A Glimpse of Being beyond Bodies: The Possibility of Platonic Knowledge of God**

Augustine’s account of the possibility of Platonic vision of God, using himself as the test case, begins and ends with an allusion to Rom. 1:20 (conf. VII.10.16-17.23). Despite the contemplative impasse created by his mortal weakness, the epistemic certainty that Augustine had gained by rising through things made persisted (eramque certissimus, quod invisibilia tua a constitutione mundi per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur, sempiterna quoque uirtus et diuinitas [Rm 1,20] tua., conf. VII.17.23). And, at this point, Augustine recounts the steps by which Platonic contemplation rises to intellectual vision.

The Platonist’s ascent to vision follows an ‘in then up’ pattern of inquiry. A desire for formal unity fuels the Platonic contemplative, but the vehicle of ascent is an internal process of questioning and receiving answers (cf. also, conf. X.6.10). Beginning with external bodies, the Platonist turns inward to the power that unifies disparate external sense data into a single internal object (atque ita gradatim a corporibus ad

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sentientem per corpus animam atque inde ad eius interiorem uim, cui sensus corporis exterioara nuntiare, conf. VII.17.23). Even the beasts possess this capacity. So the Platonist redirects his attention beyond to the part of the soul that questions.

Augustine, the Platonist, draws further within to the power of discursive reason whereby the unified sense image is subjected to rational judgment for assent or dissent (atque inde rursus ad ratiocinamentem potentiam, ad quam refertur iudicandum, quod sumitur a sensibus corporis, conf. VII.17.23). But even this capacity proves mutable, and so Augustine’s ascending reason lifts itself up further in search of something immutable (conf. VII.17.23).

The next level achieved is consideration of the soul’s own intelligence (quae se quoque in me comperiens mutabilem erexit se ad intelligentiam suam, conf. VII.17.23). This transition from the imaginable to intelligibility requires a mighty struggle against the carnal habit of thinking in phantasms (et abduxit cogitationem a consuetudine, subtrahens se contradicentibus turbisphantasmatum, conf. VII.17.23). But resisting carnal cognitive habits, Augustine seeks the source of incorporeal light, which he encounters in the very indubitability by which he knows immutable things are better than mutable things (ut inueniret quo lumine aspergeretur, cum sineulla dubitatione clamaret incommutabile praeferendum esse mutabili, conf. VII.17.23). Realizing that his intellect could not judge immutability better than mutability without knowing immutability in some manner, Augustine rises to think of immutable being itself.436


436 For the conceptual foundations of this peculiarly ancient and Platonic train of realist thought, without reference to Augustine, see Kenney, John Peter. 1991. Mystical
Through the notion of immutability, the budding philosopher catches a partial glimpse of God through creatures. By Augustine’s lights, this is a successful Platonic ascent. His mind arrives at ‘that which is’ in a trembling flash of vision (et peruenit ad id quod est in ictu trepidantis aspectus, conf. VII.17.23). The beneficial result of Platonic vision is purely epistemic (so also s. Dolbeau 26.29). Augustine’s intellectual vision has risen to view God’s invisible being through the things made (tunc uero inuisibilia tua per ea quae facta sunt intellecta [Rm 1,20] conspexi, conf. VII.17.23). But Augustine’s penal state, elaborated in his psychology of action, cannot be denied for long. His habitual temporal attachments had made Augustine weak, and so his mental gaze was not strong enough to fix itself above (sed aciem figere non eualui et repercussa infirmitate redditus solitis, conf. VII.17.23). Unable to sufficiently love God, the Platonist’s thought falls back to bodies.

With another allusion to Rom. 1:20, and a clear indication that the Platonist’s impulse to action limits his capacity to contemplate without interruption, Augustine sums up his disappointment with Platonic contemplation. The ascent left him with the memorial fragrance of a feast from which he could not manage to eat and derive actual nourishment (non mecum ferebam nisi amantem memoriam et quasi olefacta desiderantem, quae comedere nondum possem., conf. VII.17.23).437

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437 Augustine hereby breaks with the ancient philosophical commonplace of knowing as nourishment (cf. e.g. Plato, *Phdr.* 247B-E; Epictetus *Diss.* I.26.15-17; *Diss.* II.9.17-19; *Ench.* 46; Aurelius *med.* X.31.2). For Augustine affect must complete the epistemic connection.
**Seeing without Dwelling: Augustine’s Critique of Platonic Vision**

At this point Augustine circles back to complete his critique of the Platonic vision of God. First, the Platonists provide no means to transform the soul’s impulses to action and thereby to love God enough for a more steady contemplative attachment. Because he could not eat the nourishing feast of divine incorporeal being, Augustine began looking for a way of gaining strength sufficient to enjoy God *(et quaerebam uiam comparandi roboris, quod esset idoneum ad fruendum te, conf. VII.18.24)*. But the Platonists provided nothing appropriate. He did not find a way until he embraced the incarnate mediator between God and human beings *(nec inueniebam, donec amplecterer mediatorem dei et hominum, hominem Christum Iesum [1 Tm 2,5], conf. VII.18.24)*. Jesus, as mediator, provides accessible food for the weak by means of belief in authoritative teaching about his incarnation *(et cibum, cui capiendo inualidus eram, miscentem carni, quoniam uerbum caro factum est [Io 1,14], ut infantiae nostrae lactesceret sapientia tua, per quam creasti omnia, conf. VII.18.24)*. Through imbibing the church’s teaching, healing nourishment comes to the infirm soul. But Augustine, at this point, is too proud to accept the help of a weak savior *(non enim tenebam deum meum Iesum humilis humilem nec cuius rei magistra esset eius infirmitas noueram., conf. VII.18.24)*.

Misunderstandings about the nature of the incarnation contributed to Augustine’s reluctance to accept help from Jesus and highlighted the degree to which

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Only truth that is stably loved in the knowing can nourish, and one must take joy in what is true and good to be fed thereby *(conf. XIII.25.38-27.42)*.  

For milk as catechetical teaching see e.g., *an. quant.* 33.76; *mor.* I.17. Other uses of the metaphor of drinking as opposed to eating highlight the difference between the need for intellectual processing and direct infusion through either belief or conceptual implantation, e.g. *s. dom. m.* II.37; *trin.* XI.6; XI.13. For a discussion of the milk and meat distinction, cf. chapter 2 below.
Platonic contemplation only amounts to a parody of ecclesial contemplation (conf. VII.19.25).439 For contemplation of scripture within the ecclesial program, which we will consider below, enables not only a glimpse of incorporeal being but also an understanding of unity in Trinity and trinity in Unity (conf. XIII.22.32). Following his Platonic ascent, Augustine cannot even fathom the incarnation, let alone the intricacies of trinitarian being that make redemptive downward causality possible (conf. VII.19.25).

The primary problem, however, was pride. Once more connecting his condition with Rom. 1:20, Augustine describes in detail the paradoxical mixture of epistemic certainty and volitional weakness (incorpoream ueritatem inuisibilia tua per ea quae facta sunt intellecta [Rm 1,20] conspexi... certus quidem in istis eram, nimis tamen infirmus ad fruendum te., conf. VII.20.26). His lack of gratitude and humility in knowing, like Paul’s pagans in Rom. 1:20, manifests as he chatters on as if expert and wants to be seen as wise (garriebam plane quasi peritus... iam enim coeperam uelle uideri sapiens..., conf. VII.20.26). His knowledge did not contain any saving charity, rather he was puffed up about what he knew (insuper et inflabar scientia, conf. VII.20.26).

Augustine specifically contrasts the prideful knowledge achieved by the Platonists with the ecclesial way of contemplation and confession (conf. VII.20.26). In retrospect, Augustine realizes that God arranged for him to encounter this perverse alternative first so that later he could clearly see the difference between the two approaches (conf. VII.20.26).440 Presumptive contemplation seeks to see and

439 Cf. “Diastrophic Shades of Ecclesial Formation” below for an account of how this follows from its placement within the literary structure of the Confessiones.
440 nam si primo sanctis tuis litteris informatus essem et in earum familiaritate obdulcuisses mihi et post in illa volumina incidissem, fortasse aut abripuisse...
intellectually distinguish divine beauty, but will not follow the way provided in order to actually dwell there (conf. VII.20.26; cf. also, Io. eu. tr. 2.2-6).[^441] Confession, on the other hand, starts out along the way without seeing in order to eventually dwell in the beauty of the fatherland (discernerem atque distinguere, quid interesset inter praesumptionem et confessionem, inter uidentes, quo eundum sit, nec uidentes, qua, et uiam ducentem ad beatificam patriam non tantum cernendam sed et habitandam., conf. VII.20.26).

Platonists would rather see God from a distance, than submit to the way of the incarnate and crucified one. In light of this explicit critique, one should note the language used in Augustine’s Platonic ascents wherein he hears and sees incorporeal being longe...a te (conf. VII.10.16) and de longinquo (conf. VII.21.27). The language of distance in Augustine does not refer to proximity, but moral and spiritual disparity (conf. IV.2.2; VII.10.16; VII.21.27; XIII.1.1; gn. litt. XII.34.36; s. 141.1).

The Platonist refuses to relinquish the self-satisfaction of knowledge by his own innate power. The graced way of ecclesial ascent requires withdrawing trust from one’s own twisted, innate power to know (conf. VII.18.24). In order to trod that path, one must acknowledge the weakness of flesh that impedes ascent and cling to the incarnate one whose flesh becomes a vehicle for lifting us (ne fiducia sui progradere longius, sed potius infirmarentur uidentes ante pedes suos infirmam diuinitatem ex participatione tunicae pelliciae nostrae et lassi prosternerentur in eam, illa autem surgens leuaret eos., conf. VII.18.24). In other words, one can only ascend rightly as part of the totus Christus, solidamento pietatis, aut si in affectu, quem salubrem imbiberam, perstitissem, putarem etiam ex illis libris eum posse concipi, si eos solos quisque didicisset (conf. VII.29.26).

[^441]: This distinction between seeing temporarily and a culminating inhabitation in wisdom goes back to his sevenfold gradus in an. quant. 75-75, albeit without any function in distinguishing Platonic and ecclesial forms of contemplation or any allusion to Paul’s critique in Rom. 1:20.
not as a great-souled individual. Ecclesial contemplation requires descending to Christ’s flesh in order to receive the healing and nourishment to rise beyond ourselves to Christ’s divinity (per quam subdendos deprimeret a se ipsis et ad se traiiceret, sanans tumorem et nutriens amorem, conf. VII.18.24).

Because the Platonists refuse to acknowledge their weakness, they must settle for momentary visions from afar without touching or clinging or dwelling (conf. VII.20.26-21.27). The ecclesial itinerary for ascent, in contrast, plods along an indirect route designed to heal the roots of action while providing moments of contemplative touching and clinging now, which provide a foretaste of the continuous dwelling to come. We will delineate the ecclesial path below. But for now we simply notice the contrasting terminology.

In reading Paul on the heels of Platonic contemplation, Augustine finds something more. The Christian scriptures call one not only to a Platonic seeing, but also to be healed and thus hold to the incorporeal God (non solum admoneatur ut uideat, sed etiam sanetur ut teneat., conf. VII.21.27). And the one who is far off in moral and spiritual dissimilarity can travel along this path to not only see but also hold God at long last (et qui de longinquo uidere non potest, uiam tamen ambulet, qua ueniat et uideat et teneat., conf. VII.21.27). A great difference separates the Platonists’ glimpse of the fatherland from a wooded height and the Christian who clings to the way that actually leads there (et aliud est de siluestri cacumine uidere patriam pacis... et aliud tenere uiam illuc ducentem, conf. VII.21.27).
Situating Action and Knowledge: Two Points in Summary

First, there is simply no way to leave action behind in contemplation for long. The Platonists know as much. But they refuse to acknowledge that human peruersio in the impulses to action does not stem from bodily existence or bodily activity per se (s. Dolbeau 26.27-40).\(^{442}\) The inability to transcend the basic impulses to temporal, bodily provision necessarily limits human bouts of contemplation. And the penally mortal state of human bodies makes this universal and necessary.\(^{443}\)

Augustine explicitly connects the limitation of human contemplation to the innately twisted fragmentation of the impulse to action elaborated in his reading of Paul.\(^{444}\) The Platonists strategically identify themselves with their delight in goodness according to the inner man, while ignoring and dissociating themselves from the twisted impulses to action that occupy their bodies (quía, etsi condelectetur homo legi dei secundum interiorem hominem [Rm 7,22], quid faciet de alia lege in membris suis repugnante legi mentis suae et se captiium ducente in lege peccati, quae est in membris

\(^{442}\) Plotinus’ containment theory of the passions, on Augustine’s reading, despaired of transforming the soul’s impulse to action in the body and sought instead to ascend without the humble process of moral renovation. So moral purgation, on Plotinus’ telling, amounts to preparation for the cessation of all activity and an escape from bodies. Platonic moral purgation is not a way of transforming human action to live well within a body. Thus Plotinus theorized and contented himself with cyclical ascents and earthward plummets cf. Enn. I.1.10; I.2; I.4; II.9; VI.9. Also, cf. discussion of Platonic purification in chapter 3 above. On Augustine’s reading, Plotinus’ account of purgation follows from proudly denying sin and thus failing to differentiate the penal state of present human bodies from created bodies. Instead, Platonists would rather despise all bodies than admit their body is marred by sin (s. Dolbeau 26.2-40).

\(^{443}\) So the penal state of our bodies necessitates that even ecclesial contemplation will be momentary until the resurrection (conf. IX.10.25).

\(^{444}\) Cf. discussion above in chapter 4 of the fragmentation of human determinative impulses to action.
As a result, they damn themselves to contemplative ephemerality and an incapacity to ever hold, enjoy and dwell in what they claim to seek (Io. eu. tr. 2.2-6; s. 141). For grace alone heals the fragmented impulses to action and thereby leads indirectly to a therapeutic contemplation in this world and fullness in the world to come (quid faciet miser homo? quis eum liberabit de corpore mortis huius nisi gratia tua per iesum Christum dominum nostrum [Rm 7,24sq.]... hoc illae litterae non habent., conf. VII.21.27; cf. also conf. VIII.5.10-12).

Second, knowledge is not blessedness (conf. V.4.7; VII.20.26; s. 141; s. Dolbeau 26.29). While Plotinian contemplation claims to be both epistemic and salvific, Augustine finds epistemic certainty without any salvific stability of love. Following his Platonic ascent, Augustine notes that knowledge of God through creatures did not bring the salutary charity found only through humility (conf. VII.20.26). Knowledge is not utterly unrelated to blessedness. The end state of blessedness, or salvation, can be described as a fullness of knowledge in which the knower also clings in love to the God known (aliud est enim peruenire ad cognitionem dei, aliud peruenire ad salutem, ubi fit et plena ipsa cognitio, cum inhaeret cognitori cognito. s. Dolbeau 26.29). In other words,

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445 Cf. Enn. I.I. – The higher soul is the self in Plotinus’ view, or at least it can be, if so chosen (Enn. III.4.3; III.4.6). The lower soul will go to Hades and suffer torment. For Plotinus’ notion of the soul possessing many levels from which it can choose a level with which to identify, see Enn. III.4 and Corrigan, Kevin. 2001. “The Problem of Personal and Human Identity in Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa” in International Conference on Patristic Studies, Maurice F. Wiles, Edward Yarnold, and P. M. Parvis. 2001. Cappadocian Writers, Other Greek Writers. Leuven: Peeters.


447 This exceptionally long sermon was preached on 1 January 404. An exhaustive study of its theology is now available in Jones, Daniel J. 2004. Christus sacerdos in the
beatitude requires both contemplation and action – in this case that peculiar form of
determinative impulse to action named love and clinging is required (s. dom. m. II.71).448

Elsewhere, Augustine specifies the nature of ascent to Platonic knowledge (conf.
X.6.10; s. 68.6). The species of creatures – their formal dimension – initiates the ascent
when interrogated (conf. X.6.10; s. 68.6). The vehicle of ascent is the formality of
creatures viewed from the outside in. The culmination of Platonic ascent is an
intellectual vision of being itself as mediated by the interrogation of form (et peruenit ad
id quod est in ictu trepidantis aspectus; conf. VII.17.23). Augustine explicitly connects his
use of aspectus in this context to the intellecta conspiciant of Rom 1:20 (conf. VII.17.23).
Below we will see a distinctive, pre-differentiated language of the self employed in
describing the culmination of ecclesial ascents (conf. IX.10.24).449 Platonic ascent
momentarily connects the intellect as a differentiated aspect of the self to the formal
aspect of being. The cognitive connection is real and produces the positive result of
epistemic certainty concerning incorporeal being (conf. VII.10.16; VIII.1.1). Degrees of
formality do indeed mediate being in time,450 thus allowing knowledge of God through

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448 Augustine’s distinction between “clinging” and “grasping” receives a clear exposition
Indiana: Notre Dame, pp. 59-91. Those terms refer to semantic clusters and not single
Latin terms. As usual, Augustine tends to copiousness in description. So clinging
translates a cluster of words with significant semantic overlap having haereo as their
root including, inhaereo, adhaereo, cohaereo. Grasping, on the other hand, stands for a
cluster including appetere, rapere, adipisci, capere, possidere and various words with
prehendo at their root (comprehendo, adprehendo and prehendeo, when used in non-
cognitive senses).

449 For the distinctive nature of the heart as pre-differentiated totality of the self in
present awareness see chapter 3 above.

450 Indeed, varying degrees of formality in matter constitute the process whereby bodily
creatures undergo genesis and decay. And this process of corporeal mutation is the
external substratum of time, which makes possible the distensio animi whereby the soul
things made. But forms only mediate one aspect of being. For a fuller, more redemptive connection of the self to God requires a more thorough form of mediation. To that way we now turn.

The Way that Leads There: Christ’s Humble Means to Salvation

The Platonists ascent follows an ‘in then up’ pattern (conf. VII.10.16-17.23; s. Dolbeau 26.27; s. 241.2). Ecclesial ascent certainly requires moments of inward return, but the overall pattern proceeds by a ‘down then up’ trajectory in which graced contemplation and action form a rhythmic cadence as the creature plods along a revealed path. The humility of the incarnate one made a way – a means of using bodies to subordinate internally measures time (...de qua terra inuisibili et incomposita, de qua informitate, de quo paene nihilo faceres haec omnia, quibus iste mutabilis mundus constat et non constat, in quo ipsa mutabilitas appet, in qua sentiri et dinumerari possunt tempora, quia rerum mutationibus fiunt tempora, dum variantur et vertuntur species, quarum materies praedicta est terra inuisibilis, conf. XII.8.8; ... et quidquid deinceps in constitutione huius mundi non sine diebus factum commemoratur, quia talia sunt, ut in eis agantur uicissitudines temporum propter ordinatas commutaciones motionum atque formarum., conf. XII.12.15). Of course, this notion of time as constituted by the formal alterations of corporeal motion finds its roots in Plato (Tim. 37c-39e). The doctrine was available to Augustine through Cicero’s translation (Cic. Tim. 8.28-9.29), however, a lacuna in Cicero’s text prevents us from knowing how much of the detail in Plato’s thought would have been transmitted to Augustine. The Plotinian sense of a temporality intrinsic to discursive thought which constitutes the life of the soul (just as eternity is the life of intellect, Enn. III.7) also finds its place in Augustine’s thought (cf. ep. 18; uera rel. 18; 38; gn. adu. Man. II.20; conf. XI.14.17-31.41). The two seem to be connected by viewing corporeal time, as the fluctuation of form within matter, as the objective substratum. The soul’s experience of time comes through affective mutation, which inevitably follows on developing affective attachments to particular, changing bodies. Cf. “Time as theater of the mutable soul” in ch. 2 above.

Cary, Phillip. 2000. Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist. Oxford: Oxford University Press sees this pattern as the distinctive innovation of Augustine over against an alleged public interiority in Plotinus. However, through out his writings Augustine attributes this pattern of ascent to the Platonists themselves – moving inward from formality of bodies to observation of the soul, then upward in search of something unchangeable above the soul (conf. VII.10.16-17.23; s. Dolbeau 26.27; s. 241.2). So Augustine also projected the innovation Cary detected onto the Platonists.

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action to reception from God, thereby making room for grace to lift us up (*ipse autem unigenitus factus est nobis... hanc uiam, qua descendant ad illum a se et per eum ascendat ad eum, conf. V.3.5*). The church, as the body of the incarnate one, provides the humble actions and words to chart the way of return (*conf. VIII.2.4*). Augustine presents his fullest account of these humble means and the spiritual itinerary they chart in his reading *spiritaliter* of the six days of creation (*conf. XIII.12.13-34.49*). Since this account provides a major structuring device for the *Confessiones* as a whole and delineates the indirect pathway to contemplative and active fruition within the church an examination of the whole is warranted.

**Ecclesial Means of Humility: The Mystagogic Itinerary of the Hexaemeron**

Augustine clearly reads the creation account in Genesis as a detailed foreshadowing of his new creation in the community called church, and thus as schematic for the mystagogic process (*conf. XIII.12.13-34.49*). The spiritual itinerary of the six days

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452 Cf. also, *...per quam subdendos deprimeret a se ipsis et ad se traiiceret, sanans tumorem et nutriens amorem, ne fiducia sui progrederentur longius, sed potius infirmarentur uidentes ante pedes suos infirmam diuinitatem ex participatione tunicae pelliciae nostrae et lassi prostermentur in eam, illa autem surgens levaret eos* (conf. VII.18.24).

453 *confiteri, reusque sibi magni criminis apparuit erubescendo de sacramentis humilitatis uerbi tui et non erubescendo de sacris sacrilegis superborum daemoniorum, quae imitator superbus acceperat, depuduit vanitati et erubuit ueritati subitoque et inopinatus ait Simpliciano, ut ipse narrabat: eamus in ecclesiam: christianus uolo fieri., conf. VIII.2.4.*

454 The specific set of allegorical correlations Augustine produces in reading the six days, almost disappears from his works after the *Confessiones*. He soon takes up the project of providing a compelling literal reading (*gn. litt.*). However, the one place a nearly identical set of allegorical interpretations appears after the *Confessiones* is in a series of short mystagogical orations delivered during the Easter Octave (cf. *s. 229R-229W*). Clear anti-Donatist modifications to Augustine’s explanation of the sacraments in *s. 229U* makes a dating of 400-410 probable.

455 For the function of hexameral expositions in early Jewish Christianity see Daniélu, Jean. 1964. *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd. For an account of the secrecy with which these early teachings were held, and possible
entails a measured alteration between bodily action and contemplative attachment to scripture in ever deepening cycles. So, on days one, three and five the spiritual initiate engages in very specific actions appropriate to his level of maturity (conf. XIII.12.13-14.15; XIII.17.20-21; XIII.20.26-28). And on days two, four and six he turns to receive from the scriptures, according to his developmental capacity (conf. XIII.15.16-16.19; XIII.18.22-19.25; XIII.21.29-34.49). Action and contemplation form two poles between which the Christian life must constantly alternate until full simultaneity becomes possible in resurrected bodies. 

456 The allegorical meaning of the six days further depicts a three-stage overall pattern of growth – each possessing an active aspect and a contemplative aspect.

Through this gradual mystagogic process, the initiate is led to incrementally transform


456 The angelic capacity for simultaneity in action and contemplation provides a paradigm for Augustine of redeemed humanity in resurrection bodies. For an account from the same period as the Confessiones, cf. c. Faust. 22.27 ...inque ipsa ratione, quae partim contemplativa est, partim actiua, procul dubio contemplatio praecellit. in hac enim et imago dei est, qua per fidem ad speciem reformamur. actio itaque rationalis contemplationis rationali debet oboedire siue per fidem operanti, sicuti est, quamdiu peregrinamur a domino, siue per speciem, quod erit, cum similes ei erimus, quoniam uidebimus eum, sicuti est, effecti etiam in spirituali corpore ex gratia eius aequales angelis eius recepta stola prima inmortalitatis et incorruptionis, qua induetur hoc mortale et corruptibile nostrum, ut absorbeatur mors in victoria iustitia perfecta per gratiam, quia et sancti ac sublimes angeli habent contemplationem et actionem suam; id enim sibi agendum imperant, quod ille, quem contemplantur, iubet, cuius aeterno imperio liberaliter, quia suauiter, seruiunt (c. Faust. 22.27).
her overall perspective from individual self-containment to full self-identification as simply a part of the *totus Christus*.\textsuperscript{457} Once fully within the Christo-ecclesial perspective, the initiate is capable of seeing creation through the Holy Spirit, which is the animating principle of the *totus Christus*.\textsuperscript{458}

Although Augustine never explicitly employs the label, *totus Christus*, in the *Confessiones*,\textsuperscript{459} the submerged image functions as a root metaphor for the whole within which humans are to find themselves as a part. The *Confessiones* as a whole are bookended by the search of *aliqua portio creaturae tuae* to find rest in God (conf. I.1.1) and by the promise of rest for the one, now integrated with Christ's body, in whom God works and rests (conf. XIII.37.52). The interpenetration of divine and human activities in the *totus Christus*, as an extension of the coinhering three in one, corresponds with a perspectival shift wherein one comes to see all creatures through the Holy Spirit (conf.


\textsuperscript{459} Clearly, Augustine’s theology of the *totus Christus* is well-developed before the time of the *Confessiones*. The first substantial usage dates from sermons delivered in 393., cf. en. Ps. 3.9; 4.1-2; 9.4; 9.14; 15.5; 16.1; 17.2; 22.1; 24.1; 29.1-2.; cf. also c. Adim. 9.1. Significant contemporary uses include, c. Faust. 2.5; 3.5; 11.6; 12.39; 16.14-15; cons. eu. 1.54.
The linguistic cues Augustine uses for this summit of the hexaemeral mystagogy are native to his sermonic performances of the *totus Christus* (cf. *en. Ps. 83.5; en. Ps. 21.2.4; en. Ps. 30.2.3.1*), which often begin by exhorting his listeners to deliberately and consciously situate themselves within the *totus Christus* (cf. *en. Ps. 45.1; 52.1; 60.1; 79.1; 130.1*).

**Overview of Stage One:**

**Individual Submission to Ecclesial and Scriptural Authority (Days One & Two)**

The overall pattern of ecclesial mystagogy requires one to descend in order to ascend (*conf. V.3.5*). The descent phase begins on the first hexaemeral day when an initiate is joined to the body of Christ, which ever rises with his divinity. Thus the metaphorical “descent” from pride manifests as relinquishing self-direction by obediently joining the body of Christ. And the ascent manifests as gradually coming to see all of life from the perspective of the totality, which is the unity of God and humanity in Christ and church. Hexaemeral days one and two emphasize submission of the individual to the authority of Christ in his ecclesial body and his written manifestation in the Scriptures.

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For the shared flesh as condition for the possibility of rising with Christ’s divinity and thus the assumed environment of Augustine’s work as a mystagogue, cf. Cameron, Michael. 2005. “*Totus Christus* and the Psychogogy of Augustine’s Sermons” in *Augustinian Studies 36:1*, pp. 59-70.
Day One: Active Submission of Individual to Ecclesial Authority

The first day begins with words and water (conf. XIII.12.13). Faith in authoritative words requires a humbling of our innate impulse to knowledge and submission to baptism constitutes a repentant embrace of the humble Christ.\footnote{The classic statement from Augustine’s priestly period concerning faith as the starting point of knowledge is util. cred. 7.14-18.36. cf. also conf. VI.5.7; ciu. XI.3. For secondary discussions see TeSelle, Eugene. “Faith” in Fitzgerald, Allan, and John C. Cavadiini. 1999. Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans. O’Meara, J.J. 1951. “Augustine’s View of Authority and Reason in AD 386” in Irish Theological Quarterly 18, pp. 338-346, provides a concise account of Augustine’s earlier thought, which placed great optimism in human reason in this world. For an account that incorporates the later works see Rist, John M. 1994. Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.41-91.}

Baptism in the triune name creates a new trajectory for human life, though the initiate cannot yet grasp this truth. Thus, two entities emerge from baptism. Spiritual and carnal members of the church surface, as if a new heaven and earth, dripping from the baptismal font (conf. XIII.12.13). God’s mercy, hovering as the Spirit over the abyss, extends to humans in their formless ignorance with a word (conf. XIII.12.13). “Repent” reverberates in human ears and thereby spiritual light is called forth over the depths (conf. XIII.12.13). When the soul turns to God, light is created, form received.\footnote{The creatio – conversio/formatio pattern in Augustine’s thought finds its most explicit articulation in gn. litt. I.3.7-9.17. The most concise secondary treatment is Augustin, Eugène Tréhorel, and Aimé Sollignac. 1962. Oeuvres de Saint-Augustin. Les Confessions, livres I -XIII. 14, Dieu et son oeuvre. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, pp. 613-617. A fuller treatment is available in Gorman, Michael Murray. 1974. The Unknown Augustine: A Study of the Literal Interpretation of Genesis (de generi ad litteram). Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto. The ontological basis, however, upon which Augustine’s account is built was established early. Namely, Augustine’s early works conceived a two-level theory of the soul in which a minimal level of participation in being comes with the mere fact of creation, while a deeper participation in being through wisdom awaits the consent of the voluntas (imm. an. 6.11-12.19). Cf. Zum Brunn, Emilie. 1988. St. Augustine: Being and Nothingness. New York: Paragon House. Originally published as Zum Brunn, Emilie. 1969. Le Dilemme de l’être et du néant chez...}
Submission to authority is necessary at this stage, because the initiate cannot yet occupy a perspectival position as a part within the whole Christ. Thus cognitive and affective distortion is inevitable at this stage. And the aspirant may suffer bouts of sadness as he discerns his still ill formed state and the sin occupying his members (conf. XIII.14.15). But courage is fostered by considering that God’s mercy drew us up from the dark inner waters of our ignorance and can be trusted to see us through to daybreak. In the meantime, only God discerns the difference between darkness and light. So the initiate must not pass judgment on anything, not even on himself, prematurely (conf. XIII.14.15). Submission to authority, even in self-judgment, safeguards the neophyte by checking wayward impulses in action and setting limits to wandering attempts at interpretation from a highly self-contained perspective.

Day Two: Contemplative Submission of Individual to Scriptural Authority

On day two, God spreads out a firm structure of intellectual authority over the newly baptized (conf. XIII.15.16). God places a collection of writings before the new convert and the spiritual aspirant must humble himself beneath their authority (conf. XIII.15.17). Though the initiate is not yet in a position to see clearly, scriptural authority certainly is not arbitrary.

These books alone speak with a divine, internal consistency (concordes utique sermones tuos, conf. XIII.15.16)463 and alone possess a chaste eloquence, which

463 Style and substance are inseparable in scripture (conf. VII.21.27) and in teaching that conforms to and represents scripture (conf. V.13.23-14.24). Consider the contrast with the poet’s authority depicted in the contradictory claim of love tonans et adulterans (conf. I.16.25).
effectively destroys pride and persuades human beings to bow their necks to Jesus’ easy yoke (conf. XIII.15.17). Augustine’s characterization of the scriptures as possessing a casta eloquia comes from Ps. 11:7. In his sermons on this passage, Augustine glosses the phrase as meaning without simulation (en. Ps. 11.7). The Christian scriptures present the only source of words untainted by any measure of duplicity.464

At this step in the gradus, the initiate must pray for the humility needed to see clearly what is written in the scriptures (conf. XIII.15.17). Pride, like a mist intervening, impedes vision. But God gives wisdom to those who read with submissive faith. When received, the mediating structure of scripture temporally announces the mercy of the God who made time (conf. XIII.15.18). When God’s temporal economy is complete, the scriptures will be dispensed with and the one who humbled himself beneath them will see God face to face, like the angelic waters465 above the firmament (conf. XIII.15.18).466

464 In contrast, the poet’s covert project of authorizing lust and the Platonist’s books, with their incompatible mixture of incorporeal ontology and idol worship, inevitably speak with a measure of duplicity. Human pride requires it (gn. adu. Man. II.23. cf. also, uirg. 44; ep. 153.11; s. Denis 25.2). But the scriptures provide words the content and style of which are designed for the singular task of converting human beings to the God of truth (conf. XIII.15.17).


466 The full reversal of mediatory direction comes in the resurrection. Due to weakness in this life, at best, we ebb and flow between approaching God through creatures and creatures through God. But condescending in grace, God has provided a special creature in the scriptures, which allows even our ebbing to find a healing focus. Thus the scriptures should be considered the face of God for now (ergo pro facie dei, tibi pone interim scripturam dei. liquesc ab illa. paeniteat te, cum audis haec de peccatis tuis., s. 22.7).
Overview of Stage Two:

Ecclesial Redirection of Action and Contemplation (Days Three & Four)

In the second stage, constituted by the mystagogic steps of days three and four, the initiate begins to manifest the bare rudiments of communal consciousness as part of Christ’s body.

Distinct changes within the initiate’s psychology of action correspond to self-conscious identification with a new social grouping oriented to eternal ends (conf. XIII.17.21). Charity now begins to motivate and other-serving action follows. The convert has begun to manifest the humble love of Christ in redirected action (conf. XIII.17.21).

But charity also transforms contemplation. On day four the initiate clings to the scriptures in contemplative love, and thus is granted varying degrees of illumination (conf. XIII.18.22-23). The degrees of illumination, however, are not viewed as individual achievements, but as communally oriented charisms given for the sake of helping others along the pilgrim journey (conf. XIII.18.23).

Following humble submission in stage one, the second stage proceeds by reinitiating action and contemplation in service of others. And this humble re-initiation of action and contemplation ensues according to the degree of eternal perspective and other-regard granted.

Day Three: Moral Action Reinitiated for the sake of Eternal Ends

On day three, God draws together two societies distinguished by the ends of their respective psychologies of action (conf. XIII.17.20-21). And at this point the aspirant
begins to self-consciously associate and identify with the pilgrim society named church.\footnote{Unsurprisingly, the best concise account of Augustine’s ecclesiology was written by van Bavel, Tarsicius J. 1999. “Church” in Fitzgerald, Allan, and John C. Cavadini. 1999. \textit{Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia}. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans. For a view of Augustine’s church at ground level, the best treatment remains Meer, Frederik van der. 1962. \textit{Augustine the Bishop; the Life and Work of a Father of the Church}. London: Sheed and Ward.} The action of day one was focused on the individual’s repentant acceptance of authoritative instruction and baptism. At the stage of day three, personal action can focus on its results for others within a larger scheme of either temporal or eternal ends (\textit{conf. XIII.17.20}). Two groups emerge.

Souls drawn together in the earthly society, symbolized by the bitter waters, find their ultimate end in temporal happiness (\textit{conf. XIII.17.20}). Because temporal attachments always end in disappointment and loss they are depicted as bitter in the scriptures. The waves highlight the erratic motion of competing cares, which God providentially and mercifully coordinates in temporal social groupings (\textit{conf. XIII.17.20}).\footnote{Of course, this theme of the ever partial and perverted, yet substantial, expressions of justice in temporal society receives its most explicit and thorough description in \textit{ciu. 4.3-4.7; 19.4-28}. Cf. Markus, R. A. 1970. \textit{Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine}. Cambridge: University Press., pp.45-104.}

In contrast, the dry land signifies those souls, among whom the initiate sees himself, who thirst and seek after God (\textit{conf. XIII.17.21}). By seeking a different end in their actions, eternal wellbeing, they are distinguished from the bitterness of temporal society (\textit{at animas sitientes tibi et appARENTES tibi alio fine distinctas a societate maris occulto, conf. XIII.17.21}). And so the dry land produces fruit at God’s command, and by responding to divine precept the eternal society begins to love their neighbors through
simple provision of bodily needs and robust enforcement of social justice (conf. XIII.17.21).

**Day Four: Contemplation Reinitiated for sake of Christ’s Body**

On day four, the maturing initiate passes from active fruit to the delights of contemplating scripture and by clinging to the firmament of scripture becomes one of many lights in the sky (conf. XIII.18.22). But the delights of contemplation are no longer for individual gain or pride. They now serve the greater purpose of equipping members for service to the body of Christ (conf. XIII.18.23).

At this stage, contemplation of scripture progresses until one can distinguish not only between sensible and intelligible realities but also between temporal dispensations and God’s eternal counsel (conf. XIII.18.22). And the contemplative reader now understands the varying tasks to which God calls people at different times and how the God who never suffers change answers prayers at appropriate times (conf. XIII.18.22).

Through scriptural contemplation, God gifts teachers and workers with various degrees of illumination according to God’s purpose (conf. XIII.18.23). Those who possess words of wisdom become like the sun, speaking to guide those whose delight is truth (conf. XIII.18.23). The moon’s lesser light betokens those gifted with words of knowledge dealing with sacraments. And various stars speckle the sky as others emerge from less thorough contemplation with capacities for healing, miracle working, prophecy, discerning of spirits and speaking in tongues suited to produce faith in carnal persons (conf. XIII.18.23). Thus various degrees of contemplative illumination, by divine providence, produce a range of new capacities. And each capacity is viewed solely in
terms of how they help others along the pilgrim journey (conf. XIII.18.23). Communal consciousness has flowered.

Overview of Stage Three:

Maturation of Christo-Ecclesial Consciousness in Action and Contemplation

In the final stage of growth, the initiate’s perspective matures to see his every action and contemplative moment as no more or less than a partial manifestation of God’s action and contemplation. But the individual does not disappear thereby into a communal blur. Rather, the distinctiveness of each person remains as the providential vehicle of God’s own action, rest and temporal experience and thus as a part of the Christo-ecclesial whole. Full self-identification with the totus Christus allows a perspectival shift wherein one is graced to view creatures through the eyes of the Holy Spirit.

Day Five: Sacramental Action for the Conversion of Temporal Society

So, on day five, sacramental action and speech is set in motion only for the sake of responding to temporal society’s need for conversion (conf. XIII.20.26-28). The

underlying consciousness of other’s needs in light of eternal ends indicates a broader awareness of identity as Christ’s body descending in love for the world.

The maturing adept clearly sees his action in baptizing, performing miracles and preaching as the vehicle for Christ’s activity in the world. A new power, derived from God through scripture, pervades his actions and evokes wonder (conf. XIII.19.25; XIII.20.28).

Spiritually read, the two forms of sea life on day five refer to the saints producing deeds in two forms (conf. XIII.20.26). The things that creep through the waters refer to the sacrament of baptism actively intervening in the midst of temporal temptations (conf. XIII.20.26). The great sea monsters (ceti grandes) are miracles or prodigious signs designed to shake the complacent from their stupor (conf. XIII.20.26).471


470 The specific needs God responds to in temporal society stem from Adam’s fall (conf. XIII.20.28). Adam’s sin produced a race marked by three distorted forms of commendatio. Curiosity distorts the commendatio to knowledge. Pride and impulses to dominate, like a windblown swelling (procellose tumidum), drags the remnants of the commendatio to human association (conf. XIII.20.28). And the chasing of pleasures, like an unstable flux (instabiliter fluidum), perverts the God-given commendatio to preservation of bodily health (conf. XIII.20.28). These perversions bar people from direct contemplation of God and create a need for mystical deeds and utterances to engage temporal society in bodily and sensible ways (... si non esset lapsus Adam... non opus esset, ut in aquis multis corporaliter et sensibiliter operarentur dispensatores tui mystica facta et dicta., conf. XIII.20.28).

471 Augustine’s theory of miracles is bipartite – quotidian miracles and prodigious signs. The world is full of everyday signs of God’s presence and grandeur – such as the sacraments. But by turning toward creatures we have lost our capacity to wonder at God’s activity and give thanks. Thus God occasionally provides prodigious signs to shock dull senses and provide an invitation to wonder that is less easily dismissed. A wonderful encapsulation of Augustine’s bipartite account is found in en. Ps. 110.4 memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum [Ps 110,4]: hunc humilans, et hunc exaltans. memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum [Ps 110,4]: reseruans opportune inusitata prodigia, quae infirmitas hominis noutati intenta meminerit, cum sint eius miracula quotidiana.
The birds flying above the land and beneath the firmament refer to the clear
voices of God's servants in teaching and preaching from scripture (conf. XIII.20.26). They
fly close to the firmament of scripture and project their teaching downward to meet the
needs of the bitter sea (conf. XIII.20.26). Of course, they fly over the land as well and this
gestures toward their further usefulness for the faithful on dry land (conf. XIII.21.29).

Day Six: Christo-Ecclesial Integration in Action and Contemplation

On day six, progress pulses onward with a new level of synergy between action and
contemplation in the church. But the rhythmic alteration continues. There is no
apotheosis of contemplative bliss wherein action becomes dispensable.

The adept comes at last to submit every motion of the threefold commendatio to
ratio and thus attains continence. Persons become living souls by the purification of
their hearts to delight in God alone (conf. XIII.21.29). Genesis enumerates three forms of
living soul – beasts, domestic animals and reptiles. So God’s minister teaches cordial
purity of reference, or continence, in three specific ways that counteract the three
distortions of commendatio in the world (conf. XIII.21.30). Augustine calls these three
distortions the motions of a dead soul (conf. XIII.21.30).

maiora. tot per universam terram arbores creat, et nemo miratur: areficit uerbo unam, et
stupefacta sunt corda mortalium; sed memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum [Ps 110,4]. hoc
enim miraculum maxime adentis cordibus inhaeredit, quod assiduitas non uilefecerit. (en.
Ps. 110.4). cf. also, s. 126.4; ciu. X.8-17; XXII.8-10. Of course, even prodigies can be
misused when the signs are referred to the temporal rather than eternal ends (en. Ps.
105.6-7). For an account of the underlying unity between everyday regularities and
prodigies, through the rationes causales, cf. gn. litt. VI.14.25-18.29. A grisly application of
this rationale to explain bodies capable of eternal torment may be read in ciu. XXI.6-8. I
am grateful to Bob Sweetman, who first introduced me to Augustine’s theory of miracle
in a seminar. Meer, Frederik van der. 1962. Augustine the Bishop; the Life and Work of a
But when wild pride is stripped away, continence gives life to a gentle beast referring to gentleness in association (*conf. XIII.21.31*). Continence strips away the inertia of luxurious pleasure and gives life to domesticated animals. Thereby the soul engages in no excess when eating and suffers no lack when not eating (*conf. XIII.21.31*). As false knowledge falls away, continence animates harmless serpents displaying practical caution and exploring temporal nature only to the extent useful for attaining intellectual vision through what is made (*conf. XIII.21.31*).

Thus purity of cordial reference extirpates innate *peruersio* and gradually produces a reformed set of impulses to action that accords with the created *commendatio* to bodily preservation, personal association and knowledge. These new forms of living soul multiply according to their kind, that is, by the mediating process of moral education (*conf. XIII.21.31*). Thus human action at last renders proper service to eternal reason (*seruiunt enim rationi haec animalia, cum a progressu mortifero cohibita uiuunt et bona sunt*, *conf. XIII.21.31*).

Augustine has clearly identified *ratio* with the Son of God, who is Wisdom and the beginning that speaks to us (*conf. XI.8.10*). So continence only becomes possible when the individual comes to fully grasp that his bodily self, structured by threefold *commendatio*, is simply a part within the whole Christ. When everything that constitutes his individual structure appears to him as simply a limb of Christ, the wayward

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impulses come fully under the sway of eternal reason as head of the body (conf. XIII.21.31).

Concurrently, the maturing mind of the Christo-ecclesial person begins to directly perceive the coinherence of persons. God fashions the culminating creature according to the Trinity’s image and similitude (conf. XIII.22.32). Having become continent, God can now directly teach the contemplative to see the trinity of unity and the unity of trinity (et doces eum iam capacam uidere trinitatem unitatis uel unitatem trinitatis., conf. XIII.22.32). Trinitarian understanding of three in one and vice versa becomes intuitively obvious, in large part because the initiate now inhabits the personal perspective of a part thoroughly identified with the whole Christ.

At this point, one directly discerns God’s will because it no longer presents itself as an external requirement but as a perception of what is good, pleasing and perfect. At this point, right judgment over sacraments, verbalized expressions of faith and bodily impulses of the threefold commendatio, becomes possible (conf. XIII.23.33-34).

Contemplation and action, and those more fully given to one pole or another, now form a symbiotic web of mutual nourishment within the church (conf. XIII.25.38). Just as the more active members of the church receive nourishment through the teaching and sacraments dispensed by the more contemplative members, the more contemplative members are nourished by the charity of active members (conf. XIII.26.39-40).

Augustine’s early doctrine of the imago dei conceived the Word as image of God and the human mens as created to the image of the Word (gn. litt. inp. 16.60). The relation of imaging means that no other nature need mediate between the mens and the Word who is Truth (gn. litt. inp. 16.60; diu. qu. 51.2). Of course, his understanding of creation progressed by the time of the Confessiones to discerning a Trinitarian image in the mens (conf. XIII.11.12), but this immediacy of the mind to God remains vital to Augustine’s understanding. Note his late appeal to the immediacy of the mind to God in ciu. 10.2.
The intention behind an act of charity provides proper nourishment for the contemplative (conf. XIII.26.39). In principle, the soul is nourished by what gives it joy (unde autem gaudet, inde pascitur, conf. XIII.26.39; inde quippe animus pascitur, unde laetatur, conf. XIII.27.42). So the contemplative who takes delight in eating another's acts of charity is spiritually fed thereby (pascuntur autem his escis qui laetantur eis, conf. XIII.26.39).

At the end of the six days, God looks upon the creation and pronounces it very good (conf. XIII.28.43). Herein Augustine finds the complete, redemptive reversal of the direction of epistemic mediation. Repeatedly we have found God mediated through created things, and found specific critiques attached to those who content themselves with that sort of vision. At last the initiate is given a vision of creation through the eyes of the Spirit, which is the animating principle of the totus Christus (conf. XIII.29.44).

God’s eternal vision becomes successive when human beings view the creation through God’s Spirit (conf. XIII.29.44). In the same way as scripture affirms God’s temporal speech through human agents, so God temporally sees and affirms as good through human agents (conf. XIII.31.46).

When human persons see created things through God’s Spirit, God sees those things in them (qui autem per spiritum tuum uidet ea, tu uides in eis., conf. XIII.31.46). Likewise, whatever pleases human beings for God’s sake, God is the one giving pleasure.

474 In a different context, Augustine places the fall of Satan and his demons within the context of the angelic alteration between day, eventide and morning knowledge as a failure to turn back from direct knowledge of creatures (quia non remanet angelica scientia in eo, quod creatum est, quin hoc continuo referat ad eius laudem atque caritatem, in quo id non factum esse, sed faciendum fuisse cognoscitur: in qua veritate stando dies est. nam si uel ad se ipsam natura angelica conuerteretur sequi amplius delectaretur quam illo, cuius participatione beata est, intumescens superbia caderet, sicut diabolus, gn. litt. IV.24.41).
in them (*et quaecumque propter te placent, tu in eis places, conf. XIII.31.46*). And those things that please human beings through God’s Spirit please God in human beings (*et quae per spiritum tuum placent nobis, tibi placent in nobis., conf. XIII.31.46*).

The interpretive gymnastics seem foreign to the modern interpreter. But Augustine has explained the hermeneutical presupposition previously.\(^{475}\) The singular understanding needed to cement the vast array of interpretive transpositions together is the real unity of the total Christ, head and body. The perspectival shift that reverses the perverse Rom. 1:20 direction of epistemic mediation is simple but profound. At this point, Augustine is describing in first person perspective the line of sight available when one is fully integrated with the *totus Christus*.

Three separate modes of knowing and appraising creatures emerge. One may approach creatures directly and find them not good (conf. XIII.30.45-31.46). This is the sin of the Manichees. Second, a person may approach creatures directly and find pleasure in the creature above the Creator (conf. XIII.31.46). Those, including the Platonists, denounced in Rom. 1:20 follow this route to knowledge of God through creatures. Third, human beings, at the end of mystagogical integration with the Christo-ecclesial whole, may come to view the creature through God and, in approving the creature, love God in what he has made (*aliud autem, ut, cum aliquid uidet homo quia bonum est, deus in illo uideat, quia bonum est, ut scilicet ille ametur in eo, quod fecit, qui bonum est, deus in illo uideat*).

\(^{475}\) *quod ideo dicimus, ne quis arbitretur urberm dei, per quod facta sunt omnia, quasi per locos posse definiri et alicui usibiliter adparere nisi per aliquam usibilem creaturam. sicut enim uerbum dei est in propheta et recte dicitur dixit propheta recte item dicitur dixit dominus, quia uerbum dei, quod est Christus, in propheta loquitur ueritatem: sic et in angelo ipse loquitur, quando ueritatem angelus adnuntiat, et recte dicitur deus dixit et deus adparuit et item recte dicitur angelus dixit et angelus adparuit, cum illud dicatur ex persona inhabitantis dei, illud ex persona servientis creaturae. ex hac regula etiam apostolus ait: an uultis experimentum accipere eius, qui in me loquitur, Christi? [2 Cor 13,3], (c. Adim. 9.1).*
non amaretur nisi per spiritum, conf. XIII.31.46). Therein the inversion and redemption of Rom. 1:20 is complete.\textsuperscript{476}

Thus Augustine explicitly depicts Christian contemplation as a partial escape from creaturely mediation of God. Below we will explore the contemplative aspect of Augustine’s mystagogy in detail. But first we must consider how the metaphors of his ecclesial program for human formation provides a structural template for the \textit{Confessiones} as a literary whole.

\textit{Diastrophic Shades of Ecclesial Formation:}

\textit{The Hexaemeron of Confessiones XIII and the Structure of Confessions I-VII}

One of the structuring devices Augustine used in composing the \textit{Confessiones} was a deliberate depiction of his life in the world as consisting of shadowy parodies of the ecclesial program intermixed with close encounters with the true way.\textsuperscript{477} To demonstrate this reading exhaustively would require a monograph all its own. But a condensed survey of the \textit{Confessiones}, highlighting relevant allusions and the general structuring principle at work, seems appropriate at this point.\textsuperscript{478}

\textsuperscript{476} Of course several chapters follow: conf. XIII.32.47-34.49 provides a review, now explicitly through the Spirit, of the literal creatures called for on the six days (conf. XIII.32.47), then a terse review of the ontological substructure of temporality, formality and materiality unveiled in conf. XI-XII (conf. XIII.33.48), and finally a review of the created things spiritually signified by the literal creatures of the six days (conf. XIII.34.49).

\textsuperscript{477} Indeed, Augustine initiates his tale of \textit{peruersio} by explicitly contrasting his pathway with the beginnings of the humble, ecclesial way of descending to ascend (\textit{audieram enim ego adhuc puer de uita aeterna promissa nobis per humilitatem domini dei nostri descendentis ad superbiam nostram et signabar iam signo crucis eius et condiebar eius sale iam inde ab utero matris meae, quae multum sperauit inte., conf. I.17}).

\textsuperscript{478} The following interpretive summary is necessary to demonstrate, through the literary placement of conf. VII, that Augustine’s account of Platonic contemplation is
Diastrophic Shades of Day Three

In the previous chapter we saw how perversions of the first three days, encased by a distinctive account of *commendatio*, structured Augustine’s presentation in *Confessiones* I.479 The second book begins in shades of day three with the theme of bitterness (*recolens uias meas nequissimas in amaritudine recogitationis meae, conf. II.1.1*) and pursues the social dimension of life within temporal society. Two distortions of social connection are inherently repulsive to the created *commendatio* to association. Both social rejection (*fugiebam... abiectionem*) and absorption of identity (*confusiones*) oppose proper association (*conf. I.20.31*). And created *commendatio*, therefore, flees from those states (*conf. I.20.31*). But Augustine by turning from God disappeared into multiplicity (*dum ab uno te auersus in multa euanui., conf. II.1.1*). Socially this manifested as absorptive loss of identity in relations (*sed non tenebatur modus ab animo usque ad animum, quatenus est luminosus limes amicitiae, conf. II.2.2*).

So *Confessiones* II proceeds by reflecting on social solidarity, awash in the sea of temporally oriented society, as a motive to sin. The sexual passions of his youth were so many waves, which, in retrospect, Augustine wishes had tossed him up on the shore of matrimony (*ut usque ad coniugale litus exaestuarent fluctus aetatis meae, conf. II.2.3*). If only Augustine had listened to the precepts in obedience to which the dry land became fruitful on day three, he would not have sunk into the abyss (*conf. II.2.3-4*). Indeed, Augustine does encounter divine precept, spoken by Monica’s lips, but he considers the

indeed intended to be read as a parody of Christian contemplation and not a paradigm thereof.

479 The reader may refer to chapter 5 above, the discussion will not be repeated here.
advice womanly and disdains it as something that would make him lose face before his social peers (conf. II.3.5-7).

Augustine then turns to reflect on the way social solidarity in temporal society spurred him on to sin. He could accumulate renown by recounting his indecent acts, and felt motivated to invent stories of escapades when he had none to relate (conf. II.3.7). Thus by heeding temporally oriented social pressures above divine precept Augustine found himself carried along by the current of temporal desire (conf. II.3.8).

The famous pear theft episode serves to highlight the sham fruitfulness of the bitter sea (conf. II.4.9). While the dry land produces the fruit of active charity on day three to provide for the needs of others, Augustine, in his maritime antic, steals fruit without any personal need for nourishment simply for the thrill of depriving another (et alieni danni appetitus, nulla lucri mei, conf. II.9.17). After analyzing his motives, Augustine finds no possible independent goodness to be sought in the stolen pears (conf. II.5.10-7.15). And he concludes that the very social solidarity within that temporally twisted society of boys provided the only possible motivation (conf. II.8.16-9.17).

**Diastrophic Shades of Day Four**

*Confessiones III* opens with continuing disruption in Augustine through perverting his *commendatio* to health into pleasure seeking and his *commendatio* to association into the search for reputation amid temporal society (*conf. III.1.1*). But diastrophic shades of day four, and the first fruits of scriptural contemplation, appear as Augustine groups together a series of perverse forms of knowledge. Augustine’s early love of theater, as an expression of *curiositas* (*conf. III.2.2–3.5*), precedes brief mention of the wreckers and his furtive association with them (*conf. III.3.6*).

Soon imitators of scriptural teachers parade through the text one by one. Augustine encounters Cicero’s *Hortensius*, burns for wisdom itself, but does not find Christ’s name there (*conf. III.4.7–8*). He turns to the scriptures but finds their style distasteful (*conf. III.5.9*). Because he is too proud, Augustine cannot bow his neck beneath scripture’s authority, as should have happened on day two, and consequently fails to understand it (*conf. III.5.9*).

Instead of contemplating the scriptures and receiving illumination on day four, Augustine seeks nourishment from the Manichees who provide a shady parody of scripture’s truth (*conf. III.6.10–7.12*). But the Manichees’ critique of the patriarchs rests on ignorance of how God’s merciful actions are mediated in time (*conf. III.7.13–10.18*), the very things learned by the first level of scriptural contemplation on day four (*conf. XIII.18.22*). By refusing to bow beneath scripture, the Manichees are bound to lack discernment of the difference between eternal standards and changing temporal dispensations (*conf. III.7.13–10.18*). So all is darkness on the day when contemplation should have led to various luminaries speckling the sky.
The account of Monica’s visions at the end of book three \( \text{(conf. III.11.19-12.21)} \) both marks out Monica as a lesser luminary \( \text{(conf. XIII.18.23)} \) and segues into the focus on signs in \textit{Confessiones IV}. With the focus on signs, we enter the metaphoricss of day five.

**Diastrophic Shades of Day Five**

Augustine begins his diastrophic parody of day five by encountering two false wonders. The Manichees claim a false purgation through their practice of feeding the elect \( \text{(conf. IV.1.1)} \). But Augustine encounters the more vigorous purveyor of false signs in the form of the astrologers \( \text{(conf. IV.3.4-6)} \). Their purely natural knowledge of astrology masquerades as signs of supra-temporal knowledge, and contrast with the genuine signs produced by the bodily action of the saints in answer to the needs of temporal society \( \text{(conf. XIII.20.26-27)} \). Augustine did, however, find true signs immediately juxtaposed to the false signs. Bodily baptism inexplicably transforms the mind of his unconscious, dying friend \( \text{(conf. IV.4.7-8)} \). Together with the visions of Monica, this event stands as a counter-witness of the true signs produced along the ecclesial pathway on day five.

Book five of the \textit{Confessiones} is all about voices, especially the contrast between Faustus’ empty style because devoid of scripture \( \text{(conf. V.6.10-7.13)} \), and Ambrose’s weighty integrity of style and substance \( \text{(conf. V.13.23-14.25)} \). Ambrose’s eloquence corresponds to the production of flying things on day five as those who have

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\(^{481}\) In passing one might note how this episode, which directly contradicts his thesis, has simply been ignored in Cary, Phillip. 2008. \textit{Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine’s Thought}. New York: Oxford University Press.
contemplated scripture begin to teach and preach for the sake of bitter temporal society (conf. XIII.20.26). But diastrophic parodies abound.

Augustine makes his opening discussion concerning vain natural philosophers calculating astrological cycles (conf. V.3.3-4.7) directly contrast with the saints’ activities on day five (conf. XIII.20.26-28). Their proud hypertrophy of temporal knowledge does not lead them to discover God. And if they do know the Creator, they do not honor him by sacrificing their distortions of commendatio (conf. V.3.4). These distortions specifically impersonate the acts of day five – pride should be slain as a sacrifice of birds and curiosity as an offering of fish (conf. V.3.4). So the astrologers’ teachings provide a very specific parody of Christian teachers as birds of day five.482 Likewise, the pretension of the philosophers to being exalted to the stars and lights marks them out as engaged in diastrophic parodies of day five (putant se excelsos esse cum sideribus et lucidos, et ecce ruerunt in terram, et obscuratam est insipiens cor eorum [Rm 1,21], conf. V.3.5).

**Diastrophic Shades of Day Six**

Having depicted false voices of natural philosophers and Faustus the Manichee in contrast to Ambrose, Augustine turns in book six to his misuse of ecclesial exemplars of

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482 Many details of Augustine’s account only make sense when the conceptual contrast with day five is kept in mind. For instance, his inclusion of paying tribute to Caesar in describing the Way: et sapientiae tuae non est numerus [Ps 146,5]. ipse autem unigenitus factus est nobis sapientia et iustitia et sanctificatio [1 Cor 1,30] et numeratus est inter nos et soluit tributum Caesari (conf. V.3.5). Those who fly close to the firmament of scripture now distinguish the temporal dispensations in distinction from eternity (conf. XIII.18.22). God’s wisdom is innumerable and thus non-temporal. But the incarnate one became numerable, and thus temporal, and abided by the dispensation of his time in paying tribute to Caesar.
continence and his alternative attachment to lesser, immoral models. On day six, God’s ministers present themselves as moral exemplars and by following their teaching and example Christian disciples tame the three beasts of perverted commendatio and live anew as continent persons (conf. XIII.21.29-31).

So a flood of names and personages sweep across the pages of Confessiones VI as the living soul of day six achieves only a sardonic stillbirth. Monica’s absentious use of wine at the martyr’s shrines and docile willingness to give up the practice altogether at Ambrose’s decree provided a true example of Christian continence, which Augustine fails to imitate (conf. VI.1.1-2.2). Ambrose comes next and Augustine considers him fortunate because powerful and important but cannot imagine happiness coinciding with sexual continence (conf. VI.3.3). Next Augustine encounters a drunken beggar, temporarily blissful in his inebriation, and perplexes over how this beggar is happier than himself in his high social position (conf. VI.6.9-10). Accounts of the fragile goodness of Alypius (conf. VI.7.11-10.16) and Nebridius (conf. VI.10.17), with anecdotes pertaining thereto, round out Augustine’s presentation of various moral and not-so-moral exemplars. The final pages highlight Augustine’s continuing struggles with illicit sexuality and his incapacity to decide between marriage and philosophical otium (conf. VI.11.18-16.26). Following his own diastrophic path, Augustine cannot bring continence to birth.

In context, Augustine’s encounter with the libri Platonicorum in Confessiones VII presents itself as a shady parody of the contemplation of the Triune God achieved on day six, once moral continence has produced live soul (conf. XIII.22.32). Neo-Platonism provides an ascent to intellectual apprehension of non-corporeal being, but it does not produce transformation (conf. VII.17.23). Likewise, it provides an aroma of eternal food,
but does not place Augustine in the position to eat it (*conf. VII.17.23*). His incapacity to
discern the incarnation following Platonic contemplation (*conf. VII.19.25*) contrasts with
the capacity, received in ecclesial contemplation on day six, to understand the unity in
trinity and the trinity in unity (*conf. XIII.22.32*). Of course, the end result of this
diastrophic parody of ecclesial formation is a thoroughly prideful simulation of wisdom
(*conf. VII.20.26*). Now the parodies of the ecclesial program have run full circle and the
time has come for conversion to the genuine path of the incarnate one.

**Conversion: Reforming Commendatio and Reversing Diastrophic Formation**

(*Confessiones VIII-IX*)

The eighth book occupies the structural center point of the *Confessiones*. Following his
Platonic ascent, Augustine tells us that he did not lack certainty, but stability (*nec certior
de te, sed stabilior in te esse cupiebam*, *conf. VIII.1.1*). In other words, his soul's impulses
to action needed redemption before conversion and genuine ecclesial contemplation
would be possible. Already ambition, the distortion of associative *commendatio*, had
largely fallen away from Augustine (*conf. VIII.1.2*). But the more basic perversion,
whereby the *commendatio* to bodily preservation degenerates into the quest for
pleasure, continued to control Augustine (*conf. VIII.1.2*). Recalling the condemnation of
Rom. 1:20, Augustine remembers that some see God through creatures and yet fail to
love God. Among them Augustine confesses he was once numbered, but now God was
lifting him out of that proud error and teaching him that piety is wisdom (*conf. VIII.1.2*).
So Augustine makes his way to aged Simplicianus (conf. VIII.2.3). And a series of stories follow of congruent calls to God’s service. Each of the stories serves to dismantle the dissimulative stories by which Augustine maintains himself in pride. First comes Victorinus and the humility whereby he at last bowed his neck to enter the ecclesial way (conf. VIII.2.3-4.9). Simplicianus’ tale sparks a great struggle within Augustine, and again the terminology of his psychology of action, developed in his priestly exegetical work, names the roadblock to a life of ecclesial devotion (conf. VIII.5.10-12).

Next, Ponticianus tells of Antony’s call and the wonders worked at his hand and at the hands of his brothers in the desert (conf. VIII.6.14). Augustine and Alypius listened in attentive silence as Ponticianus told of how two fellow agentes

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483 For Augustine’s understanding of the congruent call, along with the Chrysippean background, cf. chapter 4 above. Relevant literature is cited there.

484 Specifically the terms: \textit{voluntas, consuetudo, necessitas}, and \textit{traho} have very strong connections with his (somewhat Stoicising) psychology of action developed during his priestly period. The reader may consult chapters 3 and 4 below for expositions. Portions of the relevant text from \textit{conf. VIII.5.10&12} are reproduced below for the reader’s convenience.

...cui rei ego suspirabam ligatus non ferro alieno, sed mea ferrea uoluntate... quippe ex uoluntate peruersa facta est libido, et dum seruitur libidini, facta est consuetudo, et dum consuetudini non resistitur, facta est necessitas.... ita duae uoluntates meae, una uetus, alia nova, illa carnalis, illa spiritualis, confligebant inter se atque discordando dissipabant animam meam., conf. VIII.5.10

...frustra condelectabar legi tuae secundum interiorem hominem [Rm 7,22], cum alia lex in membris meis repugnaret legi mentis meae et captiium me duceret in lege peccati, quae in membris meis [Rm 7,23] erat. lex enim peccati est violentia consuetudinis, qua trahitur et tenetur etiam initus animus eo merito, quo in eam volens inlabitur. miserum ergo me quis liberaret de corpore mortis huius [Rm 7,24] nisi gratia tua per Iesum Christum, dominum nostrum? [Rm 7,25], conf. VIII.5.12

rebus happened upon a copy of the uita Antonii. At the first read, he found himself changed within (et legebat et mutabatur intus, ubi tu uidebas, conf. VIII.6.15). The world, encapsulating the three perversions of created commendatio in I John. 2:16, was sucked from his mind (et exuebatur mundo mens eius, conf. VIII.6.15). And while he read, the wave of his heart (a scriptural image Augustine adopted from the bitter sea to depict temporal desires) changed direction and with a groan the man decided upon the better way (namque dum legit et uoluit fluctus cordis sui, infremuit aliquando et discreuit decreuitque meliora, conf. VIII.6.15). And with that the man belonged already to God (iamque tuus, conf. VIII.6.15). His friend followed suit.

All these stories provide a template for conversion through reading. The rich details of how reading scripture leads to a transformation in one’s psychology of action would provide substance for an intriguing, independent monograph. But the point of this brief survey is to relate the way this section fits into Augustine template from the six days.

The moment leading up to his own congruent call shows Augustine reduced to a state of essential infancy (conf. VIII.12.28). In groans and convulsive gestures, with tormented facial expressions, tears and inability to speak, Augustine the rhetor finds himself stripped down to the state wherein his first commendatio for bodily preservation was perverted into a search for pleasure (conf. VIII.12.28). So Augustine’s condition on the brink of conversion harkens back to infantile formlessness (conf.

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486 Miles, Margaret R. 1982. “Infancy, Parenting and Nourishment in Augustine’s Confessions” in The Journal of the American Academy of Religion, September 1982, pp. 349-364 highlights this connection. However, she proceeds to read it in terms of psychological archetypes (“his return to the infantile condition and selection of a different mother...”) and misses the literary and theological point of comparison with the hexaemeron.
which also corresponds to the shapeless, primordial abyss over which the Spirit deigns to hover (conf. XIII.3.4-4.5).

Receiving the *tolle, lege* as a divine command, Augustine turns to scripture (conf. VIII.12.29). And a scriptural word, read at the right moment, releases Augustine from his addiction to sex and lends form to his abysmally conflicted will. By the end of Rom. 13:13-14, a light of composure floods Augustine's heart and all the darkness of his hesitation is dispersed (*statim quippe cum fine huiusce sententiae quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo omnes dubitationis tenebrae diffugerunt*, conf. VIII.12.29). Augustine has received the formative, chaste words of holy writ and the sudden tranquility of his face bespeaks the internal change (conf. VIII.12.30). God, through his scriptures, had freed Augustine from twisted impulses to pleasure and ambition (conf. VIII.12.30).

**Recapitulating Day One and Two**

So Augustine repents and comes under the authority of scripture, thus beginning his path down the ecclesial pathway of human formation. The *tolle, lege* narrative in book eight brings Augustine through day one and into day two of the hexaemeral itinerary. *Confessiones IX* contains a condensed series of episodes, which sequentially recapitulate the positive journey of the six days. So book nine begins with a summary account of how the congruent call in the garden ravished Augustine with a sweetness (greater delight) that made renouncing the twisted forms of *commendatio* (pleasure, curiosity,

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487 Translators routinely take Augustine's contrast between *securitas* and *dubitatio* in a purely epistemic sense. But Augustine has repeatedly insisted that no possibility of epistemic doubt or uncertainty remained after his Platonic ascent. The issue, in context, is his incapacity to give a wholehearted command to himself from a unified will. Therefore I take *securitas* in the active sense of composure and *dubitatio* in the common deliberative sense of hesitancy or wavering.
honor) easy (conf. IX.1.1). Thereby Augustine traverses the pathway of days one and two, excepting his baptism, which follows out of order. But at this point Augustine adds his name to those seeking baptism the following Easter.

**Recapitulating Day Three**

Next Augustine decides to renounce his career (conf. IX.2.2). The transfer of allegiance from the bitter sea of temporal society to the dry land of eternal social solidarity is marked by the curious transition from individual to group plans before God (et placuit mihi in conspectu tuo... subtrahere ministerium linguae meae to consilium ergo nostrum erat coram te, conf. IX.2.2). Having come under the authority of scripture, Augustine is now joined in a new way with a society for whom eternal goodness constitutes the end of all temporal actions. So God’s words produce charity within this small band gathered around Augustine, and the exempla seruorum tuorum now provide a trajectory for eternally oriented social solidarity (conf. IX.2.3), just as the worldly exemplars had fostered Augustine’s solidarity with the bitter sea (conf. I.18.28-29). The submerged template of day three requires Augustine at this point to include the narratives of how Verecundus and Nebridius, then unbaptized, nonetheless died within the fold of the eternal society (conf. IX.3.5-6). And, finally, Augustine recounts the arrival of the newly oriented social grouping in Cassiciacum (conf. IX.4.7).

**Recapitulating Day Four**

At this point the events of day four, and the first wave of scriptural contemplation, bring Augustine to recount his scriptural readings at Cassiciacum (conf. IX.4.7). By reflecting on Ps. 4, Augustine provides a fairly detailed example of his first contemplative ascent
through scripture (conf. IX.4.8-11). We will return to this passage below when we collate Augustine’s depictions of Christian contemplation.488

Recapitulating Day Five

The prodigious and sacramental signs of day five along with the voices of Christian teachers emerge next (conf. IX.4.12-7.16). Augustine, while still at Cassiciacum, suddenly suffers a toothache that left him incapable of speech. The thought enters his heart to have the community pray for his healing. The very moment they kneel in petition his pain vanishes (conf. IX.4.12). Wonder and fear shake Augustine at the prodigious sign.

Ambrose’s teaching, now through epistolary surrogate, comes next (conf. IX.5.13).489 Then they return to Milan and receive the sign of baptism (conf. IX.6.14). But

488 Kotzé, Annemaré. 2004. Augustine’s Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, v. 71. Leiden: Brill, ch. 3 provides a close reading of the Manichean resonances in this passage. Certainly she has established that one element of Augustine’s purpose herein is to convert his erstwhile co-religionists.

However, an examination of the “Manichean terminology” to which Kotzé appeals, in the context of the Confessiones, reveals that many of them apply equally to the Platonists and to the Manicheans in Augustine’s thought (e.g. lack of confession and repentence (p.110, cf. conf. VII.20.26) and pride (p.113, cf. conf. VII.9.13; 20.26) certainly are associated in Augustine’s mind with the Platonists. Likewise, the culinary imagery harkens to a long-standing philosophical topos of spiritual nourishment through internalizing truth, a theme Augustine employs to critique Platonist contemplation (p.112, cf. conf. VII.17.23). Moreover, Augustine’s summary of three modes of vision at the end of the Confessiones seems to target both Manichean and Platonist as perverse in opposite ways and set them in contradistinction to the fruits of ecclesial contemplation (conf. XIII.31.46).

So I concur that protreptic is employed, but urge that a bi-focal lens must be used. For Augustine dares to appeal to Platonists and Manicheans alike. Kotzé’s note 51 on pg. 23 suggests she realizes as much, but needed to focus on the Manicheans alone due to the constrains of her project.

the emphasis here falls on the voices, as if flying things (conf. XIII.20.26). His baptism is recounted in passing to a more detailed discussion of the hymns and canticles by which voces illae influebant auribus meis, et eliquabatur ueritas in cor meum (conf. IX.6.14). The prodigious signs accompanying discovery of the bodies of two martyrs, Gervasius and Protasius, also leap to Augustine’s mind as coalescing with the formative events of day five (conf. IX.7.16).

Recapitulating Day Six

According to the hexaemeral template, Augustine should now describe how his threefold commendatio was reformed through following ecclesial exemplars. Day six begins that way (conf. XIII.21.29-31). So relating Monica’s story seems to break the progression until one looks closely at the format of her tale. Monica’s story unfolds sequentially under the template of how the three forms of commendatio are tamed by yielding to a moral exemplar (conf. IX.8.17-22; cf. conf. XIII.21.30-31).

In Monica’s case, the moral exemplar was an aged servant placed over her as a child (conf. IX.8.17). The servant reined in (frenabat) Monica’s first distortion of commendatio – the impulse to pursue pleasure over bodily health (conf. IX.8.17). By severely restricting access to water outside mealtimes, the servant sought to reform the impulse to drink by subjecting it to what was necessary for health (conf. IX.8.17). This corresponds to the reform of the first commendatio on day six (et pecora bona neque si manducauerint, abundantia, neque si non manducauerint [1 Cor 8,8], egentia..., conf. XIII.21.31).

The second commendatio achieves thematic focus initially as social distortion in the wicked slave whose cutting rebuke was unwittingly used as a providential cure for
Monica’s winebibbing (*conf. IX.8.18*). Then Augustine exemplifies Monica’s own taming of the second *commendatio* to society in the story of her great gentleness winning over the love of both Patricius and his mother (*conf. IX.9.19-20*). This corresponds to the second reform of *commendatio* on day six (*ita erunt in anima uiua bestiae bonae in mansuetudine actionis. mandasti enim dicens: in mansuetudine opera tua perfice et ab omni homine diligeris [Ecli 3,19], conf. XIII.21.31*)

Finally, Augustine relates how Monica tamed the third *commendatio* to knowledge (*conf. IX.9.21*). Augustine finds this reform manifested through the extraordinary restraint in handling gossip by which Monica proved a gifted peacemaker (*conf. IX.9.21*). By curbing curiosity, the impulse to temporal knowledge had been appropriately subjected to eternal ends of reconciliation between persons (*nihil tamen alteri de altera proderet, nisi quod ad eas reconciliandas ualeret., conf. IX.9.21*). Thus the third reform of *commendatio* on day six emerges in Monica’s story, albeit in a more active than contemplative mode.⁴⁹⁰

With the continence Augustine received in the garden and Monica developed through sequential taming of the three forms of *commendatio*, an account of Christian contemplation ought to follow in keeping with the hexaemeral template. The so called Ostia “vision” (*conf. IX.10.23-25*) naturally falls into the place of the contemplative emergence of reason on day six whereby humans begin to truly image God (*conf. XIII.22.32*). In truth, there is a glaring lack of any reference to vision in this episode. Rather tactile, auditory and culinary metaphors pervade the description of this ecclesial

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⁴⁹⁰ *et serpentes boni non perniciosi ad nocendum, sed astuti ad cauendum et tantum explorantes temporalem naturam, quantum sufficit, ut per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta [Rm 1,20] conspiciatur aeternitas. seruiunt enim rationi haec animalia, cum a progressu mortifero cohibita uiuunt et bona sunt., conf. XIII.21.31*
ascent (conf. IX.10.23-25). Perhaps we would do better to speak of the Ostia palpation? But we will consider the details of this episode in the context of other accounts of ecclesial contemplation below.

Contemplative apprehension of truth immediately leads Monica to act as a sound judge of temporal matters (conf. IX.10.26). Augustine recounts a direct connection between the Ostia ascent and Monica’s realization that the purpose of her earthly sojourn was completed with Augustine’s incorporation into the church catholic (conf. IX.10.26). Likewise, her sudden reversal of concern for the placement of her body after death signaled a new capacity to render proper judgment in things temporal (conf. IX.11.27-28).

Augustine’s capacity for judgment receives a more ambiguous but still fundamentally positive assessment (conf. IX.12.29-13.34). His confessed tears and the inward pain whence they flowed, come under the diagnostic category of a pre-passion rooted in residual consuetudo. The technical designation, uulnus recens, distinguishes Augustine’s source of tears from the full passion constituted by a changed belief (conf. IX.12.30; conf. IX.13.34). Thus in book nine Augustine recapitulates the events of the six days from beginning to end. Book ten constitutes an example of ecclesial contemplation that reverses the diastrophic direction of mediation found in Platonic contemplation. And so we turn now to an account of the distinctively ecclesial mode of contemplation.

Ecclesial Contemplation: Descending to the Scriptures to be Lifted to God

Christian contemplation, on Augustine’s telling, forms just one pole of a rhythmically sequential life pattern within the church. Within an individual’s life, action and contemplation rhythmically alternate (conf. XIII.12.13-31.46). But also within mater ecclesia certain people are variously gifted by God to engage in different degrees of charitable action and contemplation (conf. XIII.25.38-31.46). So any effort to extract contemplation from the ebbing and flowing of ecclesial life will necessarily entail a degree of distortion.

To minimize conceptual warping, we must begin by reaffirming the overall trajectory of ecclesial mystagogy and of contemplation within it. The Christian pathway to God follows a ‘down then up’ pattern of ascent, which marks it off from Platonist ascents (conf. I.17; IV.12.19492; V.3.5; VIII.2.4; XIII.12.13).

The Platonists, in their pride, refuse to acknowledge their fallen state and the inherent constraints of their penally mortal bodies (s. Dolbeau 26.2-40). While some people respond to their experience of bodily necessity with gross sensuality, the Platonists took a different tack.493 They refused to acknowledge the penal state of their


493 Notice that in conf. X.29.40-41.66 Augustine must navigate between opposite temptations in using each aspect of sensation (cf. e.g., itaque freni gutturis temperata relaxatone et constrictione tenendi sunt, conf. X.31.47) and even the commendatio to association (conf. X.38.63-39.64). Use of the created order can go astray both through too much indulgence, “loosening of the reigns,” and through contempt of things bodily, “holding the reigns too tightly” (conf. I.11.18; IX.8.17; X.31.47; c. Faust 22.28).
bodies, counted bodies *per se* as the problem and chose to live in contempt of their bodily condition even as it undermined their abortive ascents (*s. Dolbeau 26.2-40*).

The Christian ‘down then up’ pathway follows the road laid down by the humility of the incarnate one (*conf. I.17; IV.12.19; V.3.5; VIII.2.4; XIII.12.13*). This unique way follows a two-pronged approach that uses the very state of our fallen bodies to subordinate our active soul to God. Throughout the hexaemeral itinerary, submissive and expansive reading of scripture rhythmically alternates with specific forms of active obedience designed to transform our use of bodies (*conf. XIII.12.13-31.46*). Bowing under authority, first in repentant action (*conf. XIII.12.13-14.15*) and then in pious belief of scripture (*conf. XIII.15.16-16.19*), constitutes an initial descent from pride’s self-conceit. But the end of this journey finds the human person uplifted, without leaving humility behind, to a thoroughly integrated attachment to God and a capacity to see and love creation through God’s spirit (*conf. XIII.22.32-31.46*).

**Scriptural Mediation and the Character of Divine Action**

Before we extract the elements of the contemplative pole of ecclesial mystagogy, a closer look at Augustine’s understanding of scripture in the *Confessiones* will offer a proper vantage. For the words of scripture break in and start the process of ascent in Christian contemplation (*conf. IX.4.8-11; IX.10.23-26; X.6.8; XIII.18.22-19.25; XIII.22.32*). Although the scriptures mediate God’s presence to human beings, the consummation of their mediatory work is to bring us to an interaction unmediated by any creature (*conf. XIII.31.46*). At that point the condition described in Rom.1:20 is reversed and transformed human beings begin to see the creature through God’s Spirit (*conf. XIII.31.46*). So before examining the common features of Christian contemplation, we
consider here, in turn, Augustine’s understanding of the scriptures in terms of their temporality, witness to divine agency and intentionality, and, finally, the peculiar nature of their efficacy.

**The Temporality of Scripture**

The scriptures mediate the mercy of God in time (*quod firmasti super infirmitatem inferiorum populum, ubi suspicerent et cognoscerent misericordiam tuam temporaliter enuntiantem te, qui fecisti tempora*, conf. XIII.15.18). The note of temporality implies for Augustine affective mutability, which sparks the whole range of issues imbedded in his psychology of action (*uera rel. 18; 38; 65; gn. adu. Man. II.7; II.20; lib. arb. II.47; en. Ps. IV.3; conf. XI.29.39-31.41*). Affective mutation drives distention of the heart’s focus creating duplicity, vanity and impurity of motives in action (*s. 353.1; s. 177.6; s. 103.5; conf. VIII.10.22-24; XI.11.13*). The depths of human twistedness flow from affective attachment to things temporal.

And this linkage is clear in his description of those creatures positoned above the scriptures (conf. XIII.15.18). Angelic creatures read the same mercy immediately from God’s own face as his unchangeable plan (conf. XIII.15.18). But their mode of non-syllabic reading is explicitly situated within the realm of action – by choosing and loving they read God’s immutable plan (*eligendo enim et diligendo legunt ipsam incommutabilitatem consilii tui*, conf. XIII.15.18). Because their psychology of action is pure and stable, they live above the mutation, which would otherwise be theirs by

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494 Cf. discussion in chapter 2 above.
495 Cf. discussion in chapter 3 above.
Likewise, their contemplative ‘reading’ of God never ceases or dissipates \(\text{non clauditur codex eorum nec plicatur liber eorum, quia tu ipse illis hoc es et es in aeternum [Ps 47,15], quia super hoc firmamentum ordinasti eos, conf. XIII.15.18}.\)

For the sake of human weakness – the fragmentation of our capacity to focus on one thing in action and contemplation – scripture has been spread out above to mediate knowledge of God’s mercy in time \(\text{(quod firmasti super infirmitatem inferiorum populorum, ubi suspicerent et cognoscerent misericordiam tuam temporaliter enuntiantem te, qui fecisti tempora., conf. XIII.15.18)}.\) The penal state of our bodies makes a measure of distention and successivity necessary in human thought and action \(\text{(en. Ps. 4.6; ex. prop. Rom. 13-18.10-12; 36.5; 46.7; 50)}.\) \(\text{497}\) God, in the scriptures, has met our need with humble words that announce God’s character in sequential episodes we can follow in our infirmity \(\text{(conf. XIII.15.18)}.\)

**Divine Agency in Scripture**

Divine action in time is precisely what Augustine did not find in the *libri Platonicorum* \(\text{(conf. VII.9.13-15)}.\) \(\text{498}\) There he found no imminent activity of God to enlighten humans

\(\text{496} nimirum enim caelum caeli, quod in principio fecisti, creatura est aliqua intellectualis, quamquam nequaquam tibi, trinitati, coaeterna, particeps tamen aeternitatis tuae, ulde mutabilitatem suam praefaculata, felicissimae contemplationis tuae cohabet et sine ullo lapsu, ex quo facta est, inhaerendo tibi excedit omnem uolubilem uicissitudinem temporum., conf. XII.9.9}

\(\text{497} \text{Cf. chapter 4 above for discussion of necessity and mortality in Augustine’s psychology of action.}

\(\text{498} \text{...sed uerbum, deus, est lumen uerum, quod inluminat omnem hominem uenientem in hunc mundum [Jo 1,9]; et quia in hoc mundo erat, et mundus per eum factus est, et mundus eum non cognouit [Jo 1,10]. quia uero in sua propria uenit et sui eum non receperunt, quotquot autem receperunt eum, dedit eis potestatem filios dei fieri credentibus in nomine eius [Jo 1,11sq.], non ibi legi., (conf. VII.9.13).}

\(\text{... sed ex deo natus est; sed quia uerbum caro factum est et habituit in nobis [Jo 1,14], non ibi legi... sed quia semet ipsum exinaniuit formam serui accipiens, in similitudine hominum}
within the world, no incarnation, no self-sacrifice leading to exaltation, no mention of
God’s absolving love and the humility, which drove it all (conf. VII.9.13-15).

And there is no surprise that Augustine did not find it there. For not only did the
Platonists not know about the incarnation, they could not know it. For the Neo-Platonic
One is not an agent.499 And this very absence of divine agency leads directly to idolatry
in Augustine’s mind (conf. VII.9.14-15).500 The Platonist may have a true epistemic
concept of God as non-corporeal and thus immutable being, but in action – in things
pertaining to bodies – they remained subject in devotion to creatures above the Creator
(conf. VII.9.15). So Augustine’s summary flows into another critical allusion to Rom.
1:20ff and philosophical knowledge running aground on the rocks of idolatry (conf.

Neo-Platonism provided Augustine no account of ontologically downward
causation that is morally good (conf. VII.9.13-14). This is the gap at the center of Platonic
thought on Augustine’s reading. Emanation, when viewed from above, bears witness to

499 For the struggle in Middle Platonic thought to find a non-demiurgic philosophical
theology, the problematic that drove it and Plotinus’ novel success in this regard, cf.
Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press.
500 ...qui autem cothurno tamquam doctrinae sublimioris elati non audiunt dicentem:
discite a me, quoniam mitis sum et humilis corde, et inuenietis requiem animabus uestrís
[Mt 11,29], etsi cognoscunt deum, non sicut deum glorificant aut gratias agunt, sed
euanescunt in cogitationibus sui et obscuratur insipiens cor eorum; dicentes se esse
sapientes stulti facti sunt [Rm 1,22]. et ideo legebam ibi etiam immutatam gloriām
incorruptionis tuae in idola et varia simulacra, in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis
hominis et uolucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium [Rm 1,23], (conf. VII.9.14-15).
an excessiveness of goodness in the One (Enn. III.8.10; IV.8.6; V.4.2). But intentionality and thus morality cannot be ascribed to emanation, for the One remains wholly turned towards itself and its perfection fructifies by necessity (Enn. V.I.6; V.4.1). And for the entity descending from a higher ontological level, downward causality can only be motivated by τόλμη – audacity (Enn. V.1.1; VI.9.5; III.8.8).501 Pride creates. Audacity acts.

A Christian ontology, on the other hand, requires some account of morally good downward causality – or agency for the good – otherwise there is no conceptual room for a doctrine of creation distinct from sin, no room for the incarnation, no room for bodily activity as good.

Scripture, on Augustine’s reading, distinguishes two modes of intentional downward causality or agency. Pride is downward (or lateral) causality for the sake of feeling higher, or for the affective registration of power (cf. en. Ps. 1.1; lib. arb. III.76; conf. IV.15.27; s. 354.6; gn. litt. XI.14.18; s. Mai 101.2; ciu. XXI.16).502 And this is how

Augustine understands the *amor actionis* by which human beings fell (*mus. VI.40; lib. arb. III.76*). Humility, on the other hand, is downward causality for the sake of improving or aiding one’s neighbor, or for the sake of submitting to God and thereby being raised up to cling to God (*f. et symb. 6; exp. Gal. 15; exp. Gal. 24-25; diu. qu. 69.9; conf. I.11.17; III.8.16; c. Fel. 2.8*).

The incarnation unveils the very nature of divine downward causality as love and makes the clear distinction between prideful and humble agency possible (*disce a Christo, quod non discis ab homine: in illo est norma humilitatis; ad hunc qui accedit, prius in ipsa humilitate formatur, ut in exaltatione decreatur*, s. 68.11). Without this distinction, the Platonist cannot understand the Incarnation as anything other than another fallen soul.


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503 *generalis uero amor actionis, quae auertit a uero, a superbia proficiscitur, quo uitio deum imitari, quam deo servere anima maluit*, *mus. VI.40*

504 cf. ...*mitis itaque et humilis, tamquam uiam Christum sequens, debet esse animae actio tendentis ad requiem; non tamen pigra et desidiosa; ut cursum consummet, sicut scriptum est: in mansuetudine opera tua perfice* [Ecli 13,19], en. Ps. 114.6

deprivation (conf. VI.3.3). In retrospect, from the vantage of the incarnation, Augustine finds the social honor a temptation, capable of luring one away from humility in action. And now he understands the secret delights of scriptural contemplation, which thoroughly eclipse mere sexual pleasure (conf. VI.3.3). Augustine's basic categories for appraising proposed actions have been changed.

**Mediating Divine Intentionality in Scripture**

The scriptures provide a mediation of God more adequate than the formality of bodies for beginning an ascent. Of course, the superiority of scripture does not turn so much on a superior capacity to produce formal knowledge of God. Bodily creation mediates formality sufficiently to provide knowledge of God through things made (conf. VII.17.23; X.6.9). Through contemplation of created forms, God, as non-corporeal and immutable being, is discovered as the necessary source behind our latent idea of immutable goodness. Indeed, there is nothing more to be learned about non-corporeal being per se even in the resurrected life to come (gn. llt. XII.28.56).506

But the scriptures’ enunciation of God’s acts mediates divine intentionality, the *consilium dei* (conf. XIII.15.18), in a way mere formality never could (conf. VII.9.13-14).507

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507 About 411-412, Augustine uses the striking image from Ps. 22, of Christ’s heart melting like wax, to convey this thought to Honoratus: *...aut certe profundum sacramentum nos intellegere voluit, ut cordis sui nomine significaret scripturas suas, ubi eius utique latebat consilium, quod tunc apertum est, cum ea, quae de illo prophetata fuerunt, passus implectit. solutae sunt ergo scripturae eius in his, quae perfecta sunt aduentu eius, natiuitate, passione, resurrectione, glorificatione. quis enim ea iam non*
The economy of providence, ever rooted in God’s eternally stable love and choice, resonate through the pages (cf. also *ep. 140.36; en. Ps. 105.35; en. Ps. 118.15.1; s. Dolbeau 22.16*). Divine acts of mercy in time and their narration in scripture constitute so many mediations of being (*ubi suspicerent et cognoscerent misericordiam tuam temporaliter enuntiantem te, conf. XIII.15.18*). But theirs is a fuller mediation. For the scriptures not only unveil incorporeal being behind the formality of a creature, they also yield, to those so graced, insights into God’s unchanging mercy and how his eternal plan appointed different uses of those creatures at different times (*conf. XIII.18.22*).

Scripture’s mediation, when complete, obviates itself (*conf. XIII.15.18*). When God’s redemption culminates in resurrection bodies at the end of the ecclesial journey through time, scripture will be rolled up having served its purpose of leading to the eternally uttered Word (*conf. XIII.15.18*). So that is the first contrast Augustine would convey, the scriptures mediate more of God than bodily forms do.

**Humble Efficacy of Scripture**

The scriptures possess a transformative power otherwise unknown and inaccessible. Formal knowledge via Platonic ascent does not suffice to transform human psychology of action. Augustine tried it and found out (*conf. VII.17.23-20.26*). Scripture’s mediation of divine mercy, on the other hand, proves effective for transforming the constituents of human action (*conf. VIII.12.29-30; IX.1.1*). In other words, Platonic ascent does not produce continence (*conf. VII.18.24-21.27; VIII.1.1-2*), but contemplation of scripture

*intellegit in prophetis, quando usque ad intellectum etiam carnalis multitudinis peruenerunt?, ep. 140.36*
coupled with active obedience to precept and rite channels the grace that produces continent impulses (conf. XIII.21.29-31).

Scripture’s unique power flows from the nature of divine action. Words of scripture are infused with God’s own character and bound up with the incarnation in Augustine’s mind, because the scriptures too are an expression of humble, loving downward causality (conf. VI.5.8; s. Guelf. 32.5).508

The very syllables and diction of scripture are implicated.509 For words, after the fall, are primary ways of moving souls (mus. VI.41).510 To beat the air syllabically is an act of downward causality and thus comes in two modes – prideful and humble.

Late Roman rhetoric, as a means of manipulating persons verbally, stands for Augustine as the paradigmatic example of deceitful pride in speech (conf. I.17.27-18.29; III.3.6; VIII.5.10; IX.2.2).511 The secular rhetor plies his craft by formulating speech to play off the distortions in human character (as encapsulated in the three forms of

508...quo et omnibus ad legendum esset in promptu et secreti sui dignitatem in intellectu profundiore seruaret, uerbis apertissimis et humillimo genere loquendi se cunctis praebens et exercens intentionem eorum, qui non sunt leues corde, ut exciperet omnes populari sinu et per angusta foramina paucos ad te traiiceret, multo tamen plures, quam si nec tanto apice auctoritatis emineret nec turbas gremio sanctae humilitatis hauriret (conf. VI.5.8).

...doctor humilitatis sermonem et opere: sermones enim semper ab initio creaturea numquam tacuit, per angelos, per prophetas, docere hominem humilitatem; docere dignatus est etiam exemplo suo. (s. Guelf. 32.5).


commendatio). So rhetorical styles manipulate the sensual dimension of language that is capable of giving sensual pleasure on its own (ord. II.33-34; conf. I.18.28-19). Flattery and shaming steer persons by leveraging what is twisted in their impulses to association (conf. VI.6.9). Irrelevant displays of temporal knowledge feed human curiosity and create a false sense of confidence in the rhetor. The secular rhetor aims to bend human action to his will, regardless of propriety or truth (nam cum per artem rhetoricam et uera suadeantur et falsa..., doc. Chr. VI.2.3).

In the Christian scriptures Augustine found a different mode of speech, an alternate way of moving souls for which his diastrophic education had never prepared him (conf. III.5.9). In the scriptures Augustine encountered a single face of chaste eloquence (et apparuit mihi una facies eloquiorum castorum, conf. VII.21.27). Style and substance fuse inseparably in scripture (ueniebant in animum meum simul cum uerbis, quae diligebam, res etiam, quas neglegebam; neque enim ea dirimere poteram., conf. V.21.24). Scripture does not employ any sensuous enticements or excitatory language...

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512 ...cum pararem recitare imperatori laudes, quibus plura mentirer, et mentienti faueretur ab scientibus easque curas anhelaret cor meum et cogitationum tabificarum febris aestuaret, conf. VI.6.9
513 For a humble mode of scriptural speech, matched to the weakness of our condition, cf. also in this period, trin I.2 (likely composed circa 400)... rebus enim quae in creatura reperiuntur solet scriptura diuina uelut infantilia oblectamenta formare quibus infirmorum ad quaerenda superiora et inferiora deserenda pro suo modulo tamquam passibus moueretur aspectus..., but the whole chapter is relevant. Also consider, gn. litt. V.3.6... si autem nondum possis, haec relinquas conspicienda valentibus, tu autem cum scriptura non deserente infirmitatem tuam et materno incessu tecum tardiis ambulante proficias, quae sic loquitur, ut altitudine superbos inrideat, profunditate adtentos terreat, ueritate magnos pascat, affabilitate paruulos nutriat... cf. also Simpl. II.2.1; gn. litt. V.6.19. ep. 137.18.
514 Cf., Augustine’s later description of the eloquence indigenous to the Christian scriptures, ...et in quibus forte locis agnoscitur a doctis, tales res dicuntur, ut uerba, quibus dicuntur, non a dicente adhibita sed ipsis rebus uelut sponte subiuncta uideantur, quasi sapientiam de domo sua, id est pectore sapientis, intellegas procedere, et tamquam inseparabilem famulum etiam non uocatam sequi eloquentiam., (doctr. chr. IV.10).
extraneous to the ideas expressed. Rather, the very lucidity of truth delights as the ideas are humbly conveyed without pretense or manipulation.\footnote{Of course, the sermo humilis becomes a standard Christian rhetorical approach in the years following Augustine, see Auerbach, Erich. 1965. Literary Language & its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. Bollingen Series, 74. New York: Pantheon Books. For Augustine’s own usage, cf. agon., which according to Augustine (retr. II.3) is written in the humble style.}

Augustine finds in the words of Ps. 11:7 a description of God’s redemptive speech. Chaste eloquence refers to a form of speech in which conceptual beauty shines through without ulterior motivations to deceive or manipulate. The Christian scriptures provide the only source of words without any duplicity whatsoever.\footnote{Of course, this conviction pulses at the heart of Augustine’s early conflict with Jerome over the interpretation of Gal. 2:11ff, cf. esp. exp. Gal. 15; ep. 28; ep. 75; ep. 82.} In their very simplicity and unalloyed honesty, the scriptures possess a capacity to destroy the dissimulative strategies of pride (neque enim nouimus alios libros ita destruentes superbiam, ita destruentes inimicum et defensorem resistentem reconciliationi tuae defendendo peccata sua., conf. XIII.15.17), and persuade human beings to adopt a similar humility in their mode of speaking and devoting (non noui, domine, non noui alia tam casta eloquia, quae sic mihi persuaderent confessionem et lenirent ceruicem meam iugo tuo et inuitarent colere te gratis., conf. XIII.15.17).\footnote{Cf. Augustine’s account of humble speech and the need to explain its reliance upon prayer rather than voice when catechizing rhetors, cat. rud. 13.}
**How Christian Contemplation Works**

We turn at last to a collative analysis of the constituents of ecclesial contemplation. The Christian contemplative begins her ascent by reading scripture already enmeshed in a twofold mediation that contrasts with Paul’s critique in Rom. 1:20. The submission to mediated understanding of both God and creatures marks the initial descent in order to be lifted up in contemplation.

**Scriptural Mediation of God and Creatures**

First, in ecclesial contemplation, scripture mediates knowledge of both God above and bodies below. The mediation of divine knowledge by now is unsurprising. Meditation on scripture draws Augustine up to *id ipsum* at Cassiciacum (*conf.* IX.4.8-11). And the colloquy on the eternal life of the saints, by which Augustine and Monica rise at Ostia, implicitly draws from a reading of Phil. 3:13 among other texts (*conf.* IX.10.23-26).518 And throughout his synopsis of the ecclesial program of human formation from the hexaemeron, Augustine describes contemplation of scripture as drawing one up to various degrees of epistemic and affective engagement with God culminating in contemplation of the Trinity (*conf.* XIII.18.22-19.25; *conf.* XIII.22.32).

But Augustine also conceives the beginning of the mystagogic journey as a humble submission to scripturally mediated knowledge of creatures as well. So in *Confessiones X* Augustine exemplifies Christian contemplation in detail and at length (*conf.* X.6.8-28.39). The ascent begins when God’s word strikes Augustine’s heart and

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renders the accompanying visible witness of created bodies audible (*percussisti cor meum uerbo tuo, et amaui te. sed et caelum et terra et omnia, quae in eis sunt, ecce undique mihi dicunt, ut te amem, nec cessant dicere omnibus, ut sint inexcusabiles [Rm 1,20]... alioquin caelum et terra surdis loquuntur laudes tuas, conf. X.6.8)*. Likewise, the *sero te amaui* encomium concluding his contemplative ascent in book ten involves a transposition of Augustine’s usual order of the senses so that hearing comes before seeing (*uocasti et clamasti et rupisti surditatem meam, coruscasti, splenduisti et fugasti caecitatem meam, conf. X.27.38*). Of course, the reader should register the departure from Plotinus’ notion of mnemonic beauty, which assumes an immediate accessibility of formality in bodies (*Enn. I.6.2*). For the Augustine of the *Confessiones*, God’s word through scripture must mediate the contemplative’s perception of formal beauty in creaturely bodies for a salvific ascent to ensue (*conf. X.6.8; conf. X.27.38; conf. XIII.31.46*).

**Divine Presence Mediates the Scriptures**

But a second form of entwined mediation also helps initiate the ascent. All the descriptions of Christian ascent begin already in the presence of God (*conf. IX.4.8; IX.10.23; X.5.7; XIII.18.22-19.25*). So God mediates human interaction with scripture, even as his scriptures mediate human interaction with God. More precisely, God opens the inside of the scriptures to view for frail humans through the mediator, the God-man Christ Jesus (*uide, pater, aspice et uide et approba, et placeat in conspectu [Ps 18,15] misericordiae tuae inuenire me gratiam ante te, ut aperiantur pulsanti mihi interiora*).

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519 Πάλιν οὖν ἀναλαβόντες λέγωμεν τι δήτα ἐστι τὸ ἐν τοῖς σώμασι καλὸν πρῶτον. Ἐστι μὲν γὰρ τι καὶ βολὴ τῇ πρώτῃ αἰσθητὸν γίνομενον καὶ η ὑψηλὴ ὀπίσω συνείσα λέγει καὶ ἐπιγνώσα ἀποδέχεται καὶ οἶνον συναρμόττεται... (*Enn. I.6.2*)
sermonum tuorum. obsecro per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum filium tuum, conf. XI.2.4).

Thus at Cassiciacum Augustine carries on his soliloquy on Ps. 4 coram te (conf. IX.4.8). And later, at Ostia, Augustine and Monica begin their conversational ascent by searching for the referent to the scriptural promise of resurrection, and do so apud praesentem veritatem quod tu es (conf. IX.10.23). In his hexaemeral interpretation of human formation the Spirit comes into play with the turn to scripture (conf. XIII.18.22-19.25). So while the ecclesial ascent requires humbling onself to accept mediated knowledge of God through scriptures, the very instrument of mediation requires the further mediation of God’s Spirit to enable human understanding. With layers of necessary mediation, we are far away in Christian contemplation from the NeoPlatonic philosopher who is always savior of himself (abstin. 11.49.2).

Affective Engagement with God and Scripture

The presence of God and his grace instantiated in scripture engage the Christian contemplative affectively, not only cognitively (conf. IX.4.8; conf. IX.10.24; conf. X.6.8; conf. XIII.18.22-19.24). Familiar affection and fear mixed with exultant hope stir in

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521 ὁ ὀντός φιλόσοφος πανταχόθεν σοφίζων ἑαυτόν. (abstin. 11.49.2).
522 The twofold mediation, whereby the scriptures mediate knowledge of God and God mediates interaction with the scriptures, and the affective engagement may well be interconnected. Within a few years of composing the Confessiones, Augustine begins his grand de trinitate. Among the sections composed near the time of Confessiones, book eight holds special importance for our theme. For Augustine begins by offering two rather Platonic ascents to a non-bodily notion of God, which he judges to be insufficient (trin. VIII.2-3; trin. VIII.4-5) precisely because we have to cling in love to this God we seek to know (trin. VIII.6). Thus he initiates a dialectical inquiry into the relation between knowing and loving (trin. VIII.6-9), which leads to Augustine’s ultimate
Augustine as he begins his first Christian ascent at Cassiciacum (quomodo mecum et mihi coram te de familiari affectu animi mei. inhorruit timendo ibidemque inferbui sperando et exultando in tua misericordia [Ps 30,8], pater, conf. IX.4.8-9). Paradoxical combinations of affection, like mingled fear and hope, mark this engagement as different from the typical flux of sequential affective mutation produced by moving from one object of perception to another (conf. IX.4.8-9). Rather, affective registration of the God whose excessive goodness inspires the descriptive paradoxes of conf. I.4.4 now produces an emotional register unlike the impress of any temporal object (conf. IX.4.8-9).

judgment that humble love is God and loving produces introspective knowledge of God in way that ascents cannot (trin. VIII.10-12).

Note esp., quapropter qui quaerunt deum per istas potestates quae mundo praesunt uel partibus mundi auferuntur ab eo longeque iactantur non interuallis locorum sed diversitate affectuum; exterius enim conantur ire et interiora sua deserunt quibus interior est deus. Itaque etiamsi aliquam sanctam caelitem potestatem uel audierint uel utcumque cogitauerint, facta magis eius appetunt quae humana miratur infirmitas; non imitantur pieta tem qua diuina requies comparatur. malunt enim superbe hoc posse quod angelus quam devote hoc esse quod angelus. non enim sanctus quisquam potestate sua gaudet sed eius a quo habet posse quidquid congruerer potest, et nouit potentius esse coniungi omnipotenti pia voluntate quam propria voluntate posse quod contremescant qui talia non possunt. itaque ipse dominus Iesus Christus talia faciens ut mirantes doceret ampliora et temporalibus insolitis intentos atque suspensos ad aeterna atque interiora conuerteret: unite, inquit, ad me qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego vos reficiam; tollite iugum meum super uos [Mt 11,28sq.]. et non dixit: discite a me quia triduana mortuus suscite, sed ait: discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde [Mt 11,29]. potentior est enim et tutor solidissima humilitas quam ventosissima celsitudo. et ideo sequitur dicens: et inuenietis requiem animabus uestris [Mt 11,29]. dilectio enim non inflatur [1 Cor 13,4], et deus dilectio est [1 Io 4,8;1 Io 4,16], et fideles in dilectione adquiescunt illi [Sap 3,9] revocati ab strepitu qui foris est ad gaudia silentia. ecce, deus dilectio est [1 Io 4,8; 1 Io 4,16]. ut quid imus et currimus in sublimia caelorum et ima terrarum quaerentes eum qui est apud nos si nos esse uelimus apud eum?, trin. VIII.11. For the dating, cf. Du Roy, Jean-Baptiste. 1962. “L’expérience de l’amour et l’intelligence de la foi trinitaire selon saint Augustin” Recherches augustiniennes 2, pp. 415-445.
So the Christian contemplative brings his affectivity into his knowing of God. Monica and Augustine at Ostia stretched themselves by burning affect into being itself (erigentes nos ardentiore affectu in idipsum, conf. IX.10.24). The ascent of book ten begins with God’s word piercing Augustine’s heart so that he falls in love (percussisti cor meum uerbo tuo, et amaui te, conf. X.6.8). At the beginning and end of his depiction of the first bout of contemplation on hexaemeral day four, Augustine reiterates the affective connection of the Christian contemplative to the scriptures and their non-temporal referent above (conf. XIII.18.22; XIII.19.24). So contemplation begins by clinging to the scriptural firmament (cohaerentes firmamento [Gn 1,14] scripturae tuae, conf. XIII.18.22). And the successful illumination of the contemplative, whereby he becomes a luminary in the firmament, cannot happen without treasuring scripture and thereby placing one’s heart there (ut fiant et tibi luminaria in firmamento caeli [Gn 1,14]: quod non fiet, nisi fuerit illic cor tuum [Mt 6,21]; quod item non fiet, nisi fuerit illic thesaurus tuus [Mt 6,21], conf. XIII.19.24). Of course, Augustine understands the treasure that determines the heart’s location as referentially of present awareness (s. dom. m. II.44). The pre-differentiated heart, and its referencing, always includes the affections along with the cognitive and volitional aspects of the self.\footnote{Note that the purgative containment of affect is prerequisite for Plotinian contemplation. One cannot contemplate while aware of affections, Enn. I..1.10-13; I.2; I.4; III.6.5. Augustine’s ecclesial contemplation here includes more of the self than Plotinus would allow.}

\footnote{Again, the best place for an exposition of the haereo word group is Schlabach, Gerald. 2001. \textit{For the Joy Set Before Us: Augustine and Self-denying Love}. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press.}

\footnote{Cf. discussion in chapter three, “Augustine’s Invention of the Heart.”}
Series of Three Ascending Distinctions:

Sensible-Intelligible, Temporal Dispensations and Trinitarian Understanding

Next scriptural meditation leads the contemplative through a series of three ascending distinctions. The first distinction made in reading scripture contemplatively is that between sensible and intelligible realities (conf. XIII.18.22). By Augustine’s account this is the crowning achievement of the Platonists as they rise to know God as non-corporeal substance through things made (conf. VII.17.23). The Platonists arduously achieve their ascent through the formal aspect of creatures. But the Christian ascent, graced with scripture’s mediation, begins here and proceeds well beyond.

The second stage of contemplative ascent encompasses temporal distinctions in light of God’s eternity. Meditating on scripture, the contemplative learns to differentiate God’s eternal counsel from the periodic standards of different temporal epochs (conf. XIII.18.22; cf. also, c. Faust. 26.7; en. Ps. 105.35; 118.15.1; s. Dolbeau 22.16). Augustine’s critique of the Manichees’ mistaken allegations of immorality in the patriarchs shows this sort of distinction at work (conf. III.7.13-10.18).526

This distinction also leads to a new understanding of the nature of the old life and the new life (conf. XIII.18.22). The old life, awash in unrestrained affective flux, found moral focus impossible because its distance from the eternal counsel gave it nothing stable to which it could attach itself.

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Obviously, this moves well beyond the Platonic contemplative ascent from body to form to an idea of immutable being (conf. VII.17.23). Platonists see there is something beyond body and time, so their knowledge stretches from creatures up to God (conf. VII.17.23). But they know nothing of divine agency – the downward causation named in the scriptures as humility and love. Consequently, they cannot distinguish relations between eternity and specific temporal epochs, because these epochs are rooted in divine intentions coterminous with divine agency (conf. VII.18.24-21.27). The specific failure of Platonic ascent in this regard is highlighted by Augustine’s incapacity to discern the incarnation of Christ immediately following his vision of id quod est (conf. VII.18.24-19.25).

The serial progression from distinguishing sensible and intelligible realities to discerning the relation between temporal and eternal clarifies the itinerary of the Christian ascents in the Confessiones. So the move inward in Augustine’s first scriptural ascent through Psalm 4 results in being pierced with sorrow, sacrificing his old self (the very act the philosophers of conf. V.3.4 refused to do), and meditating while hoping for the renovation of the new self (intus in cubili, ubi compunctus eram, ubi sacrificaueram mactans uetustatem meam et inchoata meditatione renouationis meae sperans in te, conf. IX.4.10).

At Ostia, Monica and Augustine ascend first by rising in affection above sensation and bodies, and then ascend more inwardly cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua (conf. IX.10.24). Progression from the sensible-intelligible distinction to divine agency leads further into the human mind and beyond, for God’s activity of renovation leads through the internal reality of temporal mutation and beyond (et uenimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, conf. IX.10.24).
The otherwise puzzling trajectory of the ascent in *Confessiones* X.6.8-27.38 also follows this pattern. Through memory, Augustine rises first through the distinctions between various levels of sensibles and intelligibles (*conf. X.8.12-12.19*). This first stage, in detail, encompasses a journey through sensation to *phantasia* and *phantasmata* (*conf. X.8.12-8.14*). This leads to the *phantasms* of the self (*conf. X.8.15*). Then rises higher within intelligible things through the liberal disciplines and numbers (*conf. X.9.16-12.19*). Augustine then turns to the distinction between times by examining *affectiones animi* in the form of recalling acts of remembering, forgetting, and permutations thereof (*conf. X.14.21-23.34*). Then Augustine rises beyond all mutation to God in and unchangeably above his mind in no-place and no-time (*conf. X.24.35-27.38*). Ironically, the Christian contemplative is carried beyond the Platonist by attending to temporal events – both historical and psychic – that unfold under the decree of God’s eternal counsel.

But a third level of discernment follows in the highest stage of Christian contemplation (*conf. XIII.22.32*). Through scripture the graced adept comes to understand the threeness and oneness of God and of human beings (*conf. XIII.22.32*). Renovation into the image of God grants understanding of the single will of God, named as a threefold *quod bonum et beneplacitum et perfectum* [*Rm 12,2*] by Paul (*conf. XIII.22.32*). Elsewhere, Paul says, we are singularly renewed *in agnitione dei secundum imaginem eius, qui creavit eum* [*Col 3,10*] (*conf. XIII.22.32*). Pondering Genesis 1:26-27, Augustine recalls an alteration between plural and singular both in God’s creative action of human beings and in the description of humanity’s modes of imaging. So renewal into knowledge of the plural and singular Creator leads the contemplative to distinguish the unity in trinity and trinity in unity (*conf. XIII.22.32*). And from this renewed
understanding of God and the human mind, three in one, proper judgment now becomes possible (conf. XIII.22.32-23.33).

Perhaps a word would be appropriate now concerning the anthropological trinities in Augustine’s thought. Augustine finds within the created order a series of ascending trinities, which constitute so many vestiges bespeaking the Triune nature of their maker. At the lowest created level, bodily creation that mutates in time and space, all things are fashioned according to mensura et numerus et pondus (cf. lib. arb. II.24; gn adu. Man. I.26; I.32; mus. VI.56-58; Simpl. I.2.22; II.6; conf. V.4.7; c. Faust. 20.7; 21.6; 22.78, 89). The Trinitarian structure of creation first struck Augustine in Rome through reflection on the a quo, per quem, in quo of Paul in Rom. 11:36 (an. quant. 34, 77; mor. I.24). But soon the book of Wisdom declared this to Augustine in a more precise way and provided his most characteristic triad for bodily being (Wis. 11:21). In pursuing the roots of action in the human soul, Augustine found among the Roman Stoics a triadic account of transcendental commendatio to bodily-preservation, knowledge and association (conf. I.20.31). And perversions of these inclinations to action mapped perfectly onto the three Johannine lusts (I John. 2:16). Finally, within the mens as image of God, Augustine in the Confessiones begins to discern an analogous relation between

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529 Cf. discussion in chapter 5 above.
the Trinity and three acts – *esse, nosse, uelle* (conf. XIII.11.12).

So while Augustine is exegetically convinced that the human mind must be in the image of both the trinity and unity of God, his development of a psychological analogy remains embryonic at best in comparison with the grand developments of the *de trinitate* (conf. XIII.11.12; XIII.22.32).

**Oblivion Entailed in Overcoming Distention**

Turning to descriptions of the culmination of Christian contemplation, we find a distinct portrayal of the graced apex. Augustine depicts the ecclesial contemplative as partially transcending the temporal dissipation of sin’s condition. Platonists rise above body, but remain in sin (conf. VII.20.26). In other words, they achieve epistemic certainty through conceptualization of non-bodily being, but do not experience transformation in impulses to action (cf. also *trin. VIII.11*). Conversely, in contemplation, the disciple plodding along the ecclesial way receives partial foretastes of release from the affective mutation caused by sinful attachments (conf. IX.10.25). And those graced foretastes provide further power to release temporal attachments, thus furthering the transformation of active impulses (conf. XIII.12.13-14.15; XIII.17.20-21; XIII.20.26-28).531

The critical step of attaching one’s heart to eternal God comes through releasing the past (conf. IX.4.11; conf. IX.10.23; conf. X.14.21-22). Forgetting the past, and perhaps even oneself, proves crucial because attention to memory, like anticipation of things to come.
come, distends or dissipates cordial focus (conf. XI.26.39).\textsuperscript{532} So releasing attention to
the past is prerequisite for a total concentration of present awareness on things eternal
(lib. arb. III.76).\textsuperscript{533}

This oblivion of past pursuits marks the Christian ascents in Augustine’s mind.
Ascending through Psalm 4, Augustine realizes that rest in God requires forgetting the
distortions of past action, just as it means turning from all present pursuits of things
other than God (\textit{et in te requies obliuiscens laborum omnium, quoniam nullus alius tecum
nec ad alia multa adipiscenda, quae non sunt quod tu, conf. IX.4.11}). At Ostia the ascent
proceeds by forgetting the past (\textit{praeterita obliuiscentes, conf. IX.10.23}). And this
concern lurks in the background of Augustine’s discussion of affections being ‘tasted’
only in the present (\textit{conf. X.14.21-22}). If affections past necessarily impinged on present
awareness then cordial focus, even momentarily, would be impossible.

Two caveats should be kept in mind. First, Augustine describes the graced
forgetfulness of his ascents precisely in the midst of confessing his past. Moreover, his
confession is at once his service to God and neighbor (\textit{conf. X.1.1-4.6}) and his alternative
to presumptive ascents (\textit{conf. VII.20.26}). Second, Augustine understands a measured
alteration between contemplation and action to be normative in the ecclesial way (\textit{conf.
XIII.12.13-31.46}). Memory, on Augustine’s telling, is entailed within sequential action

\textsuperscript{532} \textit{ecce distentio est uita mea, et me suscepit dextera tua [Ps 17,36; Ps 62,9] in domino
meo, mediatore filio hominis inter te unum et nos multos, in multis per multa, ut per eum
apprehendam, in quo et apprehensus sum [Phil 3,12], et a ueteribus diebus conligar
sequens unum, praeterita oblitus [Phil 3,13], non in ea quae futura et transitura sunt, sed
in ea quae ante sunt non distentus, sed extentus [Phil 3,13], non secundum distentionem,
sed secundum intentionem sequor ad palmam supernae uocationis [Phil 3,14]... (conf.
XI.26.39).

\textsuperscript{533} Likely composed within two years of \textit{Confessiones}, cf. esp... \textit{ut autem in
contemplatione summae sapientiae... melior est autem cum obliuiscitur sui prae caritate
incommutabilis dei uel se ipsum penitus in illius comparatione contemnit..., lib. arb. III.76.
and thus common to humans and beasts (conf. X.17.26). So forgetting past and future constitutes a rhythmic moment of total cordial focus that does its work within a larger life of humble love.

The Cordial Touch: Graced Concentration Transcends Temporality

Having left the past in momentary oblivion, total concentration of the heart on eternal hope unifies the self beyond temporal variation (i.e. affective mutation) for a moment. By purifying the soul of any other appetite, God constitutes the self in singular focus upon himself (quoniam nullus alius tecum nec ad alia multa adipiscenda, quae non sunt quod tu, sed tu, domine, singulariter in spe constituisti me [Ps 4,10], conf. IX.4.10).

A handful of terms demarcate the culmination of Christian contemplation from Platonic vision. Whereas the Platonic ascent terminates in a differentiated act of intellectual vision (et peruenit ad id, quod est in ictu trepidantis aspectus. tunc uero inuisibilia tua per ea quae facta sunt intellecta [Rm 1,20] conspexi, conf. VII.17.23), the Ostia ascent climaxes in a total reference of the heart best described through the metaphor of touching (attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis, conf. IX.10.24). The heart always refers to the pre-differentiated totality of present awareness.534

Likewise, the avoidance of descriptors that would assimilate their Ostia ascent to purely intellectual vision is striking in this context (conf. IX.10.23-24). Augustine prefers the language of touching (conf. IX.10.23-24). Recalling his criticism of Platonic contemplation, Augustine’s diction becomes pregnant with meaning. The Platonists rise in a presumptive manner because they are content to know without dwelling (conf. VII.20.26), to see without holding (conf. VII.21.27). Touching at the height of Christian

534 Cf. chapter three.
contemplation is not yet dwelling or holding. But it seeks to be. And it draws closer than mere intellectual vision, while still lacking the capacity to dwell and cling without end.

So at the beginning of his transition from memory to God in the ascent of book ten, Augustine declares his intention to touch and cleave as much as possible (**transibo et istam uim meam, quae memoria uocatur, uolens te attingere, unde attingi potes, et inhaerere tibi, unde inhaereri tibi potest., conf. X.17.26**).

Three times Augustine uses the language of touching eternal wisdom or truth in the Ostia ascent (**conf. IX.10.24-25**). He and Monica travel beyond the summit of their minds in order to touch the region of inexhaustible abundance where God feeds Israel in eternity with the food of truth (**et uenimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, ut attingeremus regionem ubertatis indeficientis, ubi pascis Israhel in aeternum ueritate pabulo, conf. IX.10.24**). When mother and son actually arrive they touch it briefly with a total concentration of heart (**attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis, conf. IX.10.24**). Finally, they talk about how they had presently ‘extended’ themselves and in a flash of thought touched eternal wisdom dwelling above all things (**sicut nunc extendimus nos et rapida cogitatione attingimus aeternam sapientiam super omnia manentem, conf. IX.10.25**). So touching, more than just seeing, distinctively names the culmination of Christian contemplation (**conf. IX.10.24-25; X.17.26**).

In the final Ostia reference to touching eternal wisdom, another terminological distinction surfaces, which helps to name the goal of Christian contemplation. The total concentration of heart (**conf. IX.10.24**) evidently coincides with an act of **extensio** (**conf. IX.10.23&25**). Augustine distinguishes mere **intentio** and its perverse counterpart **distentio** from the act of **extensio** (**conf. XI.29.39; conf. XII.15.22-16.23; s. 255.6**). Indeed,
Augustine associates this term *extensio* and its cognates with an eschatological resolution of distension in the world to come (*conf. XI.29.39; conf. XII.16.23*).

For Augustine *intentio* names the heart’s capacity to stretch out in awareness and desire, without reference to direction. When this cordial focus is dissipated by attachment to temporal things, *intentio* becomes *distensio*. But proper *intentio* focused without alloy on eternal God becomes *extensio* (*conf. XI.29.39; conf. XII.16.23*). The eschatological resolution of temporally dissipated focus comes through forgetting the past and stretching one’s cordial tension, not toward the future, which would only distend, but to the eternal alone (*praeterita oblitus [Phil 3,13], non in ea quae futura et transitura sunt, sed in ea quae ante sunt non distentus, sed extentus [Phil 3,13], non secundum distentionem, sed secundum intentionem sequor ad palmam supernae uocationis [Phil 3,14], conf. XI.29.39*).

Christian contemplation, according to the Ostia account, provides a partial foretaste of the *extensio* by which redeemed humanity will one day stretch without interval or difficulty to eternal wisdom and, thereby, live beyond sin, death or dissipation (*sicut nunc extendimus nos et rapida cogitatione attingimus aeternam sapientiam super omnia manentem, conf. IX.10.25*). So while the Platonist rises to a vision of being beyond bodies, the Christian rises to a graced, proleptic experience of life beyond sin’s affective mutations. Indeed, Augustine says as much (*si continuetur hoc... nonne hoc est: intra in gaudium domini tui [Mt 25,21]?*, *conf. IX.10.25*).

**Foretastes of Joy**

Christian contemplation of the scriptures leads to a proleptic foretaste of life beyond sin, so there should be no surprise that every description of scriptural contemplation in
the *Confessiones* conspicuously presents joy as the outcome. Touching eternal wisdom produces joy in the truth.

Augustine offers a retrospective estimation of those occasions in which he watched on as Ambrose read silently (*conf. VI.3.3*). Now he knows that the mouth of Ambrose’s heart must have been filled with ‘tasty joy’ as he chewed the bread of eternal wisdom (*et occultum os eius, quod erat in corde eius, quam sapida gaudia de pane tuo ruminaret, conf. VI.3.3*). Augustine’s own first scriptural ascent at Cassiciacum brings sweetness and joy in his heart (*conf. IX.4.10*). Of course, we have already seen his description of the Ostia ascent and a foretaste of the eschatological fruition of entering into the joy of the Lord (*si continuetur hoc... nonne hoc est: intra in gaudium domini tui [Mt 25,21]?, conf. IX.10.25*).535 The ascent in book ten describes the goal of *beata uita* as *gaudium in ueritate* without interruption (*conf. X.20.29-23.34*).536

**Escaping from Rom. 1:20**

Given the prominent use of Paul’s analysis to critique the iniquitous knowledge of various pagan philosophers, one would expect some repositioning of ecclesial

535 Contemplative experiences remain proleptic because resurrection bodies are a necessary condition for continuous contemplation (*conf. IX.10.26*). Only when God lifts the penalty of bodily mortality, which produces ignorance and difficulty, will human beings be capable of uninterrupted contemplation amid simultaneous action. The fragmentation of our impulses to action continues to limit our capacity to contemplate. This disintegration is itself rooted in a penal condition of body. So the pinnacle of Christian contemplation naturally flows into a reassessment of residual perversion with our impulses to action, or a statement of hope concerning the transformed body to come (cf. *conf. X.29.40-43.70*).

536 By the end of the hexaemeral itinerary, a further source of joy emerges. Not only do we find joy in contemplation of the scriptural firmament above, we find joy in the active obedience whereby scripture’s precepts are inscribed in the lives of other human beings. All of this nourishes, for the soul feeds on what gives it joy. And thus active and contemplative persons mutually nourish each other. (*conf. XIII.25.38-27.42*)
contemplation vis-à-vis Rom. 1:20. That expectation is not disappointed (conf. IX.10.25; X.6.7; X.6.10; XIII.21.31).

The Ostia ascent describes the eternal life of the saints, which Monica and Augustine have just sampled, as an explicit reversal of Rom. 1:20 modes of contemplation (et loquatur ipse solus non per ea, sed per se ipsum, conf. IX.10.25).

Likewise, the end result of ecclesial formation unveiled in the hexaemeron, with its rhythmic alternation between action and contemplation, is a mode of viewing the creation through the Spirit (qui autem per spiritum tuum uident ea..., conf. XIII.31.46); thus fully inverting the direction of mediation in Rom. 1:20 (conf. XIII.29.44-31.46).

The characteristic act of knowing through the Spirit is not a bare intellectual vision issuing in conceptual certainty. Rather, gratitude and praise characterize the reversal in epistemic mediation, for the knowledge thereby gained is specifically of the goodness of being as derived from God (sic recte dicitur: non uos estis, qui scitis, eis, qui in dei spiritu sciunt. nihilo minus igitur recte dicitur: non uos estis, qui uidetis, eis, qui in spiritu dei uident: ita quidquid in spiritu dei uident quia bonum est, non ipsi, sed deus uidet, quia bonum est, conf. XIII.31.46). This vision of goodness, rooted in God’s creative knowing, constitutes the most inward knowledge available to humanity (nos itaque ista quae fecisti uidemus, quia sunt, tu autem quia uides ea, sunt. et nos foris uidemus, quia sunt, et intus, quia bona sunt, conf. XIII.38.53). Indeed, the cognition involved turns out to be bound up in a fuller interaction that would more properly be called love (conf. XIII.31.46).\(^\text{537}\)

\(^{537}\) Cf. the isomorphic trajectory in trin. VIII.2-13, likely composed soon after Confessiones.
Thus ecclesial contemplation, by allowing a reversal in mediatory direction, specifically addresses what was lacking in the iniquitous knowledge of Rom. 1:21 – *qui cognoscentes deum non sicut deum glorificauerunt aut gratias egerunt*. Salvation, which is constituted by a God-mediated knowing and clinging, finds its expression through the spirit enabled act of thanksgiving and praise for the way lower levels of creaturely being reflect the goodness of their maker (*qui non amaretur nisi per spiritum, quem dedit, quoniam caritas dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis [Rm 5,5], per quem uidemus, quia bonum est, quidquid aliquo modo est: ab illo enim est, qui non aliquo modo est, sed est est*, conf. XIII.31.46). In this way it foreshadows Augustine’s conclusion concerning angelic knowledge, the highest knowing comes when intellectual creatures refer each level of creaturely goodness back to the Creator in loving praise and thanksgiving (*gn. litt. IV.24.41*).

When we see creation through the Spirit, God sees and rejoices in us (conf. XIII.31.46). And that divine mediation, connecting us to creatures from the inside out, enables human beings to exercise agency that is true and good. Guided by the causal knowledge and abundant goodness the Spirit provides, human creatures at last can walk away from pride and begin to act in simple humility and love (*et nos alio tempore moti sumus ad bene faciendum, posteaquam concepit de spiritu tuo cor nostrum, conf. XIII.38.53*). Thus the rhythmic alteration between action and contemplation continues while this world lasts and we await the unending day of resurrected joy (conf. XIII.35.50-38.53).

So having lifted fallen humanity from the abyss of temporal passion and carried her to the heights of trinitarian contemplation, God now infuses her with the very humility and love by which the Almighty stooped both to create and to call her (conf.
XIII.31.46). This lowly charity enables her to reenter the world with eyes and heart newly attuned, and to act in simple gratitude and care for the world that God so loved.
Summary Conclusion for Part III: Augustine’s Anthropology in the Confessiones

The above analysis warrants the following conclusions concerning Augustine’s anthropological thought at the time of the Confessiones:

First, Augustine is providing an anthropology of the cracked self specifically as creature. Of course, he maintains and deepens his account of human fragmentation rooted in the impulses to action that he first developed during his somewhat Stoicising priestly period. But now Augustine more emphatically depicts the human self, in all its fragmentation, as woven into and bearing the marks of the order of creation. One point of his complex hexaemeral echoes throughout the Confessiones is to make known the human self in this life as suspended between evening and morning – between the spiritually unformed gift of existence, already structured through various forms of commendatio but spiritually dark, and the fully formed state of conversion perfectly accomplished only in the morning of the resurrection. So Augustine aims for a deeper picture of the human self as creature.

Second, in terms of anthropological structures, Augustine highlights vestigial features of the self that point toward the Triune Creator. Three ascending triads mark creaturely existence. The first remains largely in the background, as measure, number and weight constitute all creatures great and small. Augustine has repeatedly exposited this triad throughout his earlier works. But the second receives rather fuller development in the Confessiones. Augustine finds a version of the Roman Stoics’ threefold commendatio to bodily preservation, knowledge and association as another manifestation of creaturely goodness, subject to perversion, that bespeaks the Triune creator even in spiritually unformed human persons. This triad constitutes the roots of
human action which have been perverted and must be progressively redeemed in the ongoing process of conversion. Finally, a first, inchoate attempt at articulating the triune image in the human mind makes a brief appearance as being, knowing and willing.

The distinction Augustine makes between the threefold *commendatio* and reason, between the tamed beasts and the divine image of day six, corresponds with the way he conceives the human soul as structurally designed in creation for both action and contemplation. But the distinction also seems to imply some post-Plotinian distinction between a higher and lower soul.

A few thoroughly Christian emendations, however, make it quite definitely *post-* Plotinian. First, the whole self is fallen and the whole self (body and soul) is to be redeemed. No undescended soul provides an ontological hook by which to ascend and no part of the creature is ultimately to be left behind. Second, as in his earliest wrestlings with the soul’s ontological stability, the lower-active soul provides the perduing ontological element. When the soul falls, the lower soul restrains it from descending to nothingness. Third, both the lower and higher soul bear differing measures of the Trinitarian image. The triunity of the Christian’s God, and not absolute simplicity, marks the goodness at the core of being and the archetype of that being fashioned after God’s own image.

Third, in terms of anthropological fulfillment or destiny, the human self is constitutively active and contemplative. The Augustine of the *Confessiones* never envisions an apotheosis of contemplative bliss wherein action would become superfluous. Rather, rhythmic alternations within the Christo-ecclesial way lead toward relative human fulfillment over time. This timed alternation comprises a redemptive concession to fallen mortality and the residual distortions in the soul’s impulses to
action that even ecclesial obedience cannot altogether cure in this life. But action and contemplation will continue in the world made right through resurrected bodies at last equal to the requirement of simultaneity in the two tasks.

Fourth, human fulfillment in action and contemplation consists in full integration within the totus Christus and issues in doxology. The flesh of Christ mediates entry into the totality of God in flesh and thus provides a doorway to the inside of God, so to speak. The Platonists, on Augustine’s telling, rise to see God from afar. But by their introverting ascent they only manage to gaze at God. By descending to Christ’s flesh and rising with his divinity, the Christian comes within the totus Christus to see creatures through the Spirit of God. So having risen upward and inward with Christ, the culmination of mystagogic ascent involves turning again from the heights (or is it depths?) of Christ’s divinity to view creatures in humble love through God’s eyes, without thereby leaving God.

Confession, as the form of consequent doxology, is the referral of self and world as creatures back to God in praise. Even confession of human sin is an act of praise, for God’s creative goodness is thereby affirmed. As such, confession constitutes the proper linguistic expression of the converting formation of the human creature. So after winding through the hexaemeral pathway of the Confessiones, we are brought again to Augustine’s dictum at the beginning - et tamen laudare te uult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae. tu excitas, ut laudare te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te (conf. I.1.1). And now we see that beneath the verbal manifestation of human praise pulses God’s own Spirit immediately providing the causal knowledge and love by which we can refer the goodness of creation back to God in unfeigned adoration (conf. XIII.31.46; 37.52-38.53).
A fifth, non-anthropological, suggestion might be appropriate here. The above analysis seems to provide a literary advance as a fringe benefit. If the hexaemeral itinerary of *Confessiones XIII* does indeed provide a template for *Confessiones I-IX*, then it is time to retire the old thesis that the first nine books were initially composed and circulated independently. The role of the hexaemeron in structuring the whole should vanquish any doubt of compositional unity, or at the very least require a reversal in the presumed order of composition (i.e. requiring books X-XIII to be composed before books I-IX). Perhaps in the end, 20th century difficulties in reading the *Confessiones* revealed less about Augustine’s compositional prowess as a rhetor and more about a modern unwillingness to seriously entertain the strikingly foreign yet deeply Christian thought patterns of allegorical exegesis.
Conclusions

Retrospectively surveying the trajectory of this study spanning Augustine’s anthropological thought from Cassiacum to the Confessiones four general conclusions seem warranted.

First, Augustine’s concept of the human being undergoes clear development from its beginnings in the circular soul, always already divine, to the cracked and creaturely self.

To recap, Augustine initially adopts a picture of the fallen, immortal soul from Plotinus. But he reconsiders the nature of soul, beginning very early. The role of the higher soul as an ontological hook disappears from Augustine’s thought, immediately after Cassiciacum, during his time awaiting baptism in Milan. From this point on we find the lower dimensions of soul as the perduring ontological stabilizer (chapter 1). Soon after his return to North Africa, Augustine’s attempts at allegorical exegesis lead him to conceive a primordial body-soul unity that is created soulish, elevated to Paradise and subsequently relapses to soulish existence (chapter 2).

The still largely mythic accounts of the soulish person acquire philosophical detail first in Augustine’s account of intentio (chapter 2) and then through a fuller concept of the heart as totality of present self-awareness. The integral self, for we have now moved beyond an essentially independent soul as agent, displays a nuanced, yet potentially triumphant, psychology of action (chapter 3). Augustine’s detailed exegesis of Paul reveals cracks within the human psychology of action that will remain until the resurrection body (chapter 4).
Finally, in the *Confessiones* we find Augustine integrating his theories of the lower soul – now achieving a very specific shape through the created *commendatio* to bodily preservation, association and temporal knowledge (chapter 5) – with the higher soul as contemplative reason (chapter 6). Therein Augustine provides his first integrated account of the cracked self as constitutively active and contemplative, body and soul. Thus we have traced his development from the circular soul to the cracked self.

Second, Augustine’s account of human beatitude and his practical programs for achieving it develop in lockstep with his changing concept of the human person. The general trajectory consists in a move from early cognitive ascents to a purely contemplative fulfillment and journeys to an account of human fulfillment through the integrally graced mystagogic journey that begins by descending to Christ’s flesh in order to ascend with his divinity.

Augustine’s earliest contemplative soteriology corresponds to the Plotinian project of self-identification with the higher soul. But since Augustine had accepted this project with only a rather mythic understanding of the divine soul, the project changes rather rapidly. The Cassiciacum writings already betray tensions and paradoxes. But conceiving a rather ambitious program of ascent to contemplative vision through the liberal disciplines consoles Augustine’s fears and promises a means to attain unwavering vision of God now. Salvation starts out in a primarily cognitive account of contemplation. Action stems from pride and produces the fall (chapter 1).

Soon after his catechism, however, the means of contemplative fulfillment migrate from the liberal disciplines to the milk and meat of Christian scripture. In this history believed and its underlying intelligible realities discerned, the Christian
cogitates his way to spiritual health and fulfillment. Thus the means of contemplative fulfillment are found within the church. But action remains primarily a source of temptation and fall (chapter 2).

With his forced ordination and consequent immersion in the details of scripture, Augustine’s estimation of action changes rapidly. Beatitude must somehow combine action and contemplation. Moreover, Augustine finds a new program in Jesus’ and the Stoics’ teachings for cleansing the heart and enabling continuous vision of God in this life. By memorizing divine precept from the scriptures and focusing one’s self-awareness in action on nothing but the fulfillment of divine precept, singularity of intention becomes possible. This produces a clean conscience, which frees the heart for contemplation (chapter 3).

Of course, Paul destroyed Augustine’s programs for achieving perfect beatitude in this life. The cracked self, irrevocably divided internally through the penal mortality of its body, cannot achieve purity in action or contemplation apart from a special gift of God. And even a graced presentation, mixed with the Spirit’s subsequent infused delight, cannot eradicate every trace of mortal ignorance and difficulty in this life. Such is the lot of a fallen creature, a cracked self (chapter 4).

So in the Confessiones Augustine the mystagogue depicts a chastened program of personal formation, suited to the constitutively embodied and now fallen creature, within the totus Christus. No apotheosis of contemplative bliss beckons. And, by its own power and intelligence, the self can do nothing but invent parodies of the true way. Rather, a life long journey ensues that is prophetically intimated under the veil of the hexaemeron and intitated by the humble descent of God in Christ (chapters 5-6).
On this personal pilgrimage, the self learns to humbly submit both action and contemplation to the authority of God mediated through scripture and mother church. Then a rhythmically alternating ascent ensues as the created cum perverted impulses to action and to contemplation are transformed in tandem. By this transformative rhythm, the self comes to both know and love in a fully integrated way. The end of the ascent within the *totus Christus* finds the self’s twisted forms of interaction reversed. She now knows creatures through the Spirit of God, acts out of the grateful love that Spirit-mediated knowledge provides, and grows through the joy of seeing God work in the world (chapter 6). Thus we have traced how Augustine’s ascetic program develops from a purely cognitive program of contemplative ascent to an integral mystagogy for transforming action and contemplation within the graced environs of the *totus Christus*.

Our third conclusion takes us beyond the specific questions of Augustine’s anthropology and ascetic theories. Augustine’s philosophical resources and strategical alliances turn out to be much broader than most 20th century accounts have acknowledged. The spector of finding the father of western Christianity as a self-disguised Platonist provoked so much religious and scholarly angst that a whole century of scholarship seemed to forget other philosophical schools existed from which Augustine could derive conceptual resources. In particular, Augustine made much more extensive use of Stoic conceptualities and argumentative strategies than heretofore considered. The epicenter of his borrowings and adaptations in the period under evaluation was the construction of a suitable psychology of action. Of course, the consequences of this psychology of action, when read in dialogue with Paul, resulted in Augustine also employing a set of Stoic concepts to elucidate his distinctive doctrine of election. Likewise, Augustine’s adaptation of the Roman Stoics’ threefold *commendatio*...
contributed directly to his understanding of human creatureliness. So the primary focus
of Augustine’s furtive Stoicism unquestionably is found in his philosophical
anthropology. However, the consequences also extend into the realm of dogmatic
theology proper.

Perhaps a fourth and final suggestion, not to say conclusion, might be
countenanced at his point? Discussions of philosophical influences and borrowings in
Augustine’s thought have always stirred up an anxious impulse to categorize him. Is
Augustine after all a Platonist or a Christian? Or, perhaps, a Christian-Platonist or
Platonist-Christian? Lest we add the label Christian-Stoic to an already tiresome list,
please entertain a humble suggestion.

If one demanded a hyphenated term to use as subscript on Augustine’s nametag,
the most proper term would be a Christian-eclectic. For Augustine draws from
whatever proves philosophically useful, though his interactions should not be
construed as haphazard or dabbling thereby. But perhaps the time has come to relegate
these hyphenated terms to the past along with the misguided ideals of hermetically
sealed conceptual purity within Christian groups, which often accompany them.

From Augustine’s own world, wherein to philosophize is to engage in a life of
spiritual exercise, a saying rings across the ages. According to Cicero, the peculiar ideal
of human fulfillment or blessedness that functions as the northstar for a philosophic
school’s spiritual pilgrimage when assented to or dissented from, simultaneously marks
the boundaries of a school. *qui autem de summo bono dissentit, de tota philosophiae
ratione dissentit* (*fin. V.V.14*). Within any given philosophic school, including Christianity,
internal questions and diverse debates will always provide grist for production of rival
theories. But the school’s vision of blessedness provides the *sine qua non* of philosophic
affiliation – the peculiar shape of its form of life. If that is true, then Augustine in his mature work can be neither Stoic nor Platonist but belongs within that school designated as *philosophia Christiana*.
Abbreviations and Editions of Ancient Texts

Critical Editions in Series

**CCL** 1953-. *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*. Turnhout: Brepols

**CSEL** 1865-. *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Vienna: Tempisky

**GCS** 1897-. *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*. Berlin


Augustine of Hippo

**Acad.** *Contra Academicos libri tres*

*CCL* 29,3-61

**c. Adim.** *Contra Adimantum Manichei discipulum liber unus*

*CSEL* 25,1,115-190

**agon.** *De agone christiano liber unus*

*CSEL* 41,101-138

**an. quant.** *De animae quantitate liber unus*

*CSEL* 89,131-231

**bapt.** *De baptismo libro septem*

*CSEL* 51,145-375

**beata u.** *De beata uita liber unus*

*CCL* 29,65-85

**b. coniug.** *De bono coniugali liber unus*

*CSEL* 41,187-231

**b. uid.** *De bono uiduitatis*

*CSEL* 41,305-343

**cat. rud.** *De catechizandis rudibus liber unus*

*CCL* 46,121-178

**ciu.** *De ciuitate Dei libri uiginti duo*

*CCL* 47,1-314; 48,321-866

**conf.** *Confessiones libri tredecim*

*CCL* 27,1-273

**cons. eu.** *De consensu euangelistarum libri quattor*

*CSEL* 43,1-62.81-418

**cont.** *De continentia liber unus*

*CSEL* 41,141-183

**Cresc.** *Ad Cresconium grammaticum partis Donati libri quattor*
cura mort.  De cura pro mortuis gerenda ad Paulinum episcopum
CSEL 41,621-660

dial.  De dialectica
Augustine, Belford Darrell Jackson, and Jan Pinborg. 1975. De

diu. qu.  De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus liber unus
CCL 44A,11-249

diuin. daem.  De diuinatione daemonum liber unus
CSEL 41,599-618

doctr. chr.  De doctrina christiana libri quattor
Augustinus, Aurelius, Aurelius Augustinus, and Manlio Simonetti.
6-362

duab. anim.  De duabus animabus liber unus
CSEL 25,1,51-80

en. Ps.  Enarrationes in Psalmos
CCL 38,1-616; 39,623-1417; 40,1425-2196

ench.  De fide spe et caritate liber unus (Enchiridion)
CCL 46,49-114

ep.  Epistulae
CSEL 34,1,1-125; 34,2,1-744; 44,1-736; 57,1-656

ep. Io. tr.  In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem
PL 35,1977-2062

c. ep. Man.  Contra epistulam Manichei quam uocant fundamenti liber unus
CSEL 25,1,193-248

c. ep. Parm.  Contra epistulam Parmeniani libri tres
CSEL 51,19-141

ep. Rm. inch.  Epistulae ad Romanos inchoata expositio liber unus
CSEL 84,145-181

exp. Gal.  Expositio epistulae ad Galatas liber unus
CSEL 84,55-141

ex. prop. Rm.  Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula apostoli ad
Romanos
CSEL 84,3-52

c. Faust.  Contra Faustum libri triginta tres
CSEL 25,1,251-797

c. Fel.  Contra Felicem Manicheum libri duo
CSEL 25,2,801-852

f. et op.  De fide et operibus liber unus
CSEL 41,35-97

f. et symb.  De fide et symbolo liber unus
CSEL 41,3-32
f. inuis.  
De fide rerum inuisibilium  
CCL 46,1-19

c. Fort.  
Acta contra Fortunatum Manicheum liber unus  
CSEL 25,1,83-112

gn. litt.  
De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim  
CSEL 28,1,3-435

gn. litt. inp.  
De Genesi ad litteram liber unus imperfectus  
CSEL 28,1,459-503

gn. adu. Man.  
De Genesi aduersus Manicheos libri duo  
CSEL 91,67-172

gr. et lib. arb.  
De gratia et libero arbitrio liber unus  
PL 44,881-912

gr. et pecc. or.  
De gratia Christi et de peccato originali libri duo  
CSEL 42,125-206

imm. an.  
De immortalitate animae liber unus  
CSEL 89,101-128

lo. eu. tr.  
In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXIV  
CCL 36,1-688

c. lul.  
Contra Iulianum libri sex  
PL 44,641-874

c. lul. imp.  
Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum  
libri 1-3 = CSEL 85,1,3-506  
libri 4-6 = PL 45,1337-1608

lib. arb.  
De libero arbitrio libri tres  
CSEL 74,3-154

c. litt. Pet.  
Contra litteras Petiliani libri tres  
CSEL 52,3-227

mag.  
De magistro liber unus  
CCL 29,157-203

mend.  
De mendacio liber unus  
CSEL 41,413-466

c. mend.  
Contra mendacium liber unus  
CSEL 41,469-528

mor.  
De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum libri duo  
CSEL 90,3-156

mus.  
De musica libri sex  
libri 1-5 = PL 32,1081-1194  

nat. b.  
De natura boni liber unus  
CSEL 25,2,855-889

nat. gr.  
De natura et gratia liber unus  
CSEL 60,233-299
op. mon. De opere monachorum liber unus
CSEL 41,531-596

ord. De ordine libri duo
CSEL 63,121-185

perseu. De dono perseuerantiae liber ad Prosperum et Hilarium secundus
PL 45,993-1034

praed. sanct. De praedestinatione sanctorum liber ad Prosperum et Hilarium
primus
PL 44,959-992

ps. c. Don. Psalmus contra partem Donati
Augustine, and Rosario ANASTASI. 1957. Psalmus contra partem
Donati. Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e note a cura di
Rosario Anastasi. Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto Universitario di
Magistero di Catania. Serie letteraria. Testi critici. no. 1., pp. 44-70

qu. Quaestionum libri septem
CCL 33,1-377

qu. eu. Quaestiones euangeliorum libri duo
CCL 44B,1-118

qu. uet. t. De octo quaestionibus ex ueteri testamento
CCL 33,469-472

retr. Retractionum libri duo
CCL 57,1-143

s. dom. m. De sermone domini in monte libri duo
CCL 35,1-188

s. Sermones
s. 1-50 = CCL 41,3-633
s. 51-340 = PL 38,332-1484
s. 341-396 = PL 39,1493-1718

s. Denis Sermones a M. Denis editi
MA 1,11-164
s. Denis 20 = CCL 41,218-229

s. Dolbeau Sermones a F. Dolbeau editi
Augustine, and Francois Dolbeau. 1996. Vingt-six sermons au
peuple d'Afrique. Collection des études augustinennes, 147. Paris:
Institut d'études augustinennes., pp. 23-615.

s. Guelf. Sermones Moriniani ex collectione Guelferbytana
MA 1,450-585

s. Mai Sermones ab A. Mai editi
MA 1,285-386

Simpl. Ad Simplicianum libri duo
CCL 44,7-91
sol. Soliloquiorum libri duo
CSEL 89,3-98
spir. et litt. De spiritu et littera ad Marcellinum liber unus
CSEL 60,155-229
symb. cat. De symbole ad catechumenos
CCL 46,185-199
trin. De trinitate libri quindecim
CCL 50,3-380; 50A,381-535
uera rel. De uera religione liber unus
CCL 32,187-260
util. cred. De utilitate credendi liber unus
CSEL 25,1,3-48

Patristic Authors and Texts

Ambrose
off. De officiis
PL 16

Athanasius
u. Antonii Vita Antonii
PG 26,835-976

Clement of Alexandria
strom. Stromateis
GCS 52
paed. Paedagogus

Irenaeus of Lyon
adu. haer. Adversus haereses libri quinque.

Lactantius
Inst. Divinarum institutionum libri septem.

Tertullian
**Possidius**

**Vita**

**Classical Authors and Texts (Alphabetical Order)**

**Aristotle**

*anim.*
- *De anima*
  - LCL 288

*Pol.*
- *Politics*
  - LCL 264

*Meta.*
- *Metaphysics*
  - LCL 271; 287

*Pr.*
- *Prior Analytics*
  - LCL 325

*Eth. Eud.*
- *Eudemian Ethics*
  - LCL 285

**Aulus Gellius**

*Noct. Att.*
- *Noctes Atticae*
  - LCL 195; 200; 212

**Cicero**

*Acad.*
- *Academics*
  - LCL 268

*Cic. Tim.*
- *Timaeus*

*De nat. deor.*
- *De natura deorum*
  - LCL 268

*De or.*
- *De oratore*
  - LCL 348; 349

*diu.*
- *De diuinatione*
  - LCL 154

*fat.*
- *De fato*
  - LCL 349

*fin.*
- *De finibus*
  - LCL 40

*Leg.*
- *De legibus*
  - LCL 213

*off.*
- *De officiis*
  - LCL 30
Orator
LCL 342

par. Stoic.
Paradoxa Stoicorum
LCL 349

Tusc.
Tusculanae disputationes
LCL 141

Diogenes Laertius
D.L.
Vitae philosophorum
LCL 184; 185

Epictetus
Diss.
Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae
LCL 131; 218

Ench.
Enchiridion
LCL 218

Galen
de placitis
De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis

Hierocles
Elements
Elements of Ethics

Horace
sat.
Satires
LCL 194

Isocrates
Antidosis
LCL 229

Lucretius
nat. rerum
De rerum natura
LCL 181

Marcus Aurelius
med.
Meditations
LCL 58

Philo of Alexandria
de congress.  De congressu quaerendae eruditionis gratia
   LCL 261
de ag. De agricultura
   LCL 247
prob. Quod omnis probus liber
   LCL 363
opif. De opificio mundi
   LCL 226

Plato
Gorg. Gorgias
   LCL 166
leg. Laws
   LCL 187; 192
Parm. Parmenides
   LCL 167
Phdr. Phaedrus
   LCL 36
Phd. Phaedo
   LCL 36
Rep. Republic
   LCL 237; 276
Soph. Sophist
   LCL 123
Symp. Symposium
   LCL 166
Tim. Timaeus
   LCL 234

Plotinus
Enn. Enneads
   LCL 440; 441; 442; 443; 444; 445; 468

Plutarch
de Stoic. repugn. De Stoicorum repugnantii
   LCL 470
de E De E apud Delphos
   LCL 306
de soll. an. De sollertia animalium
   LCL 406

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Porphyry
abstin. De abstinentia

*sent.*


*uîta Plot.*

Vita Plotinii

*LCL 440*

**Posidonius**

*F*

*Fragments of Posidonius*


**Ps. Aristotle**

*Physiognomics*

Physiognomics

*LCL 307*

**Quintillian**

*Inst.*

Institutiones oratoriae

*LCL 124; 125; 126; 127; 494*

**Seneca**

*ben.*

De beneficiis

*LCL 310*

*ep.*

Ad Lucilium epistulae morales

*LCL 75; 76; 77*

*ira*

De ira

*LCL 214*

*tranq.*

De tranquilitate animi

*LCL 254*

*nat. quae.*

Naturales quaestiones

*LCL 450; 457*

*uîta beata*

De uîta beata

*LCL 254*

**Sextus Empiricus**

*adu. Math.*

Aduersus mathematicos

*LCL 382*

*Pyrr. hyp.*

Pyrrôneioi hypotypôseis

*LCL 273*

**Stobaeus**

*flor.*

Florilegium

Strabo  
geo.  

Geographia  
LCL 49; 50; 182; 196; 211; 223; 241; 267

Varro  

ling. lat.  

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Abstract

From the Circular Soul to the Cracked Self: A Genetic Historiography of Augustine’s Anthropology from Cassiciacum to the Confessiones

This dissertation is about Augustine of Hippo’s conceptions of the human person – both theoretical and prescriptive – and the philosophical resources he called upon to construct (and reconstruct) them from the period immediately following his conversion to his production of the Confessiones.

My primary intention in investigating these twin foci has been to produce a genetic account of his anthropology. In other words, I have followed Augustine’s anthropological thought with the specific issue of internal development in mind. In so doing, I have asked which resources does he call upon – both from within his own prior thought and from external sources – to produce his novel forms? And, what philosophical dynamics press him to respond in this theoretical manner?

In tracing developments within Augustine’s applied anthropology, two methodological distinctions have proved most helpful. First, I employ Pierre Hadot’s distinction between an ancient philosophic school’s chosen form of life and the specific spiritual exercises employed to conform the self to that life form. Roughly identical spiritual exercises or therapeutic modalities can be employed in service of strikingly different ways of life. Second, Christian mystagogy constitutes a mode of induction into a specifically ecclesial form of life wherein the initiate increasingly understands himself...
and all his experiences as attaining meaning in relation to the divine secret. Mystagogy, in the mature Augustine’s work, provides the overarching frame and direction for an ecclesial subspecies of therapeutic modalities or spiritual exercises.

With this methodology, I turn in chapter one to Augustine’s Cassiciacum writings and argue thus. Augustine, having imbibed Plotinus’ mythic presentation of the fallen soul, conceives the body primarily as an encumbering hindrance to the soul. The soul is preexistent, divine or structurally inviolable and designed only for contemplation. But internal tensions are immediately evident. Augustine’s attempt to provide a philosophical demonstration of the soul’s immortality manifests an odd admixture of incompatible Middle‐Platonic and Neo‐Platonic axioms. As a result, Augustine performs a terribly important, non‐Plotinian modification wherein the lower soul proves ontologically more stable than the higher soul.

At this stage, Augustine’s applied anthropology consists in a thoroughly cognitive account of blessedness achieved through contemplation. His prescriptive program begins with a study of the liberal disciplines and rises from there to the contemplation of intelligible reality.

Chapter two examines the anthropological developments following Augustine’s reception of the catechism and baptism, but preceding his ordination to the priesthood. Therein I argue that humanity’s original state of creation turns out to be a soulish sort of existence, which correlates to the lower functions of soul. Subsequent illumination by God elevated these primordial humans to spiritual existence in Paradise from which their fall constituted a relapse to their original soulish state. In distinctively Augustinian fashion, the lower functions turn out to be more ontologically stable than the higher.
In examining this bottom up state of existence, Augustine finds both action and contemplation as inverse possibilities of human *intentio*. Thereby Augustine lifts his first key anthropological concept from the Roman Stoics and uses it to describe how the soul twists from contemplation to action and thus falls. A cognitive stain, in the form of turbulent mental images named phantasms, now plagues the soul that fell by indulging in action.

Augustine’s applied anthropology at this stage consists of a program to uproot memorial phantasms and grow toward intelligible contemplation. But the earlier resources for ascent in the liberal disciplines have been largely replaced by the milk and meat of Christian scripture and its transmission within the church’s teaching.

In chapter three, my focus shifts to Augustine’s early priesthood. I trace Augustine’s first philosophical concept of the heart as it emerges entwined with his first positive account of intentional action. His reading of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount necessitated both. The Platonists offered no viable psychology of action and passion to adapt, so Augustine turns to Stoic accounts. Therein Augustine describes the heart as the totality of present self-awareness that produces the *intentio* previously found underlying human action and contemplation.

Augustine’s applied anthropology at this stage focuses on producing the purity of heart Jesus counsels. In action, purity of heart comes through a Christian adaptation of the Stoic spiritual exercise of προσοχή. The Stoics’ exercise centered on retaining precepts in mind and referring every action to the end of fulfilling precept. Purity of heart follows from retaining Jesus’ precepts and referring every action to eternal rather than temporal ends.
In chapter four, I analyze Augustine’s later priestly Pauline exegeses and argue that Augustine produces an intricate reading of Stoic psychologies of action and passion in terms of Paul and Paul in terms of the Stoic theories. Therein, Augustine finds a human body-soul complex so thoroughly integrated that only a transformed, resurrected body can fully overcome internal division within the soul. In the present, the human being labors under a disintegrated capacity for assent and dissent. Two laws, or sets of normative propositional content, and two simultaneous yet contradictory capacities to assent or dissent stir within the human person. The self has cracked.

Augustine’s shocking conclusion is that only an act of God can render one direction of assent and its propositional content stronger than its internal opponent within the person. A new doctrine of election, rather than an applied program for spiritual exercise, emerges from this anthropological realization. Only the congruent call of God, in keeping with wholly unmerited election, can turn a person and set him on the path to blessedness.

In chapter five, I turn to the *Confessiones* and argue that Augustine presents therein his first mature synthesis of his Paulinizing Stoic psychology of action and his (originally) Platonising penchant for contemplation. Chapter five begins this argument by focusing on Augustine’s analytic depiction of the lower soul as the root of human action presented in *Confessions I*. Augustine incorporates the Roman Stoic accounts of *commendatio* and *peruersio* with a handful of crucial alterations. *Confessiones I* describes the sequential emergence of a threefold *commendatio* already perverted by sin. The Roman Stoic account of *peruersio* by social echoing is further employed to describe the social perversion perpetrated by late Roman schools, the remnants of the *cursus honorum*, heretical religious teaching and the pretensions of pagan philosophy.
These perverting factors are presented specifically as parodies of a mystagogic program of human formation intimated allegorically in the hexaemeron.

In the sixth and final chapter, we consider the anthropological dimensions of contemplation in the Confessiones. Augustine envisions a distinctive form of ecclesially indigenous contemplation rising from scripture and marked off from a presumptive form of contemplation in pagan philosophy. Two key distinctions enable this differentiation in modes of contemplation. First, the direction of epistemic mediation differs in the two forms of contemplation. Second, the two directions correspond to differing sources of capacity for contemplation. Augustine’s conceptual source for these distinctions is a creative use of Rom. 1:20 found consistent in his interactions with pagan philosophy.

Christian contemplation does not exist as an isolated or stand alone phenomenon. But, as one pole within the larger mystagogic program of human transformation, contemplation can be theoretically isolated through a maneuver of conceptual precision. Christian contemplation emerges as a patterned descent to the scriptures that results in being lifted by God’s grace to a full-souled (upper and lower soul) focus on God.

First, one submits to a multilayered mediation of God through the scriptures and of the created order, including the scriptures, through God’s Spirit. Second, affective engagement draws the whole soul (not just the intellective aspect) into interaction with scripture and God. Third, ascending distinctions ensue carrying the devoted practitioner through a process of differentiating sensible from intelligible, temporal dispensations from God’s underlying eternal plan, and finally the interplay of unity and trinity in God and self. Fourth, in the process of contemplation, past memories as cordial
distractions are temporarily obliterated. Fifth, this allows a complete focus on God with the heart or the totality of present awareness. As distinguished from the partial engagement of intellectual vision, Augustine describes this total focus of awareness (intellective, desiderative, affective together) in terms of the heart touching God. In the process of this total engagement of the soul with God, the perverse mediatory direction of Rom. 1:20 is reversed. God’s spirit now mediates interaction with creatures. The Christian transformation of contemplation and action find fruition in a doxological orientation of the grace-integrated self.

I draw three conclusions. First, Augustine’s concept of the human being undergoes clear developments from a Platonizing account of the circular soul, always already divine, to a post-Plotinian account of the creaturely embodied self. Second, Augustine’s applied anthropology develops from early cognitive ascents aimed at contemplative fulfillment to his mature account of human fulfillment through the integrally graced mystagogic journey initiated by descending to Christ’s flesh in order to ascend with his divinity. Third, Augustine’s philosophical resources and strategic alliances are much broader than most 20th century accounts have acknowledged. In particular, Augustine made much more extensive use of Stoic conceptualities and argumentative strategies than heretofore considered. The epicenter of his borrowings and adaptations in the period under evaluation was the construction of a suitable psychology of action. However the consequences also extended, through motivating his characteristic doctrine of election, into the realm of dogmatic theology proper.
Samenvatting

Van circulaire ziel tot het gebarsten ‘zelf’. De ontstaansgeschiedenis van Augustinus’ antropologie van het Cassiciacum tot aan de Confessiones

Deze dissertatie handelt over de ideeën die Augustinus ontwikkelde over de mens in zowel theoretisch als normatief opzicht. Centraal staan de werken die hij in de periode na zijn bekering tot aan de vervaardiging van zijn Confessiones schreef. Deze ideeën worden geduid in het licht van de filosofische bronnen waar Augustinus uit putte. Getracht is in dit onderzoek de verschillende etappes in de ontwikkelingsgang van Augustinus’ antropologie – theoretisch en toegepast - te beschrijven. Onderzocht is dus de genese van zijn ideeën hieromtrent.

Om de ontwikkelingen binnen Augustinus’ toegepaste antropologie te traceren, bleken twee methodologische distincties dienstig. Allereerst werd uitgegaan van Pierre Hadots onderscheid tussen de gekozen levenswijze van een antieke filosofische school enerzijds en anderzijds de specifieke geestelijke oefeningen die bepaalde antieke filosofen gebruikten om het ‘zelf’ te vormen binnen het kader van deze levenswijze. Vergelijkbare of bijna identieke geestelijke oefeningen of therapeutische methoden blijken te kunnen worden toegepast in levenswijzen die van elkaar verschillen. Ten tweede werd uitgegaan van de gedachte dat Augustinus zich een mystagoog betoon. Hij wil zijn lezer leiden naar een specifiek christelijke en kerkelijke levenswijze waarin de geïnitieerde gaandeweg meer van zichzelf leert begrijpen en zijn ervaringen betekenis
verkrijgen in relatie tot het goddelijke geheim. In het rijpere werk van Augustinus vormt zijn streven, mystagoog te zijn de opmaat tot de vervaardiging van een omvattend kader, waarin de therapeutische methoden of geestelijke oefeningen, ontleend aan de veteres, hun beslag krijgen.

Deze twee methodologische vertrekpunten in ogenschouw nemend, staan in het eerste hoofdstuk Augustinus’ geschreven uit zijn Cassiciacum-periode centraal. In dit hoofdstuk is betoogd dat Augustinus zich allereerst Plotinus’ mythische voorstelling van de gevallen ziel toe-eigende. Het lichaam wist hij vervolgens hoofdzakelijk op als een belemmering voor de ontplooiing van de ziel. In deze periode beschouwde de kerkvader de ziel als pre-existent, goddelijk en structureel onaantastbaar. Daarbij beschouwde hij de ziel als uitsluitend geschapen voor de contemplatie. In zijn poging langs filosofische weg aan te tonen dat de ziel onsterfelijk is, treedt een merkwaardige vermenging van onverenigbare midden- en neo-platoonse grondinzichten aan het licht. Het gevolg hiervan is dat Augustinus een belangrijke wijziging aanbrengt, die niet te herleiden is tot zijn schatplichtigheid aan Plotinus maar die veeleer getuigt van zijn originaliteit en denkkracht. Ervan uitgaande dat innerlijke spanningen in de ziel waarneembaar zijn, stelt hij vast dat de lagere ziel ontologisch meer stabiel is dan de hogere ziel.

In dit stadium beschrijft Augustinus de door contemplatie verkregen gelukzaligheid op zeer pregnante wijze. Zijn ‘toegepaste’ antropologie wordt duidelijk in de richtlijnen ten behoeve van de contemplatie. In deze richtlijnen blijkt dat studie van de artes liberales cruciaal is voor de beschouwing van de bevattelijke werkelijkheid.

In het tweede hoofdstuk zijn de ontwikkelingen in Augustinus’ antropologie in kaart gebracht die plaatsvonden na zijn doop in 387 maar voor zijn priesterwijding in 391. In dit hoofdstuk is betoogd dat de oorspronkelijke staat van de mens voor de
zondeval een leven volgens de lagere functies van de ziel behelsde. De daaropvolgende verlichting van godsweg verhoogde het bestaan van deze oorspronkelijke mens tot een zuiver geestelijk bestaan in het paradijs. De val van de eerste mens hield een terugval in de oorspronkelijke staat in, waarin de mens dus volgens de lagere functies van de ziel leefde. Het is typerend voor Augustinus dat hij ook in dit stadium de lagere functies van de ziel in ontologisch opzicht als stabiler opvat dan de hogere functies van de ziel. De menselijke existentie vanuit de lagere functies van de ziel bestuderend, onderkent hij zowel de actie als de contemplatie als mogelijkheden die omgekeerd evenredig zijn aan de menselijke intentio. Bij de verdere ontwikkeling van dit antropologische sleutelbegrip in zijn denken, betoont hij zich zeer schatplichtig aan de romeinse stoïcijnen. Hij gebruikt de term als hij de wijze wil beschrijven waarop de ziel overgaat van contemplatie naar actie en daarom valt en te gronde gaat. Eenmaal gevallen door een overgave aan de actie, wordt de ziel gekweld door misvorming van het kenvermogen in de vorm van onstuimige mentale beelden, die fantasmen worden genoemd.

Augustinus’ toegepaste antropologie bestaat in dit stadium uit een programma waarin de mens zich kan ontdoen van deze fantasmen in de herinnering. Vervolgens voorziet dit programma erin dat de mens groeit in en door middel van de contemplatie die Augustinus in het bereik van het verstand situeert. Maar waar de opgang eerder middels de artes liberales tot stand kwam, wordt deze nu bewerkt door de melk en het vlees van de Heilige Schrift en de overdracht hiervan in de leer van de kerk.

In het derde hoofdstuk staan de werken centraal die Augustinus in de eerste jaren van zijn priesterschap heeft vervaardigd. Allereerst wordt Augustinus’ filosofische uiteenzetting over het ‘hart’ geanalyseerd, zoals deze in zijn beschrijving van de

In zijn toepassing van de eerder als ‘theoretisch’ te duiden antropologische inzichten richt Augustinus zich op de door Jezus voorgestane zuiverheid van hart. Op het vlak van de actie ziet hij deze zuiverheid voortkomen uit een christelijke bewerking van een stoïcijnse geestelijke oefening, προσοχή. Deze stoïcijnse oefening was er op gericht de geboden in het verstand te houden opdat elke actie naar het einddoel van deze geboden zou verwijzen. Op grond hiervan herleidt Augustinus de zuiverheid van hart tot het naleven van Jezus’ geboden. De zuiverheid van hart hangt samen met de ontwikkeling van het bewustzijn dat in elke actie toch vooral de eeuwige in plaats van de tijdelijke doeleinden voor ogen gehouden moeten worden.

In het vierde hoofdstuk worden de werken geanalyseerd waarin Augustinus brieven van Paulus uitlegt. Hierin is getracht duidelijk te maken dat Augustinus uiterst geraffineerd een aantal elementen van de stoïcijnse psychologie van actie en passie in de terminologie van Paulus ‘verpakt’, en, vice versa, Paulus’ gedachten in de terminologie van de stoïcijnse theorieën. In deze periode geeft Augustinus aan dat de menselijke ziel en het menselijk lichaam zo onlosmakelijk met elkaar verbonden zijn in een mens dat slechts in een getransformeerd, herrezen lichaam de innerlijke verdeeldheid van de ziel volledig overwonnen kan worden. In het hier en nu bezit de mens een het conflicterende vermogen in te stemmen of af te wijken. In de mens zelf zijn twee tegengestelde normatieve proposities aanwezig met betrekking tot de
waarheid en de doelen van aan handeling (die Paulus ‘wetten’ noemt) en twee eveneens aan elkaar tegengestelde vermogens deze proposities aan te nemen of te verwerpen. Met andere woorden: de menselijke capaciteit om ‘ja’ te zeggen tegen tegengestelde proposities is gefragmentariseerd. Mensen betuigen halfslachtig instemming met veelvuldige, aan elkaar tegengestelde proposities en ontkennen in een andere gedeelte van hun hart weer dat zij deze instemming hebben gegeven. Het ‘zelf’ is gebroken.

Augustinus schokkende conclusie is dat uitsluitend een daad van God de mens in staat stelt de richting van de instemming (en haar inhoud) overheersend te laten zijn ten opzichte van de tegengestelde kracht binnen de mens zelf. Uit deze antropologische bewustwording blijkt een nieuwe ‘leer’ van uitverkiezing voort te vloeien, eerder dan een toegepast programma voor geestelijke oefening. Uitsluitend de vocatio congrua van godsweg kan een mens, geheel onverdiend uitverkoren, op de weg naar de gelukzaligheid zetten.

In het vijfde hoofdstuk staan de Confessiones centraal. Hierin is betoogd dat Augustinus zijn eerste volwaardige synthese presenteert van zijn door Paulus geïnspireerde stoïcijnse psychologie van de actie en zijn (oorspronkelijk) platoniserende hang naar contemplatie. In dit hoofdstuk is eerst onderzocht hoe Augustinus de lagere ziel als bron van de menselijke actie analyseert en weergeeft in Confessiones I. Hij blijkt zich de Romeins-stoïcijnse ideeën van commendatio en peruersio toegeëigend te hebben maar brengt hierin wel een aantal wijzigingen aan. In Confessiones I beschrijft hij de drievoudige commendatio die bij opkomst al misvormd is door zonde. De Romeins-stoïcijnse uiteenzetting van peruersio wordt verder gebruikt om de sociale perversie te beschrijven die latere Romeinse scholen kenmerkte in zijn
idee en die concreet werd in de relict en van de cursus honorum, in ketters-religieus onderricht en in de pretenties van de heidense filosofie. Deze perverterende factoren zijn door Augustinus weergegeven als parodieën op een adequaat mystagogisch programma, waar reeds allegorisch naar werd verwezen in de Hexameron.

In het zesde en laatste hoofdstuk zijn ten slotte de antropologische dimensies van contemplatie in de Confessiones geëvalueerd. Augustinus blijkt aan de contemplatie die eigen is aan de kerk een aparte vorm toe te kennen. Hij ziet haar voortkomen uit de Schrift en acht haar scherp onderscheiden van mogelijke vormen van beschouwing in de heidense filosofie. De christelijke vorm van contemplatie is in twee opzichten verschillend van de heidense vorm. Ten eerste is er een onderscheid wat betreft de kentheoretische richting te constateren. Ten tweede verschillen de respectievelijke vormen van contemplatie omdat er verschillende vermogens in worden aangesproken. Door Romeinen 1: 20 vrij te interpreteren dient deze tekst Augustinus als bron in dit bestek. Zijn interpretatiewijze van deze passage is evenwel consistent met de wijze waarop hij omgaat met de ‘heidense’ filosofie.

Christelijke contemplatie blijkt in Augustinus’ antropologie geen op zichzelf staand gegeven. Maar als pool in het grote geheel van de mystagogie ten behoeve van de menselijke (om-)vorming kan de contemplatie als zodanig conceptueel gepreciseerd worden. Christelijke contemplatie blijkt te bestaan uit een geordende, steeds herhaalde ‘afdaling’ naar de Schrift, die uiteindelijk resulteert in een verheffing van de volledige - hogere en lagere - ziel door Gods genade. Hierdoor is het de ziel mogelijk zich onvermengd op God te richten.

In Augustinus’ idee kan een mens zich ten eerste dus slechts onderwerpen aan een meervoudige bemiddeling van God – door de Schrift en door de scheppingsorde –
als Gods Geest hem hiertoe in staat stelt. Ten tweede speelt niet alleen het intellect maar spelen ook de affecten een cruciale rol als de ziel in contact treedt met de Schrift en God. Ten derde behelzen de onderscheiden fasen in de opstijging een proces, waarin degene die zich toegewijd toelicht op dit proces, het zintuiglijke van het intelligibele gaat onderscheiden en ook het onderscheid gaat maken tussen enerzijds de tijdelijke beschikkingen en anderzijds het plan van God dat hieraan ten grondslag ligt. Ook komt een soort inzicht tot stand in de wisselwerking tussen eenheid en drieheid in God en in het ‘zelf’. Ten vierde worden in dit proces van contemplatie herinneringen, zijnde afleidingen, tijdelijk uitgewist. Dit laatste maakt het, ten vijfde, mogelijk de focus van het hart – het gehele bewustzijn – volledig op God te richten. In tegenstelling tot een verdeelde betrokkenheid van het intellect beschrijft Augustinus deze volledige focus van het bewustzijn (waarin het verstand, het verlangen en de affectie samen één dynamisme vormen) als het hart dat God aanraakt. In dit proces van volledige betrokkenheid van de ziel op God is de richting, die in Rom. 1:20 is aangegeven, omgedraaid. Gods geest is nu de bemiddelaar bij het contact met de schepselen. In de betekenis, die uiteindelijk in het christendom aan contemplatie en actie wordt gegeven vindt voltooiing plaats doordat de van genade vervulde mens een doxologische richting in zijn leven heeft gevonden.

Aan het einde van de dissertatie worden drie conclusies getrokken. Ten eerste kan worden vastgesteld dat Augustinus’ begrip van de mens duidelijke ontwikkelingen heeft ondergaan. De platoniserende uiteenzetting van de circulaire ziel – te allen tijde al goddelijk – heeft plaats gemaakt voor een post-plotiniaanse beschrijving van het ‘zelf’ dat scheepslijk is en in een lichaam is gevat. Ten tweede blijkt ook de toegepaste antropologie van Augustinus een ontwikkeling doorgemaakt te hebben. Ziet hij de
vervulling van de mens middels de contemplatie eerst voornamelijk tot stand komen door het verstand, in een latere fase van de bestudeerde periode zal hij een mystagogie ontwikkelen waarin de mens de bewustwording ontwikkelt dat zijn vervulling gelegen is in het gaan van een weg waarin Gods genade de grootste rol speelt. Deze weg begint met de afdaling tot Christus’ concrete lichamelijkheid, om zo op te kunnen stijgen tot zijn goddelijkheid. Ten derde zijn Augustinus’ filosofische bronnen en ‘strategische allianties’ veel uitvoeriger dan de meeste twintigste-eeuwse studies hebben erkend. Augustinus maakt veel uitvoeriger gebruik van stoïcijnse concepten en argumentatieve strategieën dan tot nu toe werd gedacht. In de door ons bestudeerde periode paste hij deze concepten en strategieën toe met het doel tot een adequate ‘psychologie van de actie’ te komen. De consequenties zijn later ook merkbaar geweest in het gebied van zijn ‘dogmatische theologie’, omdat het gevolgen had voor de wijze waarop hij de ‘verkiezing’ motiveerde.