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Augustine (AD 354–430)

Introduction

When scholars turn to interpret Augustine's account of knowledge by illumination, they usually look first at works such as *Soliloquia*, and above all *De magistro*, which he composed shortly after his conversion in 386, for these contain some of the most well-known and extended passages dealing explicitly with illumination. Those who consult later works normally only do so to obtain additional references to the divine light rather than theological context. If neglecting to consider Augustinian illumination within its proper theological framework complicates the effort to interpret its function, as I have already suggested, then one may wonder why the scholarly habit of taking Augustine's illumination arguments at face value has not been challenged in the past.

So far as I can tell, there are at least two main reasons why divine illumination has not yet been the subject of a theological interpretation. The first is that the treatise where Augustine offers the theological context most pertinent to the interpretation of illumination, namely *De Trinitate*, has been criticized on the basis of misapprehensions for quite some time. For the most part, the account of the relevant sections of *De Trinitate* I offer in this chapter presupposes the unity and coherence of the work, which scholars in the fairly recent past have called into question, along with the doctrine of the Trinity that is developed in the first half of the

Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge,
by Lydia Schumacher

book and the seven psychological analogies to the Trinity that are delineated in the second.[1]

The reason my engagement in the controversies surrounding *De Trinitate* is limited is that I assume knowledge of the comprehensive work other scholars have done to settle those controversies. While Rowan Williams, Lewis Ayres, and Michel René Barnes have addressed the problems associated with Augustine's Trinitarian theology and theological anthropology, both these and others have met the charges against the psychological analogies by showing that the treatise is a progressive line of inquiry designed to reform the reader into the image of God.[2]

Assuming that it is such an inquiry, I elaborate on the ways in which the treatise is designed to carry the reader through the process of conforming to the image of God, in an effort to interpret the doctrine of illumination that serves to illustrate that process. Apart from the groundbreaking efforts of other scholars who have worked on Augustine's theology, this effort to read his account of illumination in its theological context would not be possible. The fact that these efforts have been put forward only fairly recently may be one reason why a reading of illumination that is attentive to the theological context of *De Trinitate* has not been given in the past.

In her recent book, Carol Harrison discusses a second aspect of the situation in Augustinian studies that has undoubtedly encouraged the scholarly tendency to read Augustine's writings on illumination, especially the early ones, without reference to the theological context he later elucidates in works like *De Trinitate*. For over a century, she explains, scholars have operated on the assumption that Augustine underwent an intellectual revolution just before he became Bishop of Hippo in 396. In writings,

[1] Incidentally, Augustine appropriated and transformed some of these analogies from the late antique philosophical tradition, as Edward Booth notes in "St. Augustine's 'notitia sui' related to Aristotle and the Early Neo-Platonists," *Augustiniana* 29 (1979), 97–124.

[2] For responses to the criticisms associated with Augustine's Trinitarian theology, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); idem., *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Michel René Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56:2 (1995), 237–50; idem., "Rereading Augustine on the Trinity," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's De Trinitate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Rowan Williams, "De Trinitate," in *Augustine through the Ages* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). For works that address the charges against the psychological analogies, see the notes to 56–7 "Criticisms of the psychological analogies" below.

including the *Confessiones*, dating from this time, Augustine began to work out his mature theological perspective. Because the doctrines he codified during this period are supposedly unidentifiable in the more "philosophical" writings that date to the decade after his conversion in 386, scholars virtually universally see 396 rather than 386 as the real turning-point in his thought.[3]

As Harrison points out, Peter Brown, in his immensely influential biography of Augustine, perpetuated this notion that there are "two Augustines": the Augustine of the early works, a young devotee of Christian philosophy, and the Augustine of 396 and onwards, a mature and devout clergyman.[4] Following the publication of Brown's book in 1967, Harrison observes that the "two Augustines" theory became established in the scholarship. As a result, the author of the early works came to be considered as "no more and no less than a philosopher."[5]

Because Augustine supposedly remained under the spell of Neo-Platonism during the first decade of his Christian life, his early writings are said to be "of doubtful significance for appreciating his mature thought."[6] According to Harrison, the "two Augustines" thesis is simply a revised version of the old and long since dispatched idea that Augustine converted to Neo-Platonism rather than Christianity in 386.[7] However, she thinks the "two Augustines" theory undermines "the nature and importance of his conversion in 386 in a manner just as radical as those who held that Augustine was initially converted to Neo-Platonism."[8]

As Harrison indicates, Brown admits in the 2000 edition of his biography that the "two Augustines" thesis was more of a theoretical experiment than a statement of fact.[9] By this time, however, his thesis had already earned universal acclaim.[10] In the effort to counteract the scholarly effects of the wide acceptance of that thesis, Harrison contends that the real revolution in Augustine's thought happened in 386. Just prior to that time, Platonism had freed him from a false Manichean concept of God as "an

[3] Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[4] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

[5] Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, 4.

[6] Ibid., 4.

[7] Ibid., 18.

[8] Ibid., 6.

[9] Ibid., 17.

[10] Ibid., 15.

infinitely diffused material substance,"[11] and had instilled in him a sense of God's transcendence and of the reliance of all reality on Him. By reading the books of the Platonists, Augustine was prepared to realize at his conversion that faith in the Triune Incarnate God fulfills the Platonic vision. When he went on to construct his theology, he did so on a foundation laid in the Garden of Milan.

Harrison contends that Augustine's mature understanding of sin, grace, free will, and so on, is inchoately present in his early works. In this way, she advances an argument for the continuity between the early and late theological thought of St. Augustine. The argument of this chapter, not unlike Harrison's, turns on the assumption that there is continuity in Augustine's thought.[12] While her goal was to "find" Augustine's later theological thought in his early writings, mine is to show that the early works in which Augustine first and perhaps most forcibly articulates his theory of knowledge by illumination can and should be read in the theological context of the later works, which shed light on the logic of the account.

Around the time of his conversion, it would seem that Augustine came to see that faith in Christ enacts the Platonic theory of knowledge by illumination, the contours of which had become clear to him through the prior reading of Platonist works. Although he had yet to explain for the sake of his readers how exactly the Christian doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation enact the account, Augustine gestures in the early works toward the distinctly Christian conception of illumination he already has in mind.

If Augustine's initial references to divine illumination have not yet been retrospectively read in their theological context, this must be to some

[11] Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 366; cf. *conf.* 7.10.16ff.

[12] In *retr.* 1 prol. 3, Augustine testifies to the continuity of his thought; cf. *ep.*143.2, 143.7, 224.2. I am grateful to Karla Pollmann for bringing these texts to my attention. See her article, "*Alium sub meo nomine*: Augustine Between His Own Self-Fashioning and His Later Reception," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal for Ancient Christianity* 14 (2010), 409–24. Although Augustine is willing to admit that he changed the way he presented some of his ideas over the course of his career, he explains that those changes do not represent fundamental shifts in his perspective. Rather, they are indicative of the fact that he made progress in understanding ideas he entertained from the first. For further support for this claim, one might look to the *retr.* entry on *mag.*, where Augustine expresses satisfaction with the work and makes no amendments to it. In the retraction on *sol.*, moreover, he affirms that what he wrote about illumination in this work is consistent with what he wrote about it in *trin.* In the entry on *trin.* itself, the bishop states that he wrote the work for the audience he had addressed in his earlier philosophical dialogues, which was inclusive of all believers who longed to understand how their faith pertains to their intellectual pursuits.

extent attributable to the wide acceptance of the "two Augustines" theory – the tenability of which Harrison has now decisively challenged – which has prompted scholars in the past to regard works from the two "phases" of Augustine's career in separation. The groundbreaking work she and others have recently accomplished is the foundation on which I will proceed to present a theologically contextualized rendering of Augustine's illumination theory, which starts with the account of the Trinitarian doctrine he delineates in the first half of *De Trinitate*.

The Doctrine of God

One point Augustine makes abundantly clear in *De Trinitate* is that the nature of God is not like the nature of any thing that human beings know.[13] By contrast to material beings that come into existence at a point in time and gradually become the finite creatures they were made to be – development that is made possible by the cooperation of their component parts – God is an immaterial Being that never changes. He is not constituted by parts but is one thing, which is all that is Good, all the time: infinite and eternal.[14] To sum up: He is simple, and it is His simplicity that renders Him unknowable to those beings that occupy the realm of diverse things He has made.

In the first half of his treatise on the Trinity, Augustine acknowledges that some find the notion of divine simplicity difficult to reconcile with the Catholic teaching that God is Triune. In response to those who suppose that the plurality of Persons threatens the unity of the divine being and divine action, Augustine argues that the participation of the three Persons is precisely what makes it possible to affirm that there is one God who always does one thing, which is to know and make known His own glory.[15]

In elaborating this claim, Augustine distinguishes between the substance of God and the relations in God. Whatever can be said of the substance of God, such as that He is Good or that He acts for His own glory, the bishop writes, can be affirmed of all three Persons.[16] Whatever can be said specifically of one Person – such as that the Father is the unbegotten beginning who generates the Son; that the Son proceeds from the

[13] *trin.* 1.1.3; 2.8.14.
[14] *trin.* 5.1.1.
[15] *trin.* 6.7.9.
[16] *trin.* 5.8.9.

Father;[17] or that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son and therefore proceeds from both, binding them together[18] – is said relatively of the Person in question.[19]

Far from undermining the singularity of the divine substance and divine action, Augustine contends that the three Persons enact it as they subsist in their different relations. When the Father communicates Himself or His glory to the Son, the Son expresses what He receives, which is nothing but the Spirit of God that gestures back toward the divine glory the Father first made manifest. Because the Father works through the Son in the Spirit, such that the three work inseparably, it is possible to affirm that there is one God whose nature is to know and make known His own glory.[20] Because "the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit constitute a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality," in summary, "they are not three gods but one God."[21]

Creation in the Image of God

The natural order

Augustine's most elaborate account of God's creation is found in the twelve books of his *De Genesi ad litteram*. In that treatise, the bishop begins his discussion of God's creative work with an explanation of the role that each Person of the Trinity played in creation. This explanation comes by way of the exegesis of Genesis 1:3: "then God said, 'let there be light'!"[22] According to Augustine, all three Persons were involved in this initial proclamation of light, inasmuch as the Word the Father uttered was His Son, who gave outward expression to the Spirit that is eternally expressed within the Godhead.[23]

The Triune proclamation of the Uncreated Light gave rise to a created light, which participated in the Uncreated Light that was nonetheless

[17] *trin.* 5.13.14.

[18] *trin.* 6.5.7: on the Spirit as the "bond" between the Father and the Son; 5.14.15: on double procession.

[19] *trin.* 5.11.12.

[20] *trin.* 2.1.2, 2.3.1: the Son's work is to glorify the Father; 2.3.5: thereby, the Son expresses the very Spirit of God.

[21] *trin.* 1.4.7.

[22] *Gn. litt.* 1.2.4.

[23] *Gn. litt.* 1.2.6: Son; 1.5.10: Spirit; 1.6.12: Trinity.

distinct from and undiminished by the light it engendered. Augustine speculates that the created light must have consisted in creatures that exist in a spiritual mode of being like that of God Himself, a mode that entails constant orientation toward the knowledge of God and so is at once intellectual.[24] To put it more precisely, God's words "let there be light" illumined the angels to participate in the eternal vision God has of Himself. God did not speak those words into time, Augustine insists, but issued his proclamation of light on the first day of creation, which was prior to the start of time.

On that day, the Genesis account relates that God separated the light from the darkness. The darkness as Augustine describes it consisted in the absence of light or "nothingness" that arose where there was that which God and spiritual beings like Him are not, namely, formlessness and mutability. Presumably, then, darkness became separable from light as a result of the fall of the devil and a third of the angels.[25] Although what was inherently formless could not impose form on itself, Augustine notes that it was naturally receptive to the modification and imposition of form.[26] It was therefore from this stuff of nothing that God created the world.[27]

At this stage in his argument, Augustine makes a point of stressing the significance of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Because God did not fashion created reality from His own immaterial substance but simply imposed His form on matter, he contends, there is a radical disparity between the nature of the Creator and His creatures. The creation of those creatures does not detract from God's being or render Him dependent on what He made, even though it renders what He made dependent on Him. So far as God caused matter that was virtually nothing to become something, to the extent it was *formed* nothingness, God caused creatures to become images of Him who is ever an image of them.[28]

When God gave form to what was formless, Augustine elaborates, the creatures that resulted retained both the mutability characteristic of formlessness and the immutability they derived from their form. The form or essence of each creature ensured that its parts were always structured to comprise one and the same kind of being that was suited to perform the same sorts of operations. Owing to the interplay of immutability and

[24] *Gn. litt.* 1.5.10, 1.9.15; cf. *conf.* 12.15.21, 12.17.24, 13.3.4.
[25] *Gn. litt.* 1.10.18, 1.14.28; on the fall of the devil see 11.16.21.
[26] *conf.* 12.8.8; 13.19.28.
[27] *conf.* 12.7.7.
[28] *conf.* 13.2.2.

mutability, however, creatures were constrained gradually to develop into their forms. The forms God imparted were not fully actualized, in other words. Instead, they instilled in creatures the potential to become the things they were made to be – the potential for their actual "existence" to catch up, as it were, with the essence they were designed to instantiate. For this reason, Augustine writes that creation from nothing must be creation in time.[29] For time enacts the possibility of change.

In order to explain how creatures grow into their designated forms, Augustine introduces his doctrine of "causal," "eternal," or "seminal" reasons (*rationes seminales*). A causal reason, he states, is simply the form the creature has the potential to actualize as it develops in the course of time.[30] When God created the heavens and earth at the first moment in time, He brought all the causal reasons into effect at once, thus enacting the potential existence of all things. As the creation narrative of *Ecclesiasticus* 18 teaches, He created all things simultaneously.[31] Although this is true from the perspective of Him who stands outside of time and eternally sees the potential of all things in act, the Genesis account of creation in the course of time is also true from the standpoint of the creatures situated within it.[32]

Augustine's description of the way creatures actualize the potential that a causal reason instills comes in the form of comments on *Wisdom* 11:20. This verse states that God ordered all things in virtue of measure, number, and weight (*mensura, numerus, pondus*).[33] On Augustine's account, "measure" is a being's finite limit or maximum potential. "Number" is the form or causal reason the creature has the potential to fully instantiate. Weight is the characteristic operation of the creature, through which it increases in number and approximates its measure.[34] Number gauges the extent to which a creature has met its measure by operating in accordance with its weight and thus mediates between measure and weight, facilitating a creature's efforts to become what it was made to be, that is, to reach its measure.

In order for beings to actualize the potential to be what they were made to be through the cooperation of measure, number, and weight,

[29] *conf.* 12.8.8, 12.11.14; *Gn. litt.* 1.14.28.

[30] *Gn. litt.* 6.14.25.

[31] *Gn. litt.* 4.33.51.

[32] *Gn. litt.* 4.33.52–34.53.

[33] See Carol Harrison, "Measure, Number, and Weight in Saint Augustine's Aesthetics," *Augustinianum* 28 (1998), 591–602.

[34] *Gn. litt.* 4.3.7; cf. *conf.* 13.4.

Augustine insists that a Being must exist which is not in the process of becoming the particular type of being it was made to be but which is always already what it is, which is all that there is – a being whose number is eternally equal to an infinite measure because His weight is Himself. In other words, there must be a "Measure without measure," a "Number without number, by which all things are formed, but that receives no form," and a "Weight without weight," to which beings are drawn, but which "is not drawn to any other."[35]

According to Augustine, the Triune God is this Being who *is* Measure, Number, and Weight, who is not becoming Himself, but is "Being Itself" (*esse ipsum*), inasmuch as the Son is the exact likeness of the Father in the Spirit.[36] Although there may appear to be many finite instances of measure that increase in number by carrying weight, Augustine argues that they are simply different manifestations of one Measure, Number, and Weight, which pre-contains and makes possible without predetermining all finite modes of measure, all increase in number, and all operation in accordance with weight. If the causal reasons that impart measure, number, and weight to particular created beings are described as eternal, it is owing to the fact that the one who imparts them is eternal. His eternal and fully actualized existence is the reason why beings not fully actualized can progressively become so, given time, through the cooperation of three elements: measure, number, and weight.

As they thus participate in their own modes of being, Augustine affirms that creatures participate in the divine mode of being, which is to be one thing in virtue of the involvement of three elements. By becoming the singular entities they were made by God to be, creatures become like Him in the way and to the extent they can; they serve to reflect Him. Thus, although God Himself cannot be known in this life, inasmuch as He exists in an eternal and unchangeable manner "far different from beings which are made … and cannot be spoken of in any way with human language without recourse to expression of time and space,"[37] Augustine insists that the goodness of His simple nature can be indirectly perceived as creatures improvingly exhibit their own simplicity. They leave traces of Him in the world, not because they disclose Him in part or in full, but because the very structure of their being is analogous to His.

[35] *Gn. litt.* 4.4.8.
[36] *conf.* 12.7.7.
[37] *Gn. litt.* 5.16.34.

While Augustine believes all creatures are analogues to their Creator, he does not think they all are analogous at the same level. Rather, he states that creatures express the goodness of God "according to the appointed capacity granted to each entity according to its genus."[38] Even though all substances are naturally good, Augustine affirms that some "abide close to God in the graded hierarchy of being, or stand further away from Him."[39] Put differently, there are levels to the goodness of what God has made.

One reason Augustine thinks the account of creation in time is important is that it discloses the hierarchical order God established. In the first place, God produced vegetation, or non-sentient, non-rational creatures, and called them good. He then created the animals, or sentient, non-rational creatures, and called them good. Finally, He made human beings sentient, rational creatures and called them very good, locating them at the top of the hierarchy of being and indicating that they have a unique role to play in the governance of the natural order.[40]

The human being

While the first six books of *De Genesi ad litteram* treat the creation of the natural order in God's image, the last six explain what it means for human beings to be made in the image of God. On Augustine's account, being made in God's image means being made with an ability to do the one thing God does, which is simply to know and make known the glory of God. For the mind to attain to God, in fact, is for it to meet its measure. In Augustine's explanation, love for God compels the mind to do this, that is, to move in keeping with its weight, through the acquisition of knowledge, which represents an increase in number.[41]

Human beings gradually become what they were made to be, namely, knowers of God, through the cooperation of measure, number, and weight, or the mind, its knowledge, and its love, as they employ their capacity to engage in a unifying mode of cognition that, like God's, is facilitated by three elements, doing so in view of the fact that there is one God who is the source of this capacity and the goal of its use.

[38] *Gn. litt.* 4.17.29, trans. Taylor.
[39] *conf.* 12.28.38, trans. Chadwick.
[40] *Gn. litt.* 3.20.30.
[41] *conf.* 13.9.10.

Augustine calls the first element or "mode" of cognition "corporeal vision" (*ratio*). In this mode, the mind passively receives empirical data through sense perception.[42] The second mode is spiritual vision (*intellectus*), otherwise known as the imagination.[43] Since the five sense-perceptive faculties are not suited to generating images of experienced realities themselves, this is something the spirit accomplishes, as it perceives created realities by means of the body and makes mental images (*phantasms*) of them.[44]

Although the imagination is the faculty that, by definition, engages in the consideration of bodies that are absent, Augustine notes that it is possible to do this in any one of three ways. The imagination can be used simply to recall objects that have been perceived in the past, insofar as the images of objects the mind forms on experiencing them give the objects a spiritual existence in the mind, which allows the mind to retain them in the memory even when they are no longer physically present.[45]

Additionally, the imaginative faculty can be employed to "arbitrarily or fancifully fashion objects which have no real existence,"[46] that is, to combine and multiply and vary images of things that have been perceived in order to form images of things that have not been or cannot be perceived in reality. Although the resources for human cognition are limited to what the mind passively receives by way of the senses, Augustine affirms that it is possible to exceed the limitations imposed by the corporeal faculties in the act of thinking imaginatively about corporeal reality.[47]

The imaginative power to utilize images of objects that have been seen for the purpose of conceptualizing ones that have not been seen is the same power that makes it possible to envision a future course of events or plan of action in the third use of the imagination Augustine mentions.[48] As he points out, the imagination is the faculty that enacts the possibility of human ingenuity and creativity.[49]

On the basis of multiple images of related objects, Augustine explains, the mind has the power conceptually to "combine and separate" related

[42] *Gn. litt.* 12.7.16.
[43] *Gn. litt.* 12.7.16.
[44] *Gn. litt.* 12.16.32–33, 12.24.51.
[45] *Gn. litt.* 12.7.16.
[46] *Gn. litt.* 12.12.25.
[47] *trin.* 11.8.13.
[48] *Gn. litt.* 12.16.33.
[49] *trin.* 8.4.7.

and unrelated things and thus unite and distinguish them under universal concepts.[50] In this third mode of intellectual vision (*intelligentia*), the mind determines the form or "causal reason" a creature exhibits, comparing creatures with different forms on the basis of different measures and comparing creatures that possess the same form on the grounds of differences in number and weight.

To think (*cogere*) along these lines, Augustine writes, is to "gather together ideas which the memory contains in a dispersed and disordered way, and by concentrating attention, arrange them in order as if ready to hand, stored in the very memory where previously they lay hidden, scattered, and neglected."[51] In other words, it is to engage in abstraction. According to Augustine, any idea that has been abstracted can be called upon in further efforts to make sense of images that come through new experiences. Through those experiences, conversely, the mind's ideas are expanded and revised over the course of time.

An incidental point that comes into relief here is that Augustine does not reject sense knowledge or confirm his adherence to a theory of innate ideas when he denies the possibility of deriving ideas from the incessantly changing sense realm and insists that this can only be accomplished by the intellect.[52] When the details of the theory of knowledge he presents in *De Genesi ad litteram* are taken into consideration, Augustine's claim concerning the unreliable nature of sense knowledge need not be taken to undermine the importance of the empirical sources but merely to establish that the sense-perceptive faculties that provide the resources for the formation of ideas are not suited to perform the work of the intellectual faculty to form ideas.[53]

The frequent references Augustine makes in his writings to human knowledge of the "ideas" or "reasons" for reality, which ultimately exist in the mind of God, have led many readers of Augustine to conclude that he thinks God actually impresses ideas on the mind that serve as the rules or laws by which it judges reality or even affords those judgments themselves – that His influence on the mind is an extrinsic one.[54] The point the foregoing discussion has underscored, however, is that God does not so much impart the reasons or rules of judgment themselves – innate ideas

[50] *trin.* 11.8.15.
[51] *conf.* 10.11.18, trans. Chadwick.
[52] *div. qu.* 9.
[53] *civ.* 11.27.
[54] *trin.* 9.6.9–20, 12.2.2.

like goodness, beauty, justice, and so on – but an intrinsic intellectual capacity to formulate such reasons.[55]

Those reasons, unlike God's, are based on experience and are subject to change with further experience. As such, they are in the full possession of the mind that produces them; God does not directly impose them nor directly intervene in the intellectual processes that produce them. Even so, however, the mind that forms its ideas in the awareness of God comes of its own accord to know what God eternally knows, namely, His goodness through all its diverse manifestations. In that sense, it can be said to know what God knows and to owe its success in knowing to divine aid. This is not because God imposes His knowledge on the mind, but because He enables the mind to participate of its own accord in a unifying pattern of cognition analogous to that of Him who thinks one thing – Himself – in virtue of the plurality of Persons involved in His cognitive act, and thus to come to see the divine goodness He already sees in full.[56]

In employing this cognitive ability to engage in abstractive or unifying acts of reasoning, which "has been impressed upon human nature as if it were a law,"[57] Augustine writes that the mind reflects the image of God. The ability to do this is facilitated by corporeal and spiritual vision, which constitute what Augustine calls the "lower reason" that seeks knowledge of the natural order (*scientia*), by contrast to higher reason, the proper objects of which are not corporeal but incorporeal.[58]

Since the mind cannot grasp the incorporeal God so long as it forms concepts about the realm of corporeal things He has made, Augustine states that it knows Him in the present by forming incorporeal ideas about the things it can see through thinking in unifying terms in view of the existence of the one God who is the ultimate Good.[59] By doing this, the intellect judges those things as He does, namely, as manifestations of His

[55] What comes through divine grace, in other words, is simply human nature; Henri de Lubac famously argued this with reference to Augustine and Aquinas in his *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2000).

[56] God's primary causality gives creatures the power to be secondary causes. In other words, He wills that they be what they want to be; *Gn. litt.* 6.17.28–6.18.28, 8.12.25, 8.21.40–8.26.48. On this topic, see Jacob Schmutz, "La doctrine médiévale des causes et la théologie de la nature pure 13–17 siécles," *Revue Thomiste* 101 (2001), 217–64; especially 221–9.

[57] *trin.* 8.4.7.

[58] *Gn. litt.* 7.7.16.

[59] *Gn. litt.* 12.7.16.

goodness. In forming ideas about the manner and degree to which things perform a function that is good, Augustine writes, the mind forms an indirect idea of the Goodness of God, which is to say that it gains insight into the wisdom (*sapientia*) of God. This idea grows as its knowledge of reality grows.

Although the "matter" for that thought comes into the mind from without, Augustine observes that, "the intellect completes its operation within, and nothing in it lies outside the nature of the mind itself."[60] On those grounds, he infers that the final mode of vision in which God's goodness is known need not pass away, even when the first two modes of vision that operate on corporeal bodies do. When the corporeal order is replaced with an incorporeal one, Augustine writes, the intellect will go on operating for eternity on spiritual realities in a manner continuous with the way it worked with respect to corporeal bodies in time.[61] In paradise, the three modes of vision will be perfected.[62]

As human persons employ the God-given power to identify His Goodness in the goods He has made, that is, to order various goods according to their type and level of goodness, they acquire a view of all things in their proper order, a divine perspective on the goodness of the natural order that doubles as the knowledge of the Goodness of God that is currently attainable.[63] This is the wise outlook that is needed in order to exercise dominion over creation and thus do what God wants human beings to do, which is to call His creation good, as He does.[64]

Since the mind that operates in the light of the knowledge of God's ultimate Goodness evaluates finite goods in view of the fact that they originate from an all-inclusive good, it is kept from reducing the ultimate good to any particular finite good and thus from entertaining narrow-minded ideas of what is good that prevent it from finding the good in all things. Since human happiness hinges on the experience of reality as good, Augustine writes, those who think about reality in terms of the existence of a supremely good God become free to find happiness in all things.[65] By maintaining this perspective on reality and thus enjoying a constant experience of goodness in the present, human beings reflect the

[60] *trin.* 11.7.12.
[61] *Gn. litt.* 12.35.68.
[62] *Gn. litt.* 12.36.69.
[63] *trin.* 14.12.15.
[64] *Gn. litt.* 3.20.30.
[65] *Gn. litt.* 8.12.25, 8.14.31, 8.25.46.

image of God and prepare to encounter the Reality of His Goodness.[66] They begin to participate already in an eternal life that consists in knowing God.[67]

The Fall and Redemption

When God gave human beings lower and higher reason, He gave them faculties designed to grasp corporeal realities as well as a faculty that remains fixed on God; in short, He gave them faculties that are subject to change and one faculty that is not and is therefore apt to supervise the mind's assessment of reality. Although the mutability of the human mind was not originally a detriment to it, since it enabled human beings to be creative and to grow in knowledge, the interplay of the mutable and the immutable in human nature is what eventually made it conceivable for the first man and woman to fall away from God.

In forfeiting the knowledge of God as Highest Good at their fall, Augustine writes, the first human beings lost the knowledge of themselves as creatures made in His image for the purpose of glorifying Him. As a result, their overriding desire to please God was replaced by a desire to please themselves through the pursuit and attainment of those things they thought would bring them the greatest immediate happiness.[68] This desire caused the first man and woman and all human beings after them automatically to perceive tangible things and temporal circumstances as the ultimate realities that only God is, and thus to operate on the assumption that such things have the power to make or break human happiness.[69]

Ironically, Augustine observes, the fallen human proclivity for pursuing personal happiness often leads to great unhappiness, inasmuch as it enslaves people to desires for finite goods that are either fleeting or hard to find in fallen circumstances, compelling them to organize their whole lives around the attainment of pleasures that cannot be guaranteed.[70] So far as human beings try to be useful to themselves by looking out for their own interests, placing hopes for contentment in fleeting things, they end up undermining their own happiness.[71] Even more ironically, most are

[66] *Gn. litt.* 12.26.54, 12.28.56.
[67] *trin.* 1.6.10.
[68] *Gn. litt.* 11.5.7, 11.15.19.
[69] *trin.* 10.6.8–7.9, 10.8.11, 13.7.10, 14.16.22.
[70] *trin.* 12.9.14.
[71] *trin.* 14.14.18.

left perplexed when they find that their efforts to prioritize personal happiness fail to bring the desired fulfillment.[72]

In many passages, Augustine refers to evil as a privation of the good and denies that is has any positive existence.[73] Far from denying the detrimental effects of sin in doing so, Augustine rightly underscores the fact that sin diminishes the freedom or ability human beings have to be themselves. By fostering the fear of not obtaining or losing the temporal and transient things in which hopes for happiness have been placed, sin inhibits and distorts the free expression of the human spirit.

Apart from promoting personal unhappiness, the fallen tendency to go after finite goods as if they were infinite ones frequently creates conflict amongst those with different notions of what is good and what brings happiness.[74] It promotes attitudes like envy and pride and the destructive behaviors these attitudes engender. In summary, sin makes it impossible for people to find the good in all things and in other people, making it impossible for them to find happiness both in the temporal circumstances and eternally.[75]

In his *De Trinitate*, Augustine explains how the Son of God restored the knowledge of God as the Highest Good that He originally imparted to human beings He made in His image.[76] Since the scope of human knowledge had been restricted to corporeal goods after the knowledge of the incorporeal Good was lost at the fall, the Son of God took on bodily form.[77] In that form, Augustine insists, Christ maintained his divine form. That is to say, He continued His eternal work of reflecting the Spirit of God, who gestures toward the Father: His work of being the Image of the Trinity.

For Augustine, no contradiction is inherent in the claim that Christ was fully man and fully God, inasmuch as human beings were created with the potential to know God fully. In assuming a human body, the Son did not abandon his divinity; He only actualized the potential for the full knowledge of God that human beings are bound to realize eschatologically. Insofar as the Son accomplished this feat in the form of a man, Augustine writes, one can affirm that the Father was greater than Him, albeit in a qualified sense. For inasmuch as He retained His divine form

[72] *trin.* 12.10.15, 13.4.7.
[73] *Gn. litt.* 8.14.31.
[74] *trin.* 13.7.10.
[75] *Gn. litt.* 11.15.20.
[76] *doct. chr.* 1.11–17.
[77] *trin.* 13.9.12ff.

through His life on earth, He and the Spirit He expressed remained co-equal with the Father at all times.[78]

By coming to reveal God in the form of a man who expressed the Spirit of God to the glory of the Father, the Incarnate Son fully revealed for the first time that the nature of God is Triune.[79] Because He revealed the Triune nature of God while in the form of a human person, the Incarnate Son at once revealed that all human persons are made in the image of the Trinity and are therefore designed to work as He does, that is, to bring glory to the Father in all the work the human spirit (*animus* = spirit, mind) undertakes.[80]

When Christ ascended into heaven, withdrawing the fully actualized presence of God's Spirit from a human person inhabiting the world, and sent His Spirit upon His followers at Pentecost, He reinstated the potential of all human persons to live by the Spirit He expressed, the Spirit that seeks to do the Father's will.[81] By placing faith in Christ, Augustine teaches, the mind remembers that it was made in the image of God and thus for the purpose of considering all things in light of the knowledge of His goodness.[82]

In making this discovery, the mind realizes that its ultimate cognitive objective is to know the Good it cannot yet know in full and to evaluate the created goods it can know now with that goal in mind.[83] Although faith raises awareness of the image, Augustine emphasizes that it does not immediately break fallen habits and restore the image in full. On his account, it remains for faith to be made completely effective through ongoing efforts to re-learn the skill of using the cognitive powers that were given by the Son in the spirit He modeled, glorifying the Father, until doing so is second nature, such that the image is constantly reflected. It remains, in other words, for the people of faith to learn to take full advantage of the grace God unfailingly gives.

If Christ did not instantaneously restore human beings to their original state of happiness on accomplishing the redemption of humankind once and for all, Augustine states that it was so that they might re-learn to be exactly what He originally made them to be, namely, people who consistently work of their own accord in the spirit that prioritizes the Highest

[78] *trin.* 1.7.14, 1.11.22.
[79] *trin.* 13.11.15.
[80] *trin.* 12.6.7–7.12.
[81] *trin.* 13.10.14.
[82] *Gn. litt.* 3.20.32.
[83] *trin.* 13.17.22.

Good over temporal goods – that God's purposes might be fulfilled. Although laborious, Augustine thinks human efforts to reform a habit of reasoning in light of the knowledge of God are nonetheless gratifying, inasmuch as they help the laborer appreciate what it means to be made in God's image in a way that was not possible before the fall. For in the struggle to re-conform to the lost image of God, the people of God gain the opportunity to experience a double measure of the grace God unfailingly gives.

Conforming to the Image of God

In what follows, I will argue that the seven psychological analogies which Augustine delineates in the second half of his treatise on the Trinity are designed to lead the reader all the way through the process whereby a habit of reasoning under the influence of faith in the Father's ultimate goodness is formed. That habit, of course, is one of thinking in a manner analogous to Christ, who constantly expressed His Spirit to the Father's glory – who always bears the image of the Trinity.[84] In short, it is a process of conforming to the image of God, or learning to glorify Him as constantly as He glorifies Himself. Although Augustine's analogies have long been subjected to serious criticisms, recent research has revealed that those criticisms were often based on misapprehensions of the text, which resulted from a failure to understand it as something like the guide to conforming to the image of God it is now starting to be understood to be.[85]

*Intellect, knowledge, love (*mens, notitia, amor*)*

The first psychological analogy to the Trinity Augustine introduces is that of the mind, its knowledge, and its love, which respectively correspond to the measure, number, and weight of the human being.[86] With this trinity, he reinforces the point that the intellect only ever accumulates knowledge that it desires to accumulate, or knowledge of what it truly loves. If the intellect prizes temporal attainments above all else, the implication is that it is bound to refer all its actions to achieving those things rather than God. For this reason, it will never attain God.[87]

[84] *trin.* 11.5.8–9.
[85] See notes under "Criticisms of the psychological analogies."
[86] *trin.* 9.3.3.
[87] *trin.* 13.20.26.

If the intellect places its faith in God, indicating that its desire is to know and love Him above all else, however, the knowledge of Him as Highest Good is reinstated upon it. As a result, this knowledge can be applied in acts of knowing the things He is not, namely, the created order and the circumstances that transpire in it.[88] Each time the mind brings faith in God to bear in this way, its fallen tendency to operate on the assumption that the objects of experience have the power to make or break its happiness is checked; in this, the effects of the fall are partially overcome. The image is restored to some extent, and faith is made effective as reason's perspective on reality is aligned to the professed belief in the Triune God as the Highest Good. The first psychological analogy is presented in an effort to summon readers to embark on the cognitive process through which these changes transpire.

Memory, understanding, will (memoria, intelligentia, voluntas)

The second trinity of memory, understanding, and will seems to be the means through which Augustine explains how knowledge is actually acquired and the image of God reflected and renewed in the mode of intellectual vision.[89] On Augustine's account, the memory retains all the information that has been acquired through the three modes of cognition.[90] It preserves the understanding or judgments that have been attained through intellectual abstraction – actual matters of knowledge – as well as a great deal of cognitive resources that create the potential for new discoveries to be made: all the experiences a person has had, the thoughts and feelings that were associated with those experiences, desires for certain kinds of experience, skills acquired through experience, and stories about others' experiences.[91]

The mind also contains information that has come to it in the past but has not yet been scrutinized because it was not thought important or understood at the time it was acquired. This happens, for example, when one person says something to another who is not paying attention and therefore cannot account for what was said when asked to do so.[92] As

[88] *trin.* 8.2.3.
[89] *trin.* 10.11.17–18; *conf.* 10.8.12; *Gn. litt.* 12.
[90] *conf.* 10.8.12.
[91] *conf.* 10.8.13ff.
[92] *trin.* 11.8.15.

Augustine emphasizes, people only tend to pay attention to input when their will compels them to do so. The will is what forms the intellect's desires for understanding. The understanding the mind already has, conversely, is indicative of the kind of understanding the will tends to desire. It attunes the will to seek new understanding that satisfies those same fundamental desires.

Whenever the memory becomes aware of something that the mind's current understanding cannot explain but has been predisposed by the will to desire to explain, a will for new understanding arises. The sense of dissatisfaction or restlessness that accompanies the sudden realization that the understanding is inadequate to the will for understanding incites the mind to search through the resources in the memory that were previously unnoticed, unused, or thought unimportant in order to render the new experience intelligible.[93]

If the resources needed to answer the question which the will aims to address cannot be found in the memory, the will may direct the intellect to go out in search of new information that seems to serve that end.[94] Since this is often necessary, Augustine points out that the quest for understanding is not entirely straightforward. The intellect gains understanding not by fully obtaining it at the outset of an inquiry, but by acknowledging at that point that it does not already know what it desires to know. That desire for understanding, which is indicative of faith that the understanding is attainable, compels the mind to convert what it does know into speculations about the truth that is as yet unknown.

To illustrate this, Augustine cites as an example how he tried to form a picture of the city of Alexandria, which he had never seen, on the basis of his knowledge of the city of Carthage, which he had seen.[95] In order to do this, he sought information about Alexandria and sought to compare it with what he knew about Carthage and other cities in general. The discovery of something new about cities in general or about Alexandria in particular caused him to adjust or even reject existing opinions about Alexandria in order to render them more precise. In time, he says, he developed a more accurate picture of Alexandria, which not only increased his desire to go there, but also instilled in him the confidence he would need to navigate it on arrival – to find things there as he would have expected them to be.

[93] *conf.* 10.8.12.
[94] *conf.* 10.11.18.
[95] *trin.* 8.6.9.

Although he acknowledges that he had to hold many incomplete or "erroneous" ideas provisionally in the course of coming to a clearer conception of Alexandria, Augustine insists that these ideas were not detrimental but beneficial to his efforts to acquire knowledge, because they enabled him to proceed by degrees toward better understanding.[96] Such provisional ideas, he notes, are "in some respects true precisely because they are in other respects false."[97] By "false," Augustine simply means less than totally true. Since the knowledge that something is false is knowledge of the sense in which it is less than entirely true, however, Augustine regards it as knowledge of the way in which an idea can come closer to the truth.[98] It is knowledge that is not to be dreaded but welcomed, inasmuch as things cannot succeed in becoming "what they want or ought to be as long as they refuse to be false."[99]

According to Augustine, the only way to err, such that what is false utterly fails to bear the truth and is patently false, is to settle on a notion of the truth that obviously falls short of the desired truth, that is, intentionally and counter-intuitively to obstruct the way to truth through the passivity of apathy or the activity of lying to oneself and others about the nature of the truth.[100] Because what is found out to be false – opinions held, then doubted – has a truth-bearing function, it does not hinder attempts to gain understanding. Rather, it indicates that the mind is actively and effectively engaged in knowing. As Augustine sums up: "if I doubt, I exist." (*si fallor, sum*)[101]

In affirming this, Augustine suggests that the way toward attaining any desired understanding is basically a way of "negation" in which the intellect converts the things it knows, which are not the things it desires to know, but has faith that it can and will know, into speculations about the truth it wishes to know, testing, revising, and rejecting possible answers until it senses that it has alighted on the object of its faith and desire.

On this model of knowing, all knowing entails a process of "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quaerens intellectum*), because it begins with an unfulfilled cognitive objective, which is reached by degrees as the intellect employs its knowledge to pursue understanding of the unknown,

[96] *ench.* 17, 19–21; *util. cred.* 10–11.
[97] *sol.* 2.10.18.
[98] *sol.* 2.5–10.
[99] *sol.* 2.10.18.
[100] *ench.* 18, 22; cf. *mend.* and *c. mend.*
[101] *trin.* 10.10.14.

to wit, an object of faith. Inasmuch as the mind knows what its cognitive objective is and believes in the attainability of that objective which governs all its actions, it can be said to "know" that objective by anticipation or faith – potentially – if not yet actually or explicitly. The underlying distinction between potential and actual knowledge – or faith and understanding – is what enables Augustine to affirm that the mind may simultaneously know and not know the objects of its knowledge and thus to resolve the notorious Platonic paradox of inquiry, according to which the mind must already know X in order to be able to identify it, yet need not discover X if it already knows it.[102]

Each time the intellect forms or adjusts a provisional idea about something it seeks to know, Augustine states that the result is the product of "that which was hidden in the memory in a dispersed and disordered way before [the thought] was conceived, the [understanding], which arises from memory in the thought when it is perceived, and the will which combines both and so from these two and itself as a third completes one single thing."[103] He calls the resulting instance of understanding a "trinity of understanding."[104] On his account, the trinities of the understanding return to the memory where they come into contact with the resources that are already stored there. In that context, they may prompt the will to pursue new understanding, which it could not have thought to pursue previously, such that the process of concept production that is facilitated by the cooperation of memory, understanding, and will, begins all over again, causing the trinities of thought to be combined in new ways, to expand, continually change, and multiply *ad infinitum*.[105]

The more automatically a trinity of thought – or idea – is brought to bear in efforts to make sense of new experiences, Augustine goes on to say, the more deeply rooted in the memory it can be said to be. The more the mind puts its faith in its ideas by memorizing how to operate in accordance with them, moreover, the more it can be described as certain concerning their truth. The mind that has memorized how to implement the rules and vocabulary of foreign language, to take Augustine's example, applies them as a matter of habit and fluently speaks the language. Its confidence in the certifiable nature of those rules arises from its effective use of them for the purposes of interpersonal communication.[106]

[102] *trin.* 12.15.24, 15.21.40; cf. *conf.* 10.18.27.
[103] *trin.* 11.7.12.
[104] *trin.* 15.11.20.
[105] *trin.* 11.8.12.
[106] *conf.* 1.8.27.

By this account, certitude, like knowledge itself, is not an all or nothing affair, but a matter of degrees. In cases like language learning, the mind can be said to know the language better and with greater certainty the less it needs to pause to think about the rules and vocabulary. Stopping to think about these things is actually a sign that knowledge is still deficient in some respect. The less time the intellect has to spend determining whether or how to regard reality in light of certain ideas and the more easily it simply acts on those ideas, the more understanding and certainty it can be said to have with respect to them. To sum up: the evidence that the memory has truly grasped an idea is in the impact it has on human behavior. Ideas that have been genuinely interiorized are exteriorized, and their justification is in the effects of their exteriorization.

Turning the subject slightly, Augustine contends that the most basic memory the mind contains is the thought of the object it desires most, that is, the object it believes will bring it the greatest happiness.[107] That thought dictates everything the mind does. When the mind remembers that its desire for happiness is indicative of a desire not for any temporal attainment but for God, as per the first psychological analogy, the forgotten thought of Him is reinstated in the memory. This recollection puts the mind in a position to bring faith in God to bear in every cognitive effort that is cooperatively undertaken by the memory, the understanding, and the will, that is, to perform its "unifying" acts of cognition in ultimate terms of the existence of the one true God.

Although these acts of knowing reveal nothing about the nature of the unknown God Himself, they allow the mind to experience the world in the light of the knowledge of His Goodness and to therefore identify the good in or make the best of all things.[108] To put it in other words, faith affects the way the mind perceives things, and that way of seeing things doubles as the knowledge of God that is presently attainable through what "God is not" but what has been made possible by His creative hand. To sum up, faith enables engagement in the enterprise of "negative theology" that is enacted by the positive affirmation of God's Triune nature and by the Incarnation of the Son.

Although initial faith restores the knowledge of the Triune, Incarnate God as the intellect's ultimate cognitive goal, Augustine points out that the recollection of Him is inevitably only a faint one at first. Even though faith removes the cause of the mind's disease, which is the loss of the knowledge of God, that disease has yet to be completely healed, as

[107] *conf.* 10.20.29ff.

[108] *trin.* 8.4.6–8.5.8.

the mind recovers awareness in all things of Him as the real source of human happiness.[109] As with any act of "faith seeking understanding," it waits for the object of faith to be fully known, and the object of faith is increasingly known as the mind brings its desire to know that object, in this case God, to bear in its efforts to know other things.[110] That desire directs the mind to attend to some things and ignore others. It determines what the mind perceives and the way it perceives it. It checks the inordinate desire for temporal things, and transfers those desires from "temporal to eternal things, from visible to intelligible things, from carnal to spiritual things."[111]

On Augustine's account, the mind that perseveres in performing its work in the Spirit of Christ that esteems the Father to be the highest good, performs its work in remembrance of Christ and thereby memorizes how to think after the manner of Christ, praying as much as it thinks.[112] Each time the mind cultivates the habit of seeing things from the perspective of Him who remained confident that the Father's good purposes are always fulfilled, even in the hour of His death, it checks the ingrained habit of operating according to its own norms; it overcomes the limited concepts of what is good that have no place in the mind of Christ; it increasingly realizes through its acts of reasoning the profundity of the faith it professes. In all this, it gradually becomes more conformed to the image of Christ who is the image of God. To sum up: the human mind becomes an ever better analogy of the mind of Christ, who never sought to serve Himself but only His Father God.

Ability, learning, use (ingenium, doctrina, usus)

The next analogy Augustine presents is that of ability, learning, and use. With this analogy, he acknowledges that there are many different ways of putting memory, understanding, and will to work – many means of directing thoughts and actions to the Father, through the Son, in the human spirit or mind. Although he affirms that all people with faith share the objective of knowing God, Augustine emphasizes that each one inevitably strives to obtain that objective in accordance with an individual level and type of ability, applying the faith in different situations and in different

[109] *trin.* 14.17.23.
[110] *trin.* 8.4.6–8.5.8.
[111] *trin.* 14.17.23; cf. *conf.* 10.17.26.
[112] *trin.* 8.5.7–8, 14.16.22, 15.2.2.

ways. For this reason, he concludes that the faith which the faithful share is not one in number, but one in kind.

For the same reason, he allows that there are as many ways to work in the spirit of Christ as there are human spirits, where the way in which one imitates Christ can both inspire and instruct others how to do the same in their own distinctive ways. Since no one who has faith has achieved the goal of knowing God that all with faith share, Augustine observes that the efforts to reason in faith that one makes in one way can inform those of another working to do so in another. In the Christian community, the different types and level of ability are not a cause for competition but celebration, inasmuch as the way one person imitates Christ can stimulate another to imitate Him in yet another of countless possible ways.

Corporeal and spiritual analogies

As the intellect learns to work habitually in accordance with its abilities from the standpoint of faith, Augustine notes that it learns to know and make known what is eternal, namely God, through the knowledge of what is temporal; it gains wisdom through science. As the intellect is redeemed by Christ, in other words, the faculties of sensation and imagination that previously distracted it from God are redeemed as well. They serve their originally intended purpose, which was to enable the intellect to discover God in the world He made in preparation for knowing Him in Himself.[113]

Because the first and second ways of knowing are gradually recovered together with the third, Augustine argues that analogies to the Trinity can be detected not only in the memory, understanding, and will, that is, in intellectual vision, but also in corporeal vision, which consists in the sight of the eyes, the object seen, and the perceptive faculties' attention to an object;[114] as well as in spiritual vision, which involves the memory of sense perceptions, the internal comparison of perceptions, and the production of an image.[115]

Although the corporeal and spiritual – scientific – faculties cannot rightly be said to bear the image of God, since the natural order on which they operate will one day pass away, Augustine affirms that they are

[113] *trin.* 12.15.25.
[114] *trin.* 11.2.2.
[115] *trin.* 11.3.6.

properly described as analogues, because they will be perfected even as they are replaced with two related faculties, which will carry on operating in an incorporeal order as the "imperfect" faculties worked in the corporeal one.

From this point in his discussion, the bishop proceeds to treat the topics of knowledge and wisdom, as well as their inter-relationship, offering what seems to be the mature statement of the views on these issues he espoused in early "philosophical" works like *De ordine* and *De beata vita*.[116] In the former, Augustine had stressed the importance of acquiring scientific training, or the ability to identify order in creation, prior to engaging in philosophical speculation about the principles that underlie the natural order, an inquiry that falls within the domain of wisdom.[117] There, he argued that the most effective way to form a habit of identifying order in the cosmos is through a course of study in the liberal arts (i.e. the *trivium*: grammar, logic, rhetoric, and the *quadrivium*: arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy).

Although these studies must precede the study of the principles that account for the natural order, Augustine affirms that some cursory concept of the source of that order – some wisdom – is needed even for pursuing knowledge. For if young minds go out in search of knowledge while lacking awareness of God's wisdom, they may come to the conclusion that there is no ultimate purpose to the acquisition of knowledge and thus fail to do anything useful with it.[118] Alternatively, they may feel they have the liberty to define wisdom as they wish and grow inordinately proud of their own understanding. Otherwise, they may become so disturbed by the disordered state of the fallen world as to declare that there are no principles of order – no underlying wisdom – at all.[119]

While Augustine acknowledges that some, like the Platonists, find a way to give a sound explanation of the principles that uphold the natural order, he notes their failure to account adequately for the identity of the divine being that sustains that order as well as His ability to intervene in it. Because they do not provide such a fully satisfying account, which is in fact offered by the Christian doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation, Augustine argues that the Platonists fail to enact their true

[116] Frederick Van Fleteren has made this suggestion in "Augustine and Anselm: Faith and Reason," in *Faith Seeking Understanding: Learning and the Catholic Tradition* (Manchester, NH: St. Anselm College Press, 1991), 59.

[117] *ord.* 1.9.27.

[118] *beata v.* 1.2.

[119] *ord.* 2.17.

understanding.[120] Even though Augustine praises the Platonists for their intellectual achievements, consequently, he struggles to call the wisdom of philosophers genuine, inasmuch as they do not name the source of their wisdom.[121]

Augustine describes the dangers associated with embarking on the pursuit of knowledge without a preliminary notion of wisdom in order to underscore the importance of beginning with the belief that wisdom belongs to the Triune God. There are two ways Augustine thinks a person of faith can adhere to divine wisdom: the way of authority and the way of reason. The first way more or less bypasses the road to wisdom through knowledge outlined above. It is the shortest and safest way of achieving wisdom because it involves holding fast to wisdom and never letting go of it.

Many of the faithful take this first way. "Although they are exceedingly strong in the faith itself," Augustine writes, "they are not exceedingly strong in science."[122] Though the wisdom of Christ predisposes them to affirm that there are indeed principles of order, above all, the goodness of God, that underlie reality, they are not particularly inclined to explore those principles and their profound implications.[123] For their purposes, it is enough to know what Christ revealed, which is that God is the Highest Good and that He works all things for Good;[124] that nothing can therefore make or break human happiness;[125] that supposed evils can fulfill divine purposes just as much as apparent goods, inordinately desired, can hinder the realization of those purposes.[126] For the people of faith, in fact, the "evil" or difficult circumstances through which "good" things are taken away can be regarded as goods, inasmuch as they check the human tendency to see those goods as the sole source of human contentment and lead the faithful to the realization that happiness consists in clinging to no one thing but receiving all things as gracious gifts from a good God.

While the way of authority schools people of faith in the wisdom they need to survive this life and arrive in the next one, Augustine does not

[120] *conf.* 7.9.
[121] Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's De Trinitate,* 40–67, 219–31.
[122] *trin.* 14.1.3.
[123] *ord.* 1.10.28.
[124] *ord.* 2.7.24; cf. *trin.* 13.7.10, 13.16.20.
[125] *trin.* 12.13.21.
[126] *ord.* 1.6–7, 1.9.27, 2.4–8.

think it fosters the highest possible level of enjoyment of the present life for which human beings were made. While the way of authority takes priority in the order of operation since faith is the forerunner of understanding, consequently, the way of reason is the more highly prized object of desire.[127] This is because the way of reason leads one to the eternal, not by passing over but by passing through the temporal; it thereby promotes the happy life of using all things on earth to enjoy God, which human beings were originally intended to live. Those that desire such a life are instructed not merely to believe that God is the source of order but also to seek to grasp the profundity of that belief by bringing it to bear on the very study of His order, however they are gifted to undertake it.

Although those who take the way of authority have the potential to reflect God's image just as constantly as those on the way of reason, such that there is no objective discrepancy as regards the clarity of the image, there is a subjectively realizable difference, which those that take the way of reason become aware of when they find what happiness accompanies discoveries of the implications of God's wisdom for science, faith for the endeavors of human reason.[128] Those that bring their faith to bear on efforts to explore reality make this discovery each time they locate a principle of order underlying reality and discern how to identify that principle with the work of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, which is precisely the principle that Christ revealed.[129]

As they do this, the study of order becomes the sort of enterprise in negative theology that Augustine encourages his readers to undertake in the second half of *De Trinitate*, that is, an inquiry in which all things that are "not God" are regarded under the formality of a positive affirmation of the existence of a Triune God who made Himself Incarnate. In mediating or doubling as the knowledge of God, these studies anticipate the attainment of that knowledge, rendering both the intellectual pursuits and the faith profoundly meaningful to the inquirers who come to find God in all things.[130]

Although the circumstances in which this is done may change, Augustine insists that the perspective cultivated by those with faith need never alter.[131] These can "survey all things and find nothing unarranged, unclassed, or

[127] *ord.* 2.9.26.
[128] *beata v.* 2.9; cf. *trin.* 13.4.7ff.
[129] *ord.* 2.16.
[130] *ord.* 2.2.4.
[131] *ord.* 2.6.18.

unassigned to its own place."[132] They consistently find traces of spiritual things in material things;[133] they conform to God rather than the world in every encounter with reality.[134] The steadfastness of their outlook prepares them to gaze unflinchingly on God. In the present, it enables them to find the purpose in everything, and thus, to enjoy life and be happy.[135]

To Augustine's mind, this wise outlook on reality is what equips those who maintain it to "help the godly and defend against the godless."[136] For a perspective on the temporal that is informed by the eternal prepares those that have it to address questions about the relationship between faith and life that may arise amongst believers. In addition to its instructive power in the Christian context, Augustine suggests that a wise perspective is the source of persuasive power in the context of dialogue with unbelieving thinkers. It allows the wise to address the same questions that concern philosophers from the standpoint of faith and to appropriate "pagan" philosophical insights in the process.[137]

In doing this, the faithful can challenge and correct the mistakes of philosophers even while substantiating their true insights, as Augustine did with the philosophy of the Neo-Platonists. In *De Trinitate*, Augustine testifies that his purpose is to provide his erudite Christian readers with the conceptual tools to grow in Christian wisdom, that is, to form a habit of reconciling reason and faith in the only place possible, namely in their own minds, so as to be ready on demand to bring faith in Christ to bear in dealing with any dilemma that might arise from dialogue with those that have or lack faith. By learning to bring the wisdom of God to bear on practical or "scientific" matters, Augustine concludes, believers in Christ carry on His redemptive work in the world, even as they discover how to receive all that the world offers as a gift that allows for the enjoyment of God, just as God originally intended.

Memory, understanding, and love of the self (**meminit sui, intellegit se, diligit se**)

On the argument I have been advancing, the five psychological analogies that have been discussed thus far are designed to help readers of *De*

[132] *ord.* 2.4.11.
[133] *trin.* 12.4.4.
[134] *trin.* 14.7.10.
[135] *ord.* 1.8.25.
[136] *trin.* 14.1.3.
[137] *doct. chr.* 2.40.

Trinitate memorize how to perform acts of reasoning, as they are gifted to perform them, under the influence of faith in God's ultimate goodness. When the mind fully remembers, understands, and loves God in this way, Augustine writes, it simultaneously remembers, understands, and loves itself, such that the sixth psychological analogy becomes apparent on it.[138] This is true because the mind that remembers God at once remembers that its purpose is to work for His glory rather than its own.

So long as the mind operates on the mistaken notion that its first task is to fulfill its own immediate desires, it remains subject to fallen attitudes like envy, pride, and fear, which prevent it from freely employing its abilities. So long as, and to the extent that it is selfish, in other words, it is inhibited from being itself. By making a commitment to unlearn the fallen habit of clinging to temporal things – to sacrifice itself – and to cling instead in faith to the God Christ revealed, the mind chooses to follow Him figuratively to Golgotha from Gethsemane, where He gave up the will to do His own will.[139]

Far from a decision to abandon an individual identity, the mind's decision to traverse this sacrificial path only represents a decision to abandon the enslaving sentiments that encumbered the free expression of the human spirit. As the empty tomb at the end of Christ's own sacrificial path confirms, this loss of the self is really the resurrection of the self. In point of fact, it is a gain, where what is gained is the freedom of the human spirit to glory in God at all times.[140] The mind that memorizes how to glorify God in its own way, and thereby memorizes how to imitate Christ, is one that memorizes how to express itself without hindrance, that is, to be itself. To sum up, a mind conformed to Christ is pre-disposed to receive all events as a gracious gift that reinforces the belief in the goodness of God.

Unlike a mind still subject to sin, which is constantly preoccupied with itself and its own concerns, the self that has memorized how to be itself need not think of itself, for it automatically knows how to respond in any circumstance that may arise.[141] By recovering the image of God, it recovers the freedom of the will to direct the intellect anywhere and discern the nature and degree to which God's goodness is exhibited in the things that come into view and to judge wisely on those grounds how to order them with respect to one another.

[138] *trin.* 14.8.11.

[139] See Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (Ann Arbor: Yale University Press, 1980); cf. *trin.* 9.4.4.

[140] *trin.* 14.8.11.

[141] *trin.* 14.5.7.

Just as wisdom helps the mind discern the finite purpose of different things and use them accordingly, so Augustine explains that it further enables the intellect to come to terms with itself as a finite creature that is capable of meeting some needs, not others; to behave in keeping with its limitations; and in doing this, to serve others in the way and to the extent it can – no more, no less.[142] As the mind reconciles itself to the ways in which it is and is not suited to serve the world, letting go of the human tendency to over or under estimate personal abilities, Augustine writes, the intellect also learns to leave room for others to be their unique selves.

Instead of attempting to persuade them to do things in one's own way, one learns to respect others' limitations and to encourage them to make the most of the gifts they actually have. In learning how to love God and thereby self, in summary, one may finally realize what it means to love one's neighbors as oneself, which is to love them not as one wants to love them but in the way their own natures dictate that they should be loved.

By helping his readers overcome hindrances to being themselves through efforts to teach them how to regain a predisposition to work at all times in the spirit of Christ, Augustine describes the experience individuals must undergo, namely, the restoration of the image of God, in order to draw close to others.[143] It is in being renewed and conformed to Christ's image, Augustine affirms, that the intellect is prepared not only for relationship with other human beings but above all for an ultimate encounter with the reality of God that accomplishes the perfection of the image.[144] For when Christ returns and the need for faith passes away, the memory, understanding, and love of the self – which is the memory, understanding, and love of the faith one placed in God during life – will be transformed into a seventh and final Trinitarian analogue which will determine the way in which the mind will know and love the Triune God for eternity.[145]

The whole goal of *De Trinitate*, Augustine concludes, is to re-train readers to live continually by faith in God with respect to temporal things. To do this is to form the habit that brings the mind to the height of the ascent to God it can reach in this life through the steps that are

[142] *trin.* 14.14.18.
[143] *trin.* 10.1.2.
[144] *trin.* 14.9.12.
[145] *trin.* 14.2.4.

represented by the first six psychological analogies. The attainment of that height is what allows the intellect to make a seamless transition to the immediate vision of the Trinity at the end of time, when the mind will become marked with the seventh and last psychological analogy. The idea behind Augustine's treatise, then, is to enable human beings to learn to enjoy God as they are able to do so to the greatest possible extent in the present, so as to maximize the experience of Him for eternity.[146]

Criticisms of the psychological analogies

The foregoing treatment of Augustine's psychological analogies rests on the assumption that those analogies outline the cognitive process involved in conforming to the image of God. Although a reading of the latter half of *De Trinitate* that proceeds along these lines has recently been developed by a number of other scholars, it has by no means been the predominant reading of the recent past.[147] Moreover, the readings that have prevailed have been highly critical of the project Augustine supposedly undertakes in presenting his analogies.

Chief amongst the accusations that have been directed against Augustine's analogies is the one that holds that they promote an introverted individualism. In encouraging his readers to reflect on themselves as images of God, Augustine purportedly implies that human beings need

[146] *trin*. 13.20.26.

[147] Lewis Ayres, "The Christological Context of Augustine's De Trinitate Thirteen: Toward Relocating Books Eight through Fifteen," *Augustinian Studies*, 29:1 (1998), 111–39; idem., "The Discipline of Self-Knowledge in Augustine's *De Trinitate* Book X," in *The Passionate Intellect* (Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1995), 261–96; Isabelle Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le désir de Dieu* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1982); Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's De Trinitate*; Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003); O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine;* Anna Williams, "Contemplation: Knowledge of God in Augustine's *De Trinitate,*" in *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Rowan Williams, "Sapientia and the Trinity: Reflections on the *De Trinitate,*" in *Melanges T.J. van Bavel, Collectanea Augustiniana*, ed. B. Brunner (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 317–32; idem., "The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the *De Trinitate,*" in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine: Presbyter factus sum* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 121–34.

look no further than themselves to find the foundations for all knowledge, and that they should withdraw from reality and human relationships in order to tap into their innate and fully actualized intellectual powers.[148] In doing this, Augustine is thought to have instigated the "turn to the subject" that took place in the thought of Descartes and Kant.[149] Inasmuch as reflection on the image of God entails virtual reflection on God Himself, Augustine is also said to have argued for the possibility of knowing God purely rationally and thus to have founded the discipline of natural theology, in which the existence of God is supposedly established without reference to the revelation of God the Son or to experience.

The account of the analogies I and others before me have endeavored to give indicates that Augustine actually subverts the very trends he has been accused of setting. Far from implying that human beings possess fully actualized cognitive powers, he suggests that the power to know, which is a power to know with a view to the existence of God, is one that must be gradually recovered by bringing faith in the revelation of Christ to bear in ordinary experience. Since the knowledge of God, like His image on the cognitive capacity, is something that must be gradually recovered, Augustine cannot be accused of giving any natural theological argument that provides definitive knowledge of God outside the context of faith and human experience.

Furthermore, though Augustine exhorts his readers to progressively recover the image of God and thus to recover their humanity individually, those that rightly interpret and follow these instructions do not withdraw from the world, but attain the position in which it becomes possible to enter into genuine human relationships – something one cannot do to the extent one remains un-conformed to God's image and thus self-absorbed or unsure of oneself. In Augustine's account, human beings conform to Christ not by engaging in static and solipsistic reflection but through participation in a dynamic process of Christian transformation that enacts the possibility of human community.

[148] For example, Catherine La Cugna, Olivier Du Roy, Colin Gunton, Karl Rahner.

[149] Phillip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Gareth B. Matthews, *Thought's Ego in Augustine and Descartes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Charles Taylor, "In Interiore Homine," in *The Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Divine Illumination

In both *De Trinitate* and *De Genesi ad litteram* Augustine invokes illumination to illustrate the work of the human intellect as the *imago dei*.[150] These references invite the reader to interpret illumination as it is mentioned in earlier works like *De magistro* and *Soliloquia* in a larger theological context, that is, as an illustration of the process involved in conforming to God's image, or recovering the cognitive capacity by regaining the ability to use it for its proper purpose. This is the sort of interpretation of illumination I will offer in what follows.

De magistro

In *De magistro*, Augustine recounts a dialogue between himself and his son Adeodatus concerning the nature of signs and the possibility of teaching and learning using signs, especially words.[151] Toward the end of the discussion, the father and son conclude that it is impossible to teach solely by means of signs. Although teachers can create an environment that is conducive to comprehending signs and can stimulate their students to attend to the realities the signs signify, their efforts merely give students the potential to learn the meaning of the signs under consideration. For they cannot enforce learning on students that have no drive to discover or that lack the skills or knowledge that might be needed to help them make sense of the signs.[152]

Only willing and capable learners are in a position to benefit from the guidance and expertise of their teachers. If a teacher calls on such students to draw a conclusion about the meaning of signs that the students do not know on the basis of ones they do, they will be able to give a response. Furthermore, they will be able to anticipate, comprehend, and disagree with their teacher's interpretation of various signs. In light of all this, Augustine and Adeodatus emphasize that the efficacy of teaching is just as contingent on the teachable spirit of the students as it is on the skills of the teacher.

From this point, Augustine proceeds to claim that divine illumination enacts the possibility of the teaching and learning, which would not

[150] *Gn. litt.* 12.29.57, 12.30.58, 12.31.59; *trin.* 9.6.9, 10.1.2, 12.15.24,14.7.9, 15.25.44, 15.27.49–50.

[151] *mag.* 1.2.

[152] *mag.* 10.33, 12.40.

otherwise be possible. He describes Christ as the inner Teacher, the light all consult to gain understanding.[153] Christ, Augustine states, both bestowed "the light of the mind by His enlightening act"[154] at creation and reminded that the light was dwelling within at His Incarnation.[155] Because of His illumination, human minds may continually experience the enlightening action of God.[156]

When *De magistro* is interpreted at face value, these citations may seem to support some of the extrinsic interpretations of illumination I have mentioned. However, a reading of the text that takes into account Augustine's mature theological treatises makes it possible to affirm that the function of Christ's illumination in human knowing as it is envisioned in this dialogue is simply to illumine the Triune nature of God and His image on the human mind in the same instance – to illumine an intrinsic intellectual capacity and its Triune source.[157]

Augustine already hints at this in the *Soliloquia*, where he speaks of God as "the intelligible Light, from whom and through whom and in whom all things intelligibly shine."[158] Just as there are three things in the sun, "that it is, that it shines, and that it illumines," he writes, "so also in that most hidden God there are three things, namely, that He is, that He is known, and that He makes other things to be known."[159] In making these claims, Augustine speaks obliquely of the three Persons of the Trinity that the Person of Jesus Christ revealed as He illumined God's Triune nature. He suggests, moreover, that the doctrine of the Trinity is required to enact the account of knowledge by illumination which the Platonists espoused.

As *the* image of the Trinity, Christ demonstrated that reflecting the image means expressing the spirit or intrinsic intellectual ability He gave at creation for the purpose He exemplified through His Incarnate life, which is to illumine the nature of the Father. By this account, divine illumination works two ways: Christ illumines human minds so that they

[153] *mag.* 11.

[154] *ep. 147*, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons in *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 20 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 45.

[155] *mag.* 14.

[156] *mag.* 12.

[157] *sol.* 1.1.3, 1.8.15.

[158] *sol.* 1.1.3.

[159] *sol.* 1.8.15, trans. Gilligan: *Nam et terra visibilis et lux; sed terra nisi luce inlustrata videri non potest. Ergo et illa, quae in disciplines traduntur, quae quisquis intellegit verissima esse nulla dubitatione concedit, credendum est ea non posse intellegi, nisi ab alio quasi suo sole inlustrentur.*

can illumine the divine being. Augustine wholeheartedly affirms that all are made in the image of God and therefore possess the ability to illumine reality. This is why it is both possible and necessary for people with faith to learn from, converse with, and by these means influence those that reason without faith. Nevertheless, he struggles to call the latter truly illumined, inasmuch as they do not recognize the light through which they know and are therefore particularly prone to "reduce" the light by which they judge to some particular, created light.

The tendency to do this is exactly the one human beings acquired at the fall. As a result of the fall, they began to judge the world by restrictive ideas and thus in an exclusive light. Instead of judging the relative worth of things, they employed the capacity for judgment to be judgmental. In this way, they lost the ability to learn from and to teach one another. Christ reinstated the ability to learn and to communicate with others when He modelled the openness of mind that makes it possible to find the good – and God – in all things. He revealed that those with divergent interests can pursue their interests with the shared goal of glorifying the God who gave them those interests as ways to discover Him and to inspire others to do the same. Far from suspending normal human patterns of interpersonal communication, the theologically contextualized interpretation of *De magistro* confirms that Christ restores them for those who recover the capacity He originally gave them to know God by learning to work for His glory.

Soliloquia

According to Augustine in *Soliloquia*, the process of recovery begins when initial faith opens or cleanses the eyes of the mind, converting them from darkness to the light of the realization that the mind is created in God's image in order to know like God, and eventually, to know God.[160] This realization entails another, namely, that the material things that are seen all around are not ultimate; that the "interior eyes are judges of the exterior ones" and that "the former [should be preferred] to the latter."[161] Although the opening or cleansing of the eyes through faith instigates the process of the mind's conversion to the light, it does not at once adjust it fully to the light. Although reinstated, the image of God on the mind is still an effaced one, or as Augustine elaborates, the all-encompassing

[160] *sol.* 1.6.12–13.
[161] *ep.* 147, 41.

Light of God is too bright for those whose limited concepts of goodness and light have left them unaccustomed to it.[162]

Stated otherwise, the newly illumined are still "bent over" (*incurvatus se*) particular goods; their heads are bowed and eyes covered for protection from the light that reveals the goodness of all things which is as yet too bright for them to bear. In order to stand upright and actually see the world in this light of faith, Augustine exhorts the illumined to invite the influence of more illumination, which is to undergo the renewal of the image of God.[163] On his account, the eyes of the mind adjust to the vision of the world at ever higher, more inclusive grades of light by judging whatever can be seen under the level of light they are able to bear. Judging by the light means acknowledging that nothing that is seen by the light is itself an all-consuming light by which to judge the world. The light by which all things are perceived and distinguished is not diffused in any special place.[164] The low grade of light at which the mind initially sees results in narrow-minded judgments, since darkness excludes what light subsumes and appropriately includes. Dimness of vision prevents the mind from grasping fully that the unspeakable and incomprehensible light of minds encompasses far more than the light of one outlook ever could - from seeing that there is more than one road to wisdom and allowing others to guide and be guided toward that light "according to their health and endurance."[165] Darkened vision, in summary, makes the mind unsure about what can be subsumed under the light, fostering aversions and fears and inhibiting the human ability to navigate the world confidently in the knowledge that there is a place for everything in it in the divine order, and thus to identify God's goodness in all things.

Even so, vision at a low grade of illumination naturally leads to vision at a higher degree of light. The mind cannot stay in the dimness of light forever if it faithfully adheres to the knowledge that the light includes all things but is reduced to none, for it is impossible to forget what it was like to come to see more clearly and to realize where vision remained obscure. The contrast between darkness and light trains the eyes of the mind to move by trial and error out of darkness and into brighter levels of light that dispel the shadows that prevent the realization that the light is an all-inclusive one, in which a greater share can be gained as one learns

[162] *sol.* 1.8.15.

[163] See *conf.* 13.20.2; *ord.* 1.8.23.

[164] *ep.* 120, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons in *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 18 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1953).

[165] Ibid.

from others how that light operates. Each time the intellect attempts to judge in the light, it cultivates the habit of doing so, undergoing the renewal of God's image and bringing that blurry image into clearer focus.

As the mind comes to an ever better realization of the fact that there is a place for all things under the common light, Augustine elaborates, the head is lifted by degrees and the hands drawn away from the eyes until the illumined stands upright with arms outstretched so as to see all that surrounds it under the constant ray of divine light that exposes the distinctive purpose and worth of all things. Augustine calls attention to the fact that those who assume this cognitive stance poise with eyes and mind and heart and arms wide open as Christ did when He accomplished the redemption of mankind on the cross.[166] Following in His steps, they become free to maneuver the world without the inhibitions of narrow-mindedness and fear that formerly tainted the light of the mind and to find what is good in all circumstances.[167]

In doing that, Augustine believes that people of faith gain the ability to further the redemptive work of Christ, and thus encourage others to see things in His light. Although the circumstances in which this is done may change, Augustine insists that an illumined perspective on the circumstances themselves need not shift any more than the Son's steady gaze on the Father in the Spirit. Changes in circumstance, far from upsetting the illumined outlook, can only broaden the scope of illumined judgment.[168] As this happens, Augustine affirms, "each one according to his strength grows more proficient … and [prepares to] sooner or later behold the sun without flinching and with immense delight."[169] Each one, in other words, prepares at their own pace and in accordance with their own abilities to see God.

Defining Augustinian illumination

What has been said to this point serves to bolster the contention that illumination for Augustine is the source of an intrinsic cognitive capacity rather than any sort of intellectually offensive extrinsic conditioning. So construed, illumination evades the problems commonly associated with the claims that the divine light interferes in the process of cognition or that it imposes the very content or certitude of thoughts. By defining

[166] *ep.* 140, 26.
[167] *conf.* 13.20.2; *ep.* 147, 44.
[168] *ord.* 1.8.25.
[169] *sol.* 1.13.23.

illumination as the source of the mind's ability, however, I do not intend to imply that Augustinian illumination has no bearing on cognitive processes, content, or certainty. This is manifestly not the case, inasmuch as the cognitive capacity is one that must be gradually recovered as the mind cultivates a habit of reasoning in the light of faith in God.

As the mind does this, Augustine relates that it begins to employ the innate ability the Son gave to think in terms of unifying categories, in ultimate terms of the existence of one God, and thus to think in the way the Incarnate Son Himself exemplified: in the Spirit that glorifies God the Father. In the sense that the mind seeking to recover its capacity must follow Christ's example concerning how to think, Christ affects cognitive processes, not by performing them on behalf of the mind but by putting the mind in the position to perform them of its own accord by way of the example He set at His Incarnation.

As the mind imitates Christ's way of knowing, it gains greater insight into the object of His knowledge, which is the goodness of God the Father – not yet directly, of course, but indirectly, as it realizes the impact faith in Him has on its efforts to form ideas about reality. By forming ideas in the way the Father does, namely, through the Son and in His Spirit, the intellect increasingly participates at its own initiative in an eternal life that consists in contemplating the idea of God. While the search for God's Truth may be in the making of the mind that undertakes it, the Truth that is discovered is not the mind's invention. Rather, the mind through its own workings conceptually alights on an aspect of the way God has made things to be: good.

For this reason, one can affirm that illumination bears on the content of thought, not because God imposes thoughts on the human mind but because the intellect, to the extent it has recovered its capacity, comes to know what God already knows in full, which is quite simply the goodness of God, as it can be perceived through the mediation of natural experiences scrutinized from the standpoint of faith. Although the knowledge of Truth is something that is sought after "from below" or through the use of the natural capacity to comprehend natural reality, one can still affirm in a qualified sense that it is something that is received from above, to the extent that the mind acknowledges that the employment of its natural capacity represents a participation in the knowledge of what is above.

The more the mind participates in the knowledge of God as it presently can, learning to see the signs of God's goodness everywhere it turns to look, the more the mind becomes confident in the veracity of the idea it entertained from the beginning, which is that God is good. The "proof"

for the truth of the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation, consequently, is in the effects the application of those doctrines on the mind that uses them to find the good – and God – in all things, overcoming in the process the idea that the circumstances can make or break happiness while discerning how to make the best of all circumstances and find happiness in them.

As the truth of Christian faith is reinforced for the believing mind by these means, the opportunity to demonstrate its viability in the face of unbelievers also arises. For the capacity to put all things into a perspective that locates the good in them – the capacity to "redeem" them – is a testament to the powerful effect that faith in the Triune, Incarnate God can have whenever it is invoked.[170] While those who are aware that God is an all-inclusive good can identify the sense in which God can bring good from virtually anything, and in that, find a way to overcome difficulties and reconcile differences in perspective, those that are not aware of the all-inclusive nature of that light, who tend to reduce it to some finite light, do not have the resources to embrace all that surrounds. By making use of the resources of faith to redeem the circumstances and incorporate the ideas of others, as Augustine did with the ideas of the Platonists, for example, the people of faith acquire a charitable attitude of open-mindedness that is conducive to promoting unity and peace and that serves as the source of their faith's persuasive power.

That attitude is one of the effects of faith in God, which provides perhaps the most convincing evidence for the truth of Christian doctrine that can be produced in an order where God Himself is never fully disclosed. Since those effects can only be identified by a human mind that is affected by faith and that is prepared to give an account of the object of faith by which it is affected – the Triune God – and how it is affected – through the Incarnation of God's Son – Augustine insists that those wishing to lead others to belief in God must go about this in the way Christ modeled: not by shining the light of faith in the eyes of those who reason in the dark, but by showing how effective it is to walk in the light that makes the way forward clear and fosters fellowship with others. He urges his readers to persuade others to believe through the application of the belief in the goodness of God, which produces certainty about the goodness of all that happens in reality, which in turn reinforces belief in the goodness of God. Here, illumination can be said to afford cognitive certitude not because this is imposed from the outside but because the mind that recovers its capacity inevitably experiences a directly propor-

[170] *trin.* 15.3–8.

tional increase in certainty with respect to belief in God. The certainty that results from seeing reality by the light of faith doubles as the confidence in the Light Itself that remains as yet unseen but will surely be seen by the eyes that adjust to it by faith.[171]

All this may be summarized by saying that divine illumination is the source of an intrinsic intellectual capacity all human beings have to illumine the nature of God. So construed the theory evades the problems typically associated with interpretations that treat the divine light as though it were some sort of extrinsic force. Those interpretations have not done justice to the later developed theological context of the account Augustine most famously mentions in early "philosophical" works. Inasmuch as the capacity that comes through illumination is one that must be gradually recovered, however, it is possible to affirm that illumination enters into cognition in the three other ways Augustine admittedly mentions, namely, as an ongoing help in the cognitive process and as the source of cognitive content and of certitude. This is not because Christ the illuminator directly instigates or interferes with the cognitive process or imposes ideas and certainty about them, but because the human mind can only recover its capacity by following the example He set through engagement in a process of cognition that is analogous to His and that results in a growing understanding of and certainty about the Being of God that He always knows in full.

With all this in view, one can conclude that the illumination of Christ does not bear on cognition in any way that undermines the autonomy or integrity of the intellect but in a way that reinstates it, at least for the intellect that stokes rather than extinguishes His light through a decision to work with faith in Him.[172] On Augustine's account, all that comes to the intellect from the outside is the power to be renewed on the inside; this is the power to illumine the divine being that is received through divine illumination – the power to know like God and thus know God. Here at last the logic of Augustine's claim that divine illumination is the condition of possibility of all human knowledge comes into relief – for unless God gives the capacity to know Him and it is used to the end of knowing Him, there is no such thing as knowing or knowledge at all. After all, there is nothing to see in the dark.

[171] *beata v.* 4.35.
[172] *trin.* 14.14.18.