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# The Structure and Intention
# of Augustine's *De Trinitate*

Augustine often commented on the "extreme difficulty" of his work *On the Trinity* (*trin.*), repeatedly remarking that it would be comprehensible only "to few."[1] This may explain why, while there is a surfeit of modern discussions which draw upon material from the *trin.*, there are virtually no modern treatments of the work as a whole.[2] Perhaps this is because, of all of Augustine's works, the *trin.* appears to us to be the most moorless, an intractable mass of speculation floating oddly aloof from foundation in any particular social context. Peter Brown, commenting on the *trin.* in his biography of Augustine, warns us that we are wrong if we do not think that Augustine was capable of writing a book out of purely speculative motivation.[3]

But perhaps this too is merely a polite way of suspecting that the work is essentially irrelevant, and indeed Brown immediately drops the work from further consideration, and others have followed suit. In this chapter, I would like to take an exploratory first step toward removing the stigma of pure speculation from this work by suggesting a location for it within a circle of discourse peculiar to Augustine's intellectual milieu, and I would like to propose that the key to such an enterprise will lie in a consideration of the *structure* of the work as a whole.

Despite Augustine's insistence, in the letter affixed by his design to the beginning of every copy of the work, that "the subsequent books are linked to the preceding ones by a continuous development of the argument,"[4] a standard interpretation of the unity of the work divides

it in half, something like this: A first "half" (usually construed as books 1–7 but sometimes given as 1–4 or 1–8) presents the teaching on the Trinity, which constitutes the Catholic "faith," while the remaining "half" of the treatise presents an attempt to "understand," through the use of reason, the faith so presented.[5] Apart from the fact that Augustine does not divide the treatise this way, but rather conceives of the whole work as an attempt to bring the reader to understanding,[6] on this interpretation of the structure, there remain in the work masses of material, both large and small, which are not accounted for. The long discussions of redemption in books 4 and 13, the discussion of contemplation in book 1 and in the prologues to books 1–5, the treatment of original sin and human renewal in book 14, as well as the sheer extent of the discussion of the theophanies of Genesis and Exodus in books 2–3, are not easily fit into the standard plan. Those who adhere to it will probably find themselves lamenting, with McKenna (1963), that "the *De trinitate* of St. Augustine is not as systematically arranged as the medieval or modern studies of this dogma."[7] We would probably do well to remember that it actually is not a medieval or modern study of the dogma, if it is a "study" of a "dogma" at all, and is therefore most likely not structured by the understanding of "faith" and "reason" and their relation which may inform these later works.

Nevertheless, we may be forgiven for going astray since we are not among the "few" whom Augustine expected would understand the treatise. These "few" can however be glimpsed in numerous other places in Augustine's writings. Augustine often stops to address specialized remarks to them in the course of his homilies.[8] We first meet these "few" in the earliest pages of Augustine's first writings, as those accomplished in or invited to the study of "philosophy." They would include the dedicatees of the early writings – for example, Augustine's patron Romanianus, and the Christian Platonist Manlius Theodorus.[9] These people, some of whom can be glimpsed by name in the Letters,[10] would know (or, in Augustine's view, be capable of knowing) that "knowledge" or "understanding" of that which is uncreated and eternal consists in a sort of intellectual "seeing" or "vision" of it,[11] one which involves a mode of thinking completely free of images or of any mental construct applicable to the creature,[12] much as Augustine himself had learned from his first reading of Plotinus.[13] The "few" would also realize (or at least be expected to be able to grasp) that the

mind could be "exercised"[14] in this image-free thought through a process of step-by-step ("gradatim") "ascent" from the consideration of physical things, to that of finite spiritual things, to the eventual vision of things eternal. Such an "ascent" would also represent a turning inward as one passes from bodily things to the things of the soul and mind.[15] In short, the "few" whom Augustine expected might understand his treatise would be those familiar with a standard Plotinian and especially Porphyrian characterization of the "return" of the soul to contemplation or *noesis*.[16]

Clearly, the *trin.* is predicated upon such a notion of understanding. The guided tour of the human mind which we receive in books 9–14 is nothing less than an attempt at a directed "ascent" (with several detours) from the consideration of that which is created to the contemplation – the Plotinian *noesis* – of the Creator. These books are, in effect, an extended exercise[17] of the mind in the "non-corporeal" mode of thinking with which the Trinity will ultimately be grasped. Perhaps, as a unit, they could therefore be regarded as one of the finest examples of what could be called Neoplatonic anagogy[18] that remains from the antique world. The question now becomes, what is it doing here in Augustine's *trin.?*

We can answer this question in part by remembering that the quest for the Neoplatonically conceived direct vision of God is not a new theme in the work of Augustine, and appears with particular strength in the early philosophical dialogues, which Augustine wrote shortly after his conversion. These works are characterized by a frankly Neoplatonic agenda aiming at the contemplation of a Plotinian divine triad.[19] Augustine lavishes praise upon both Plato and Plotinus;[20] employs Cicero's *Hortensius* as his main instrument of the philosophical conversion of the youth attached to him;[21] and there is everywhere breathed an (almost insufferable) optimism regarding the capacity of "philosophy" to induct those converted to it into the vision of God's eternal light.[22] The only function which the Incarnation seems to have in this system is as an authoritative injunction to a faith in the ability of philosophy to lead one back to God – a faith which will serve to purify our minds so that the philosophical ascent may be successfully completed.[23]

Du Roy (1966) has characterized this early relation between faith and reason as one in which the philosophical agenda remains definitive, essentially unaffected by a faith which serves only as a sort of

extrinsic adjunct helpful to the process but not even, in every case, necessary.[24] However, it is more difficult to agree when he (and others echoing him)[25] go on to remark that this relation remains character-istic of Augustine's work for the rest of his life, with minor variation.[26] In the first place, such a way of thinking ignores Augustine's pointed remarks, both in the *conf.* and in the *retr.*, about his earlier works in general, as well as the more specific observation made about each of the earlier works in the various chapters of the *retr.*[27] But what this view fails to take seriously above all is the *trin.*, and here we can begin to see the deleterious effect of regarding this work as separable into two "halves," essentially extrinsic to each other, one belonging in a general way to "faith" and one to "reason."

I would suggest, instead, that the *trin.* uses the Neoplatonic soteri-ology of ascent only to impress it into the service of a thoroughgoing critique of its claim to raise the inductee to the contemplation of God, a critique which, more generally, becomes a declaration of the futility of any attempt to come to any saving knowledge of God apart from Christ.

In books 5–7, Augustine attacks the "Arians,"[28] as well as what he conceives to be an inadequate orthodox response to the Arian posi-tion. This discussion serves to point the reader to an awareness of the absolute uniqueness of the being of God and hence the necessity of a new sort of thinking which rises beyond images or categories appro-priate only to creaturely life.[29] The language developed in book 5 for speaking about the Trinitarian relations is a way of constructing a vocabulary which will preserve rather than reduce (as the "Arians" do) the absolute uniqueness of the *esse* of God. And in book 7, with the failure to discover any positive content for the term *persona*,[30] we are forcefully pushed as it were to the brink of language itself, per-suaded, finally, that any closer apprehension of the divine essence will have to be without words and without any mental pictures whatso-ever. We are persuaded, in other words, of the necessity of the ascent, upon which, in book 8, we immediately embark.

There are actually two consecutive attempts to tread the way of the ascent in the *trin.*, one coincident with book 8, and the other devel-oped off and on in the sequence of books 9–14.[31] But the most strik-ing point about both attempts is that they fail. Neither one of them delivers us to the contemplation of the Trinity which we have been expecting all along. Of course, there is nothing new in attempts at

Plotinian ascents ending in failure. We can all recall that Porphyry reports that he completed the ascent only once, and that even Plotinus was not many times more successful.[32] But there *is* something new in structuring a work so that the whole is predicated upon a *deliberate* failure, especially when the work has already persuaded us that the ascent is necessary. The failure of the first attempt is recorded in language very similar to Augustine's account of his own first encounter with the divine "light" in book 7 of the *conf*.[33] What Augustine discovered there when he finally succeeded in making the ascent was not the secure contemplation of God, but rather the *distance* that existed between himself and God.[34] And we, reading book 8 of the *trin*., also find from the very experience that we are too "weak" to keep the "eye of our minds fixed" on the splendor we glimpse.

We should not be surprised to reach this point of failure, for Augustine had announced it as his intention from the opening chapters of book 1 (chapters which were among the last to be written,[35] and which therefore have some claim to reflecting Augustine's final view of the work). Pointing out how difficult it is to "see" and "fully know" the substance of God,[36] and that faith is necessary if we are to "see the ineffable ineffably,"[37] Augustine goes on to state that his treatise will serve to point out precisely this. His reasoned explanation of how the "Trinity is the one, only, and true God"[38] will function to show all who inquire, from their own "actual experience,"

> *both* that the highest good, which is perceived only by minds which are wholly purified, exists, *and* that they themselves are unable to see or to comprehend it … because the weak eye of the human mind cannot be fixed on a light so dazzling, unless it has been nourished and become stronger by the justice of faith.[39]

This is not a promise to deliver the reader to contemplation, but simply a promise to show us, by our own experience, that what we seek to contemplate does exist, but that we are too weak to actually contemplate it.[40] And the rest of book 1, in the process of laying out exegetical rules for Trinitarian disputation,[41] develops into a discussion of contemplation as something which will be achieved only eschatologically, when Christ delivers the kingdom – that is, that body in whom he now reigns by faith – to God the Father.[42] Right from the outset, therefore, the ultimate context of the endeavor upon which

we have embarked has been laid out as one which is eschatological.[43] *Noesis*, Plotinianly conceived, has receded to the limiting point of the eschaton, and, if it remains the goal, is only so eschatologically.

Even here, however, Augustine is to some extent echoing Porphyry, who also held that, for most persons, *noesis* would be postponed until after death.[44] But for Augustine, the difference between the two positions is made clear as we proceed upon the second, extended attempt, in books 9–14, to slowly ascend to contemplation through a consideration of our own created minds. This attempt ends in an even more spectacular failure in book 14, where we discover that the image of God which we bear in our minds has become radically disfigured through sin.[45] And thus, when the results are reviewed in book 15, and we attempt to rise to the direct consideration of the Creator, we find that we cannot.[46] Or, more precisely, we find that we have been contemplating an image which is more notable for its lack of similarity than for its similarity, even apart from the disfigurement caused by sin.[47] What we have discovered by making the ascent, by learning to think non-corporeally, is the painful awareness of our own *distance* from God, and that our coming to contemplation will be an onerous lifetime project of seeking, if it is possible at all.

But we have also discovered that to continue the purely introspective Neoplatonic ascent is to continue a process which has not only failed but which *cannot but fail*, for the more we persist in contemplating a disfigured image as though it were not disfigured, as though it were, so to speak, an accurate image of God, the more we persist in furthering the disfigurement. For Augustine, it is this second failure, impossible to avoid, which is meant to definitively break open the absolutely introspective character of the soteriology of ascent. For what is necessary now is not so much an uninterrupted consideration of the image but a "renewal" of the image. And this consists not in the static regard of an essentially unchanging intellect or in the eschatological cleansing of that image from extrinsically accrued bodily taint at death, but in the genuine "growth" of that image itself in, as Augustine puts it, a "gradual," "day by day" "progress," one which is accomplished "holding fast to the faith of the Mediator."

This faith, for Augustine, is what enables us to break the impasse of the introspective soteriology of ascent, and Augustine has already prepared us for this realization. The discussion of the economy of

redemption in books 2–4[48] serves to make the point that if we can see God in this life, it is only, like Moses, the "backparts" of God ("posteriora," Ex. 33:11–23) which we see, namely the flesh of Christ in which he was crucified.[49] And in book 13, in more direct preparation for the failure of book 14, Augustine's lengthy discussion fixes our regard even more firmly outward, on the blood of Christ. He asks, "What is the meaning of *justified by his blood*? What power is there in this blood that believers are justified by it?"[50] Faith in Christ, Augustine insists, means clinging to his blood as the price paid for our redemption, and subsisting on the confidence in the love of God which it reveals. "For what," Augustine asks, "was so necessary for raising our hopes and for liberating the minds of mortals … than to show how highly God esteemed us and how much God loved us?"[51] Our minds are liberated by this faith because, in faith, the awareness of the absolute distance separating God and ourselves – an awareness which we necessarily come to on our ascent to contemplation – becomes a coincident awareness of the love of God which crossed that distance. And the greater and more painfully aware we are of the distance, the more we become aware of the love of God. Thus, we are freed from the necessity of what Augustine regards as stop-gap, self-generated, and self-defeating philosophical measures which serve to remove the painful awareness of distance by in effect denying it rather than actually bridging it.[52]

But what it is important to note here is not simply that we have a new "way" for completing an ascent which remains definitively Neoplatonic in its goal, but that the goal – *noesis* itself – has acquired a new character. Our contemplative regard is pushed outward, from the consideration of a static metaphysical self essentially disconnected from the uncomfortable realm of the bodily and historically contingent – that realm which defines our ontological distance from God – to that very realm itself and to the blood, irreducibly contingent and irreducibly historical, which for Augustine became its central node. "Faith" is thus revealed not merely as a propaedeutic to vision, but as a redirecting of the noetic regard to a decidedly un-noetic realm, and "understanding" becomes the position of the self that is constituted by a growth wholly defined in that realm – it becomes, that is, a "seeking." We come to learn then, by book 15, why the Psalmist could say, "Seek his face evermore" (Ps. 104.4):

> If therefore, He who is sought can be found, why was it said, *Seek his face evermore?* Or is He perhaps still to be sought even when He is found? For so we ought to seek incomprehensible things, lest we should think that we have found nothing, when we find how incomprehensible is the thing which we are seeking … Faith seeks; understanding finds; and therefore the prophet has said, *Unless you believe, you shall not understand.* And again the understanding still seeks Him whom it has found: … for this reason, then, humans ought to attain understanding in order that we may seek God.[53]

*Noesis* itself has become, or at least has been replaced by, an "understanding" which is itself a seeking. In bringing us to this point, Augustine has discharged the intention first announced in the prologue to book 1, and he has created a work which is in effect a re-issuing of the earlier philosophical dialogues, but here radically redone, as a critique of the position that there is any accurate or saving knowledge of the Trinity apart from faith in Christ.[54]

And thus, the *trin.* is not in the first instance a purely "speculative" work inquiring into the mystery of the Trinity for the sake of systematizing Christian dogma, but finds its context rather in a polemical dialogue, visible in other, more familiar parts of the Augustinian corpus, against Neoplatonic views of salvation and also against (as Augustine sees it) overly Platonizing Christian views.[55] I agree with Zum Brunn (1988) when she notes in a related context that:

> the problem that faces us … appears to be that of the interpenetration of two spiritualities and of two cultures more than that of reason and Revelation, philosophy and faith.[56]

I would add, however, that, from Augustine's point of view, he is in the *trin.* arguing on behalf of one particular faith and spirituality against another,[57] and of the modification of the notion of "understanding" which that faith, as he sees it, entails.

## Acknowledgments

# Notes

1   In *ep*. 169 (late 415), Augustine tells Evodius "… nec libros de trinitate, quos diu in manibus verso nondumque complevi, modo adtendere velim, quoniam nimis operosi sunt et a *paucis* eos intellegi posse arbitror" (*ep*. 169.1.1, p. 612.6–9). He thought of the *City of God* as a more pressing work, likely to be of benefit, by contrast, to many. Five years earlier, Augustine had written a reply to the monk Consentius (*ep*. 120.3.13), where he noted the "extreme difficulty" of the subject of the Trinity: "… volo, ut leges ea, quae ad istam quaestionem pertinentia iam multo conscripsimus, illa etiam, quae in manibus habemus et propter magnitudinem tam difficilis quaestionis nondum possumus explicare" (p. 715.18–21). Cf. also *ep*. 143.4 (ca. 412, to Marcellinus).

2   Still standard is Schmaus (1927), as well as Schindler (1965). La Bonnardière (1965) and Hendrikx (in his introduction to text at 9–14 of BA 15) provide the best chronology of the *trin*., at which Augustine worked on and off for some 20 years (finished ca. 420), finally publishing it in a version less polished than originally planned – the unfinished work had previously been stolen and circulated in an unauthorized version, and Augustine did not want the final version to differ too drastically from what was already circulated (see *ep*. 174, the prologue to *trin*.). Since book 15 and the prologues to the earlier books were the last parts to be written, these have a special claim on our attention as representing Augustine's final understanding of the work as a whole. [See chapter 11 below for updated bibliography on *trin*.]

3   Brown (1967), 277.

4   *trin*. Prologue: "… praecedentibus [libros] consequentes inquisitione proficiente nectuntur" (lines 9–10). Translated by McKenna (1963).

5   Thus, for example, E. Hendrikx in his introduction to the BA edition and translation (BA 15), divides the work into part I, "The Truth of the Church's Dogma Demonstrated from Scriptures," and part II, "The Explication and Deepening of the Dogma by Speculation," while the edition itself is divided into two volumes, books 1–7 corresponding to "*La mystère*," and books 8–15 to "*Les images*" (BA was edited and translated by P. Agaësse, S.J. and J. Moingt, S.J.). Even as recently

as 1986, Chadwick essentially repeats this standard conception of the work, which has authoritative defenders all the way back to Marrou (who keeps book 8 with the first seven books; see Marrou (1958), 315–27). Hill (1991), in the introduction to his new translation of the *trin.* (*WSA* I/5), notes that "the *De Trinitate* divides itself fairly obviously into two parts, Books I–VII … and Books VIII–XV" (21). Hill, however, modifies this by describing a chiastic structure (26–27) and pointing to the "dramatic" character of the *trin.* (18–19), linking books 9–14 with the economy of salvation (see 25–26, 258–263).

6   It is true that Augustine marks book 8 as a turning point in the work, both in the course of the text itself (8.P) and in the review given at 15.6.10 and at 15.3.5, and I do not wish to underestimate these markers. But the standard interpretation tends to over-interpret them, holding the two "halves" apart to the point where their relation becomes almost purely extrinsic, as though the two "halves" could almost be separate works (or at least separate volumes), and thus the "understanding" of what one "believes" becomes a moment formally separable from faith itself (as perhaps in some later scholastic treatments of "faith seeking understanding"). Surely one of the reasons these two halves are placed together – one of the reasons for Augustine's special insistence on the "continuous development of the argument" – is precisely to qualify any claims, philosophical or otherwise, that what one knows in faith and what one knows by understanding are different, or that what one learns by philosophical intro-spection is different and over and above what one learns from exegesis (see n. 42). In book 8, we are informed that we are now proceeding "modo interiore," but this does not mean that we have not been operating on the basis of "reason" before this; actually, it implies a continuity of process, only in a different "style." In the summary of the treatise given in book 15, book 8 is marked as that book where the Trinity began "to dawn on us," but this once again can signify the term of a process, not a new process.

7   McKenna (1963), xii.

8   As, for example, in the *Tractates on John*, a project that Augustine was working on concurrently with the *trin.* See, for example, *Io. eu. tr.* 1.1.13–17. For other passages, and on the distinction between the *animales* and *spiritales*, see Teske (1984).

9   At *Acad.* 2.1, Romanianus is invited to join the "few" (2.1.1.14) for whom philosophy will bear fruit in the knowledge of the truth (2.3.9.56–58). In the *beata u.*, the "few" ("pauci," 1.1.6) are those who make it to the "port of phi-losophy" (1.1.1), some of whom go on to arrive at the happy life, where, Augustine presumes, Manlius Theodorus has already arrived (1.5.118–19; cf. *ord.* 1.11.31.18–23).

10  A full-scale study of this issue will have to await another article, but we can surely include Evodius among correspondents from the period during the composition of the *trin.* In *ep.* 169 (see n. 2), Augustine discusses with Evodius

all of the issues which, from his point of view, will limit the appeal of the *trin.* to only a "few," and he fully expects Evodius to understand the discussions in the *trin.* when it is finally published. In *ep.* 162, Augustine identifies the issues which Evodius has repeatedly raised (in *ep.* 158, 160, and 161) as those which will be treated in the *trin.* and the *Gn. litt.* (*ep.* 162.2, p. 512.18–513.3). In *ep.* 159.2 (p. 499.17–18), Augustine refers Evodius to *Gn. litt.* 12, a highly sophisticated discussion of visions and the seeing of God such as only the "few" would understand. The list of correspondents would also include the lady Paulina, who had asked Augustine about how God is seen. Augustine's answer is a small treatise (*ep.* 147), denoted "On the Vision of God" at *retr.* 2.67, where Augustine also notes that its subject is "truly most difficult." If anything, it is treated more thoroughly than the corresponding treatment given for Evodius in *ep.* 162. Chapters 3–4 and 41–44 are typical of the exhortation to vision and spiritual ascent, which are reserved for the "few" and are reminiscent of many passages in the *trin.* Our list must also include Dardanus, praetorian prefect of Gaul and recipient of *ep.* 187, the treatise "On the Presence of God" (*retr.* 2.75). Prompted by Dardanus' request, and prefaced by a compliment on Dardanus' powers of reflection (a compliment which Augustine only rarely gives out, *ep.* 187.1.2, p. 83.4–5), it is a complex treatment of issues related to how to think about the non-corporeal omnipresence of God who is "everywhere wholly present" (see n. 56 for further treatment). A preliminary list would also have to include Paulinus of Nola, as well as Marcellinus, frequent correspondent and the dedicatee of the *ciu.*, and Marcellinus' friend Volusianus, who deftly raises explicitly philosophical questions for discussion by Augustine (see *ep.* 135 and 136), and whom Augustine answers in the complex *ep.* 137. The monk Consentius (of *ep.* 119 and 120) may also be included, although his understanding is not accorded the same esteem that Augustine cedes to those already mentioned. Among Augustine's correspondents before the period of the composition of the *trin.* (and not already mentioned here), we can recognize Nebridius (*ep.* 3–14; note especially *ep.* 11, an early letter on the Trinity), Zenobius (*ep.* 2, to whom the *ord.* is dedicated), Romanianus (*ep.* 15; cf. Paulinus and Therasia's letter to him at *ep.* 32), and perhaps Hermogenianus (to whom Augustine has submitted the *Acad.* for correction or comment, *ep.* 1).

11  For example, in the *beata u.*, Augustine explains that this is what he learned from Ambrose and Manlius Theodorus (1.4.91–94), and, in the *ord.*, Augustine explains that a "few" healthy intellects "behold" the invisible, spiritual world: "Esse autem alium mundum ab istis oculis remotissimum, quem paucorum sanorum intellectus intuetur" (*ord.* 1.11.32.44–46). By the time of *ep.* 169 to Evodius, what is "discerned" by the "few" (*ep.* 169.1.2, p. 612.17) is much more specific, namely the "ineffabilem trinitatis unitatem, sicut discernitur in animo nostro memoria, intellectus, voluntas" (*ep.* 169.1.2, p. 612.13–15). The parallels with the subject of books 9 and 10 of the *trin.* are obvious. Further, it is clear

from Evodius' own letter (*ep*. 158.6) that he is himself in the habit of thinking about just these issues, including the incorporeal oneness of memory, understanding, and will (p. 492.3–7).

12   See, for example, his instructions to Paulina at *ep*. 147.43; the long instruction to Consentius in *ep*. 120.2.9–12 (followed by the recommendation to read the *trin*. when it is finished, 120.3.13, p. 715.18–21); and that to Volusianus at *ep*. 137.2.4–8 (in the *trin*., cf., e.g. 1.1.1, 5.1.1–2, 10.10.16).

13   In the *conf*., as a result of reading the "Platonic books" (*conf*. 7.9.13.5–6), Augustine can say, "Numquid nihil est veritas, quoniam neque per finita neque per infinita locorum spatia diffusa est?" (*conf*. 7.10.16.22–23). The *beata u*. (1.4.99) specifies Plotinus as the source (following Green's text, which defends the reading "Plotinus" as opposed to "Plato").

14   See Marrou's classic treatment of this theme (1958, 298–327), and also BA 16, 612–614 ("note complémentaire," 30). For a parallel idea in Plotinus, see Trouillard (1955), 163–165 ("Sciences et dialectique purificatrices"). On the ascent in general, see also Van Fleteren (1974), 29–72.

15   Note, for example, the expression at *trin*. 12.8.13.1, "Ascendentibus itaque introrsus quibusdam gradibus …," cf. *trin*. 14.3.5.29–30, where "ab inferioribus ad superiora ascendentes" is parallel to "ab exterioribus ad interiora ingredientes."

16   On *noesis* in Plotinus and Porphyry, see Smith (1974), esp. 20–39. The philosophical "few" of Augustine's early dialogues are the same "few" to whom Porphyry thought high philosophical vision would be limited. See, for example, Augustine's citation of him at *ciu*. 10.29 (= Bidez fragment 10, in Bidez (1964), p. 37, lines 12–13): "'ad Deum per virtutem intellegentiae pervenire paucis' dicis esse concessum." On Porphyry and Augustine, see TeSelle (1974), 113–147.

17   With reference to the preceding six books: "Volentes in rebus quae factae sunt ad cognoscendum eum a quo factae sunt exercere lectorem iam pervenimus ad eius imaginem quod est homo in eo quo ceteris animalibus antecellit, id est ratione vel intellegentia …" (*trin*. 15.1.1.1–4; see also 15.6.10.55–58, cited in n. 46).

18   On the word "anagogy," see Zum Brunn (1988), 4. She takes the expression over from du Roy (1966), who explains his usage at 170, n. 6.

19   See du Roy (1966), 147–148. Note, for example, at *ord*. 2.9.26, what makes the "few" the "few" is that they can contemplate Intellect and the First Principle (= Nous and the One): those eager to learn ("studiosi," line 1) will in fact eventually learn "quid [sit] intellectus, in quo universa sunt – vel ipsa potius universa – et quid praeter universa universorum principium. Ad quam cognitionem in hac vita pervenire *pauci*, ultra quam vero etiam post hanc vitam nemo progredi potest" (lines 17–20). See also *ord*. 2.5.16.2–3, 47–50: "philosophia rationem promittit et vix paucissima; liberat … Germana philosophia est, quam ut doceat, quod sit omnium rerum principium sine principio quantusque in eo maneat intellectus quidve inde in nostram salutem sine ulla degeneratione manaverit …"

20  For example, *Acad*. 3.18.41.41–46: "… os illud Platonis, quod in philosophia pur-gatissimum est et lucidissimum, dimotis nubibus erroris emicuit maxime in Plotino, qui Platonicus philosophus ita eius similis iudicatus est, ut simul eos vixisse, tantum autem interest temporis, ut in hoc ille revixisse putandus sit" (cf. also *Acad*. 3.17.38.42, which refers approvingly to "Platonica illa velut sacrosancta decreta"). Augustine retracts this praise at *retr*. 1.1.4.99–102: "Laus quoque ipsa qua Platonem vel Platonicos sive Academicos philosophos tantum extuli, quantum impios hom-ines non oportuit, non inmerito mihi displicuit, praesertim contra quorum errores magnos defendenda est christiana doctrina." This sentence could sum up the *trin*. as itself a kind of *retractatio* of the earlier dialogues (see n. 55).

21  For example, the whole agenda of the *beata u*. derives from the *Hortensius*, the beginning ("Beatos nos esse volumus," see *trin*. 13.4.7.32–35) of which is cited as the announcement of the argument of the *beata u*. (2.10.85; note how promi-nent the *Hortensius* is in Augustine's account of his conversion just previously, at *beata u*. 1.10.85). See also *Acad*. 1.1.4.97–98, which shows that Augustine is still using Cicero's *Hortensius* as a kind of textbook, useful for helping people begin their study of philosophy.

22  As, for example, at *Acad*. 1.3.77–80.

23  On Augustine's early view of the role of the Incarnation, see O'Connell (1968), 265–278. In du Roy (1966), see pp. 109–148, where he notes "Les dialogues de Cassiciacum nous confirment aussi que, dès sa première théologie, il a tire les conséquences de l'ordre des mystères chrétiens qui fut celui de sa découverte: la Trinité peut être connue avant même l'Incarnation, et sa connaissance, quoique confuse et orgueilleuse, se trouve déjà chez les philosophes païens. L'autorité ou la foi n'est là que pour nous purifier de la convoitise des sens et de l'orgueil de l'esprit" (148).

24  See, for example, du Roy (1966), 125, commenting on *ord*. 5.16, 157.16–20.

25  For example, Zum Brunn (1988), 93, and 95, n. 8.

26  There is a particularly damning judgment on 105: "Si le mode suprême de con-naissance a pu être atteint en quelque mesure par les philosophes païens sans la foi, si donc l'illumination suprême n'est transformée intrinsèquement par la foi, si c'est seulement le degré et la stabilité qui diffèrent, alors le Dieu révélé, le Dieu Trinité, peut être connu en dehors de l'économie de la révélation … On conçoit que, la foi ne modifiant radicalement (ni explicitement, ni consciem-ment du moins) le mouvement propre de *l'intellectus* …" The "anteriority" of knowledge of the Trinity to knowledge of the Incarnation is a "fundamental articulation" of Augustinian theology (97), and as such it constitutes Augustine as a kind of crypto-gnostic (see especially 419). In Augustine, the relation between faith and understanding always remains "extrinsic" (456).

27  In the *conf*., Augustine notes of his literary activity at Cassiciacum, "Ibi quid egerim in litteris iam quidem servientibus tibi, sed adhuc superbiae scholam tamquam in pausatione anhelantibus testantur libri disputati cum praesentibus

et cum ipso ne solo coram te …" (*conf.* 9.4.1.4–1). One need only peruse the early chapters of the *retr.* to provide specification for this observation. Many of the comments are directed against excessive praise of philosophers or of philosophy itself.

28  Eunomius is mentioned at *trin.* 15.20.38.1–2, but it is not clear that the "Arians" refuted in books 5–7 (*trin.* 5.3.4.3; 6.1.1.8; 6.9.10.11; cf. 2.15.25.15) are Eunomians. On the identity of these "Arians," see Barnes (1993).

29  See especially *trin.* 5.1.1.1–6, 39–46, and note the specification of this in terms of the 10 categories (given at *trin.* 5.7.8), some of which apply only metaphorically to God (*trin.* 5.8.9), and the rest of which, except for the category of substance (and, at *trin.* 1.5.10, even this is suspect, so that God, and God alone, should rather be called "essentia"), must be applied only in an accommodated sense, since there is no accident in God (*trin.* 5.4–5). In particular, there are no accidental, but only eternal, relations (*trin.* 5.5.6).

30  *trin.* 7.4.7.1–5; 7.4.9.117–120.

31  This is clear from the summary that Augustine gives at *trin.* 15.6.10. Book 8 attempted to "raise" ("erigere," *trin.* 15.6.10.34) our minds to the unchangeable nature which is not our mind, but this failed because we could not keep the eye of our mind fixed firmly on the brilliance of its ineffable light (*trin.* 15.6.10.46–48), and thus we turned in books 9–14 (*trin.* 15.6.10.54) to a consideration of the image, in order that, with Romans 1:20 – Augustine's favorite biblical description of the ascent – we might understand the invisible things of God through those which are made.

32  See Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, in Armstrong (1966), 23.

33  In *trin.* 15.6.10.34–40, Augustine points out that in the eighth book "erigere temptavimus mentis intentionem ad intellegendam illam praestantissimam immutabilemque naturam quod nostra mens non est. Quam tamen sic intuebamur ut nec longe a nobis esset et supra nos esset, non loco sed ipsa sui venerabili mirabilique praestantia ita ut apud nos esse suo praesenti lumine videretur. In qua tamen nobis adhuc nulla trinitas apparebat quia non ad eam quaerendam in fulgore illo firmam mentis aciem tenebamus" (cf. *trin.* 15.6.10.46–48; and see also 8.2.3.28–40). These passages may be usefully compared to *conf.* 7.17.23.27–32 and similar passages.

34  Of course, *conf.* 7.10.16.17 ("et inveni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis") comes to mind, but see also, for example, *conf.* 11.9.11.4–15.

35  See La Bonnardière (1965), 176.

36  *trin.* 1.1.3.69–71.

37  *trin.* 1.1.3.72–75.

38  *trin.* 1.2.4.3.

39  "… suscipiemus … reddere rationem, quod trinitas; sit unus et solus et verus deus … ut non quasi nostris excusationibus inludantur sed reipsa experiantur et esse illud summum bonum quod purgatissimis mentibus cernitur, et a se

propterea cerni comprehendique non posse quia mentis humanae acies invalida in tam excellenti luce non figitur nisi *per iustitiam fidei* (Rom. 4:13) nutrita vegetetur" (1.2.4.1–2, 3, 6–11).

40    Augustine goes on to give a hint about those for whom this service will be accomplished: "… si voluerit et adiuverit deus, istis garrulis ratiocinatoribus, elatioribus quam capacioribus atque ideo morbo periculosiore laborantibus, sic fortasse serviemus ut inveniant aliquid unde dubitari non possint, et ob hoc in eo quod invenire nequiverint, de suis mentibus potius quam de ipsa veritate vel de nostris disputationibus conquerantur. Atque ita si quid eis erga deum vel amoris est vel timoris, ad initium fidei et ordinem redeant …" (*trin.* 1.2.4.13–20). Can we begin to put faces on "these chattering reasoners," for whom Augustine says he will render this service? They are certainly a part of the "discerning few" in *ep.* 169 to Evodius (169.1.2), those in particular about whom Augustine complains later in the letter: "nonnulli a corporibus incorporea discernentes, cum sibi ex hoc magni videntur et inrident *stultitiam praedicationis* (1 Cor. 1:21), qua salvi fiunt credentes, ab unica via longe exerrent, quae ad vitam aeternam sola perducit" (*ep.* 169.1.4, p. 614.10–13). It is these whom the *trin.* promises to "return" to the "initium fidei." Perhaps one may think, in this connection, of Manlius Theodorus, to whom Augustine dedicated the *beata u.* but later regretted the dedication (or, at least, the praise with which it was given – see *retr.* 1.2). Did Augustine come to regard him as overly Platonizing? Courcelle (1950) describes Manlius Theodorus as Augustine's "maître" after Ambrose, and explains Augustine's later severity toward Theodorus as follows: "la raison de cette sévérite tient à ce que, vers la date de rédaction des *Confessions*, Theodorus venait de reprendre une vie mondaine et quasi-païenne: Symmaque dans ses lettres, Claudien dans un panégyrique en vers, le félicitent d'avoir obtenu le consulat pour l'an 399 et de fournir aux Romains des jeux à grands spectacles" (154; see 153–56 on Theodorus in general). Such a Theodorus, Augustine might think, would need to be returned to the "initium fidei." One may also think of the relatively innocuous but obnoxious Dioscorus of *ep.* 117 and 118, for whom Augustine points out the errors of the philosophers, the "Platonists" included, in the context of the sort of discussion of God's incorporeality which he might have with a member of the "few" (in this case, a would-be member).

41    The best article on these rules is Pelikan (1987–1988). Pelikan points out quite rightly that the first, "exegetical," half of the *trin.* is often ignored by scholars despite its importance to Augustine. But if, as Pelikan points out (25), the "immediate source" for the *canonica regula* is Phil. 2:5–11, this implies that Trinitarian hermeneutics, or any attempt to "understand" Scriptural teaching on the Trinity, will consist in and arise from a sustained reflection on the mysteries of God's saving work in Christ. This is why the two "halves" are placed together: one's coming to understand the Trinity is not separable from reflection on the economy of salvation (*pace* Gunton (1990), esp. 48, italicized

passage), but is in fact coincident with such reflection. It is Scripture itself which, as Augustine points out at the very beginning of the treatise (*trin*. 1.1.2; cf. *ep*. 137 to Volusianus), mandates and engages us upon the ascent to understanding. The ascent *is* exegesis of the text, but it is an exegesis governed by *canonica regula* which forms the ascent, and thus the ascent itself occurs as a reflection upon the economy of salvation in which the Son of God "emptied himself." The point of placing the two "halves" together is that, when in book 8 we come to tread the path "modo interiore," we do not depart from reflection on the economy of salvation, but, on the contrary, we find its absolute priority demonstrated. The *Io. eu. tr.* would be another good example of the coincidence of exegesis and ascent.

42   1 Cor. 15:24; see, for example, *trin*. 1.18.17.80–95.

43   Note that the stages of this drama are marked by Scriptural citations which are introduced in book 1, and which serve, at crucial points in the narrative, as reprises of the eschatological themes laid out in book 1. These include Ps. 104:4 ("Seek His face evermore …"; *trin*. 1.3.5.5); 1 Jn. 3:2 ("We shall be like Him, since we shall see Him just as He is"; *trin*. 1.13.31.172); 1 Cor. 13:12 ("We see now in a glass darkly, but then face to face," *trin*. 1.8.16.63, cited 14 more times in book 1 alone, and then in every succeeding book except book 11); 2 Cor. 5:7 ("For we walk by faith, not by sight," *trin*. 1.8.17.114–115).

44   *ciu*. 10.29 = Bidez fr. 10 (in Bidez (1964), p37, 17–19): "nec ipse dubitas 'in hac vita hominem nullo modo ad perfectionem sapientiae pervenire …'"

45   Scripture teaches and "has pity upon" the deformed divine image ("deformitatem dignitatis eius miserans divina scriptura," *trin*. 14.4.6.13–14) which is the mind, and of which the reader is about to ascend to consideration (*trin*. 14.8.11.1–7). In fact, however, we were already at this point earlier: we *had* ascended to the consideration of this image in book 10, and were about to ascend to consideration of that immutable nature (God) of which the mind is an image ("Iamne igitur ascendendum est qualibuscumque intentionis viribus ad illam summam et altissimam essentiam cuius impar imago est humana mens sed tamen imago?" *trin*. 10.12.19.1–3; equivalent to the step about to be taken yet another time in book 15: see *trin*. 15.1.1; 15.4.6), when we were prevented from doing it because of the way in which the mind tends *not* actually to stay in self-awareness, as it would if it were truly philosophic and able to think incorporeally, but to picture itself in a "phantasy," as extended, etc. (*trin*. 10.5, 6, 7, 10). This inability is really a kind of failure of the ascent, and it causes the long detour of books 11–13, in which Augustine attempts to help the reader distinguish between the trinities of sense and the mind's knowledge of itself (*trin*. 10.12.19.6–12, 18–22; 14.6.9.55–61; 14.7.10.58–61). But this detour essentially comes back to the point of failure, as though we now learn that the mind's inability to be aware of itself was a more serious problem than first thought, and in fact reflects the deformity of the image of God itself, and thus of its radical

need for transformation by God's love. *Trin.* 14.14.20 and 16.22 describe the mind's inability to know and love itself as due to an undue attachment to and thus conformation to lust for things beneath it, and that it is our job to "turn away" from this disfigurement or conformation to the world (*trin.* 14.16.22.1–4) – but that this "reformation" (cf. Rom 12:2) must be God's work (*trin.* 14.16.22.5–7); it does not occur in the one moment of conversion, but is a long course of healing (*trin.* 14.17.23.1–11) and of day-by-day progress and growth in clinging to the faith of the Mediator; and full vision will only come after death ("In quo provectu et accessu tenentem mediatoris fidem cum dies vitae huius ultimus quemque compererit, perducendus ad deum quem coluit et ab eo perficiendus …; in hac quippe imagine tunc perfecta erit dei similitudo quando dei perfecta erit visio," *trin.* 14.17.23.26–29, 31–32). Awareness of the need for reformation is the true fulfillment of the Delphic "Know Thyself" (*trin.* 10.9.12.4, 7, 16), and love of God and neighbor in faith (*trin.* 14.14.18.26–31) is the true delivery from misery to happiness, the true love of wisdom, or "philosophy" (*trin.* 14.1.2.32–38), which will, unbeknownst to Cicero, be the fulfillment of the exhortation in the *Hortensius* (*trin.* 14.19.26).

46   *trin.* 15.6.10.55–58: "Et ecce iam quantum necesse fuerat aut forte plus quam necesse fuerat exercitata in inferioribus intellegentia ad summam trinitatem quae deus est conspiciendam nos erigere volumus nec valemus"; cf. *trin.* 15.27.50.71–74, 89–91.

47   *trin.* 15.7.11–13 is an extended discussion of the unlikeness of God and God's image in us (cf. the parallel discussion in *ep.* 169.2.6, to Evodius, some 5 years earlier than book 15; note also the "ontological gap" mentioned by Van Fleteren (1987–1988), 224). Du Roy (1966) notices and comments upon the failures of ascent (of book 8 and book 15) and the discussions of the unlikeness of the image, but he can see them only as a "betrayal" of the "most profound aspirations" of Augustine's *intellectus fidei* (447), and he dissociates them from the overall anagogy of the *trin.*: "Le livre XV va consacrer cet échec de l'anagogie en s'installant résolument dans l'analogie et en faisant le bilan des livres VIII à XIV. Il commence donc par les résumer. Puis il invite à s'élever jusqu'à la Trinité divine. Mais ce n'est plus par une méthode anagogique, c'est par une attribution analogique des perfections créés au Créateur" (446). But Augustine, by reviewing the plan of the whole work, presents this moment as the culmination of the anagogy: it is the last "step," the one "above" (*trin.* 15.1.1.9) our nature, and it is our attempt to take this step which is analyzed. The language about "like" and "unlike"; "higher" and "lower"; and "better" and "best" (in this context, see especially *trin.* 15.4.6) is constitutive of the dissimilarities (e.g. eternal vs. temporal, immutable vs. changeable, spiritual vs. corporeal) which enable the ascent to proceed. The point is not that, at the end of anagogy, we come to "analogy," but rather that *the same logic which defines the ascent also defines its failure* – that is, that the spirituality of introspective ascent is inherently

self-defeating. The anagogical path itself becomes a demonstration of the need for transformation and grace (explained in *trin*. 15 at 15.8.14, immediately following the failure of the ascent and the discussion of the dissimilarity of the image). Du Roy's (1966) distinction between anagogy and analogy here seems without textual warrant, imported from another (Thomistic?) world of thought in order to preserve his contention that Augustine believes there is (natural?) knowledge of the Trinity available independent of faith. Thus, when the anagogy fails to raise us to understanding of the Trinity, the failure cannot be part of Augustine's own fundamental intentions – as a *critique* of the anagogical spirituality – but must instead be a "betrayal" of Augustine's intentions.

48    With prologues, which Augustine added later to ensure that we do not lose sight both of the request for vision which he is entertaining and of its limitations. Compare, for example, Books 2–4 of the *trin*. to *ep*. 137 to Volusianus, where the discussion of the theophanies and the Incarnation, in connection with a discussion on how we see God, is a response to a (Porphyrian?) critique that Christians localize God in a body.

49    "Non incongruenter ex persona domini nostri Iesu Christi praefiguratum solet intellegi ut posteriora eius accipiantur caro eius in qua de virgine natus est et mortuus et resurrexit … Facies autem eius illa dei forma … Illa est ergo species quae rapit omnem animam rationalem desiderio sui tanto ardentiorem quanto mundiorem et tanto mundiorem quanto ad spiritalia resurgentem, tanto autem ad spiritalia resurgentem quanto a carnalibus morientem. Sed *dum peregrinamur a domino et per fidem ambulamus non per speciem* (2 Cor. 5:6–7), posteriora Christi, hoc est carnem, per ipsam fidem videre debemus…" (*trin*. 2.17.28.1–4, 6, 37–43). Aspiring to this contemplation means "building up" the neighbor in love (*trin*. 2.17.28.29–30).

50    *trin*. 13.11.15.1–3, "Sed quid est *iustificati in sanguine ipsius*? (Rom. 5:9). Quae vis est huius sanguinis obsecro ut in eo iustificentur credentes?"

51    *trin*. 13.10.13.11–15: "Quid enim tam necessarium fuit ad erigendam spem nostram mentesque mortalium conditione ipsius mortalitatis abiectas ab immortalitatis desperatione liberandas quam ut demonstraretur nobis quanti nos penderet deus quantumque diligeret?"

52    In the *trin*., see 4.15.20 (especially lines 1–3, 10–17: "Sunt autem quidam qui se putant ad contemplandum deum et inhaerendum deo virtute propria posse purgari, quos ipsa superbia maxime maculat … Hinc enim sibi purgationem isti virtute propria pollicentur quia nonnulli eorum potuerunt aciem mentis ultra omnem creaturam transmittere et lucem incommutabilis veritatis quantulacumque ex parte contingere, quod christianos multos [as opposed to the "few"] ex fide interim sola viventes nondum potuisse derident. Sed quid prodest superbienti et ob hoc erubescenti lignum conscendere [the only "ascent" which works] de longinquo prospicere patriam transmarinam?" Also see *trin*. 13.19.24.32–55 ("sine mediatore, id est sine homine Christo

philasophati sunt," lines 40–41; cf. 14.19.26.64–68, where books 4 and 13 are mentioned).

53  "Si ergo quaesitus inveniri potest, cur dictum est *Quaerite faciem eius semper* (Ps. 104 : 4)? An et inventus forte quaerendus est? Sic enim sunt incomprehensibilia requirenda ne se existimet nihil invenisse qui quam sit incomprehensibile quod quaerebat potuerit invenire…. Fides quaerit, intellectus invenit; propter quod ait propheta: *Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis* (Isa. 7 : 9). Et rursus intellectus eum quem invenit adhuc quaerit… Ad hoc ergo debet esse homo intellegens ut requirat deum" (*trin.* 15.2.2.13–17, 27–29, 31–32).

54  Augustine directs the reader of the *retr.* specifically to the *trin.* for a correction of views expressed in the earlier dialogue literature (the *sol.*, at *retr.* 1.4.4; cf. the comments on the *an. quant.*, *retr.* 1.7.2). The *trin.* is the only work mentioned by name as actually correcting earlier books (of those written up to the time of his priesthood). Also, Augustine returns to his earliest practice of using Cicero's *Hortensius* to set his own agenda. The opening gambit of the *Hortensius* sets the agenda of book 13 in much the same way it set the agenda for the *beata u.* (see n. 22), as though Augustine were almost rewriting or reissuing that treatise but from a new perspective. For if it is true that *beate vivere omnes homines velle* (*trin.* 13.4.7.24–25, 29–30, 35–36, 42–43, with the source actually cited at lines 33–34; 5.8.6, with long citation and attribution at 9–16; etc.), the question becomes what *is* the happy life? The ultimate conclusion is the same – contemplation of the Trinity ("Iam ergo in ipsis rebus aeternis, incorporalibus et immutabilibus in quarum perfecta contemplatione nobis beata quae non nisi aeterna est vita promittitur trinitatem quae deus est …." [*trin.* 15.4.6.1–4]; on the Trinitarian implication of the *beata u.*, which ends with a citation of the Ambrosian verse, "Fove precantes Trinitas," see du Roy (1966), 149–171). But unlike the *beata u.*, book 13 argues that inquiry into the happy life requires not simply an exhortation to philosophy but a discussion of a very unphilosophical topic, the blood of Christ, as the only liberation of human beings from "unhappiness" (*trin.* 13.10.13.2). Faith (*trin.* 13.20.25) is the beginning of the reformation of the image of God in charity (see 13.20.26.64–74, where the mind ["animus"], memory and will, is formed by faith in the blood of the mediator and by *the sort of life* [lines 71–71] which results). This sets the stage for the discussion of renewal in book 14, which continues to refer to the *Hortensius* and which ends by citing the end of the *Hortensius* (*trin.* 14.19.26.31–45), but qualifying its exhortation to philosophy: "Sed iste cursus qui constituitur in amore atque ivestigatione veritatis non sufficit miseris, id est omnibus cum ista sola ratione mortalibus sine fide mediatoris, quod in libris superioribus huius operis, maxime in quarto et tertio decimo quantum potui demonstrare curavi" (*trin.* 14.19.26.64–68). One could think of books 13 and 14 – a discussion whose beginning and end coincides with the beginning and end of the textbook Augustine used at Cassiciacum – as a revision of that textbook and of the works which drew their inspiration from its use.

55    In many cases, what the "few" of the letters and the homilies from the period
      of the composition of the *trin.* finally learn is the impossibility of seeing God
      apart from faith and the works of charity. In the *Io. eu. tr.*, the distinction
      between the few and the many, the milk-fed and those capable of solid food,
      tends to be sublated by the mere fact that Augustine addresses the same homi-
      lies to both, and also by Augustine's tendency to collapse both into an inclusive
      "we" (see, e.g. *Io. eu. tr.* 21.1; 22.1), none of whom can be saved apart from faith
      in the Incarnation and Passion (*Io. eu. tr.* 2.3–4). What purifies the eye is not
      introspection but the works of mercy; love of neighbor is the way in which
      God may be seen (*Io. eu. tr.* 17.8, 18.11). In the letter to Dardanus "On the
      Presence of God" (417), there is a progressive erosion of the idea of the philo-
      sophical few. God's metaphysical presence is "everywhere whole" ("ubique
      totus"), and awareness of it as such would be restricted to the few who can
      think "incorporeally" (see, e.g. *ep.* 187.1.2, p. 83.4–5; 187.4.11, p. 90.2–15;
      187.6.18, p. 96.4–5; note the implications for Trinitarian speculation carefully
      laid out at *ep.* 187.4.15). But, under the increasing exigencies of the polemic
      against Pelagius (see *retr.* 2.75), this presence is, in the course of the letter, dis-
      tinguished from God's "indwelling" by grace (see, e.g. *ep.* 187.5.16, p. 93.18–
      19; p. 94.6–7: "Verum illud est multo mirabilis, quod, cum deus ubique sit
      totus, non tamen in omnibus habitat… unde fatendum est ubique esse deum
      per divinitatis praesentiam sed non ubique per habitationis gratiam"; cf. *ep.*
      187.5.17, p. 94.19–20 and 187.13.58, p. 116.4–8). But if the philosophical few
      and those in whom God dwells by grace are not coincident groups (see *ep.*
      187.9.29), this hugely qualifies any efforts to know God through philosophical
      introspection and greatly relativizes claims to know God from God's (mere)
      metaphysical presence. Finally, and this is the most exhaustive qualification, it
      is only Christ in whom *the fullness of Godhead dwells bodily* (Col. 2:9, *ep.*
      187.13.39, p. 116.9–10), and this is a grace different from and greater than that
      of any of the saints "quantalibet sapientia et sanctitate praestantibus" (*ep.* 13.40,
      p. 117.16) – that is, no matter how exclusive a group you choose to select, no
      matter what the criterion. The *few* have shrunk down to *One*, and it is only by
      being joined to his Body that anyone has any claim on God's indwelling pres-
      ence. This means that when we think of God's presence, we are, as usual, not
      to think of masses and extension (*ep.* 187.13.41), but now the substance of our
      vision, its content, and the direction of our gaze is outward, at the unity and
      charity of the Body of Christ ("Deus caritas est, cum vero eius habitationem
      cogitas, unitatem cogita congregationemque sanctorum …" [*ep.* 187.13.41, p.
      118.9–11]), and our knowledge of God, while not a matter of images or
      extension (c. 11, c. 40), is our growth in charity (*ep.* 187.13.40). Paulina, too,
      discovers that seeing God will mean ascending from corporeal images, but that
      this ascent is accomplished not by introspection but in the renewal of the
      image of God in acts of charity (*ep.* 147.43; Augustine makes sure that the

passage he cites from Ambrose is not understood as meaning that we have any knowledge now apart from faith [*ep.* 147.35] – whether or not Ambrose did mean that is another, and very interesting, question). One could think of the beginning of this process of sublating the "few" as extending back to Augustine's inclusion of his mother – a most unphilosophical figure – in the philosophical discussions of Cassiciacum (see especially *ord.* 1.11.31–33, where Augustine includes Monica as one of the few in whom "philosophy" is advanced even to the point of the fearlessness of death, while at the same time he has to explain to her what the word means).

56   Zum Brunn (1988), 116.
57   See, for example, *trin.* 13.20.25.

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