

AUGUSTINE AND THE TRINITY

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Introduction

I

Even as summary accounts continue to repeat the established caricatures of the past century, new readings of Augustine's Trinitarian theology grow in scholarly detail and density. These new readings, which have largely emerged over the past three decades, argue for new accounts of the fundamental dynamics of Augustine's Trinitarianism; they suggest new questions that we should ask if we are to study him well; they suggest new texts from his corpus as paradigmatic. Many of the older readings of Augustine's Trinitarian theology that have been displaced by this body of scholarship – and which, it must be noted, have not been extensively defended in the scholarly literature for many years – tended to view Augustine in highly negative fashion as the initiator of disastrous trends in Western Christian thought. Augustine was presented as marking a shift in the history of early Christian Trinitarianism, his own overly strong commitment to the divine unity partially being the result of his Neoplatonic engagements and strongly influencing those who came after him. This commitment led him away from the heritage of earlier Greek Nicene theology (and, in some readings, from earlier Latin theology). Even many of those who viewed Augustine positively – and saw his differences from his predecessors as merely delineating sets of complementary theological trajectories – operated with similar assumptions about his work. At the same time, his Trinitarian theology was engaged through an almost exclusive focus on the *De trinitate*.¹

¹ The significance of Theodore De Régnon's *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité* (Paris: Retaux, 1898) in setting the agenda even for those who reversed or adapted his categories has been frequently noted since the publication of Michel Barnes's 'De Régnon Reconsidered', *AugStud* 26 (1995), 51–79. The two most influential twentieth-century treatments of Augustine, both of which offer the now standard critique, are Michael Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des hl. Augustinus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1967) and Olivier Du Roy, *L'Intelligence de la Foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustin. Genèse de sa Théologie Trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris: études Augustiniennes, 1966). In many ways it was reaction to Du Roy's volume that began the shifts

This book is both parasitic on and a contribution to these new readings and it may thus be helpful to note in general terms some of their common themes and emergent trajectories. I say ‘emergent trajectories’ because, since the mid-1960s, most scholars of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology have held to some of the positions I describe here: only in the past fifteen or twenty years has it begun to be possible to point to those who hold to all. It is important to note that these common themes concern not only questions of doctrinal ‘content’, but also questions of method. Thus, the past few decades have seen a growing emphasis on studying Augustine against the background of his immediate peers and predecessors, both theological and philosophical. In the specific field with which I am concerned, once the unlikelihood of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology being best understood as primarily an adaptation of earlier Greek pro-Nicene theology was established by Berthold Altaner, scholars have come to put increasing weight on Augustine’s interaction not only with major Latin theologians such as Ambrose and Hilary, but also with the less-well-known figures of late fourth-century Latin theology and on attempting to identify what might have been available to Augustine in translation. At the same time, rather than assuming that Augustine as major thinker must naturally have been in primary dialogue with the major figures of classical philosophy, scholars have come to see his philosophical knowledge as far more piecemeal, far more dependent on his readings in figures such as Cicero and Apuleius who summarized the opinions of those we moderns count as the ‘major’ figures of the ancient philosophical tradition. Students of Augustine have also become far more attentive to the extent to which his philosophical and theological knowledge grew over his extensive literary career: the Platonic engagements of the *De civitate Dei* tell us little about his knowledge during the 380s.

These methodological emphases have resulted in a greater readiness to note significant development in Augustine’s thought and even the experimental quality of some of his mature texts. A text such as the *De trinitate* is thus increasingly viewed not as a non-polemical summative statement, but as the product of many years of development – and of a development that did not end with the final words of that text. Increasing awareness of the peculiar concerns and nature of this work is also leading scholars to become aware of discontinuities as well as continuities between Augustine’s statements here and elsewhere in his corpus. Against

in reading of Augustine that I sketch here. For further discussion of modern readings specifically of the *De trinitate*, see Roland Kany’s excellent *Augustins Trinitätsdenken. Bilanz, Kritik und Weiterführung der modernen Forschung zu ‘De trinitate’* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

this background Augustine certainly appears as a distinctive figure, but he does so in part because of his highly personal engagement with those predecessors.

In terms of content, the new scholarship that I am delineating here has directly rebutted some of the most common charges against Augustine made in the last century or so. This recent literature has paid much attention to the ways in which Augustine's Trinitarian theology is deeply shaped by Christological themes. Our faith in the Trinity begins in attention to the scriptural rule of faith. Our growth in understanding is shaped by the transformation of intellect and affection from an obsession with the material to a love for the eternal that occurs in Christ (and through the Spirit) that, in turn, is a following in reverse of the route by which Christ's humanity reveals the divine.

Increasing attention to this Christological focus has been closely related to a growing interest in the exegetical foundations of his Trinitarian theology. Rather than viewing Augustine's Trinitarianism as the product of primarily philosophical concerns, recent scholarship has seen Augustine's theology as deeply rooted in the exegetical dimensions of the Trinitarian controversies that were so central a part of late fourth-century theological development. We will see a number of significant examples of this engagement throughout the book.

The same scholarship has argued against the idea that Augustine's Trinitarian theology inappropriately asserts the unity of God over the diversity of the persons. One of my own central arguments in this book will be that while recent scholarship has rightly emphasized Augustine's insistence on the irreducibility of the persons, we can push further and see him as moving, in the decade between 410 and 420, towards a sophisticated account of the divine communion as resulting from the eternal intra-divine acts of the divine three. While this account is stated very tentatively, Augustine is consistently clear that the Trinitarian life is founded in the Father's activity as the one from whom the Son is eternally born and the Spirit proceeds. In this emphasis Augustine is, I will suggest, revealed as one of the most interesting and important interpreters of Nicaea's 'God from God and Light from Light'. Building on the recent work of Richard Cross, I will also argue that Augustine's idiosyncrasy and theological fruitfulness stem in part from the manner in which he rejects the usefulness of genus and species terminologies for describing the relations between the divine three.

It is important to note that the scholarly trends I have summarized here have resulted not only in the development of a sophisticated response

to the extensive critique made of Augustine's Trinitarianism over the past century, but also in a reappraisal of the positive reading of Augustine common within the Thomist tradition. In a way parallel to the best of the *ressourcement* movement during the twentieth century, this new reading suggests that while Augustine is at times a precursor of medieval concerns, at many points he is pursuing a different agenda in a different theological and philosophical context. The emergence of this new Augustine, then, need not be tied to an attempt to supplant Thomas, but to present others alongside Thomas as sources for the Catholic theologian.

I intend that this book contribute to these revisionist readings by focusing on two themes: Augustine's struggles to articulate the Trinitarian communion or life of the three irreducible 'persons'; his developing understanding of how we grow in understanding of the Trinity, how we progress towards the contemplation of God that is a participation in the Trinitarian life. Given these foci, it is important to note three things that this book is not. In the first place, it is not a detailed study of the development of Augustine's Trinitarian theology through to the end of his career. I have discussed the development of particular aspects when it was important to do so, but I have made no systematic attempt to describe the history of every theme that I discuss. In particular, although I have made some use of material from Augustine's *Contra sermonem Arrianorum* (418) and from his late polemical engagement with the Homoian bishop Maximinus (427), I offer no extended treatment of these works. Eventually, I hope, Michel Barnes will produce a book on the development of Augustine's Trinitarian theology complementary to this that will fill significant gaps in our knowledge. In the second place, this book is not a commentary on the *De trinitate*. Although I spend considerable time with the *De trinitate*, I frequently use exposition of that text as a way into other key texts of Augustine's corpus that help to illustrate its concerns. In other places I discuss the *De trinitate* in order to highlight its peculiar and at times unique status. This is especially true of the extended discussions of Chapters 10 and 11.²

In the third place, this book does not offer a detailed study of how Augustine sees the saving action of God as a Trinitarian event, nor how

² A full-scale commentary on the work is much to be desired. Basil Studer, *Augustins De Trinitate. eine Einführung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005) is a welcome addition to the literature. But while Studer's work is of great significance for the revisionary scholar of Augustine's Trinitarian theology, in many ways it represents only a bridge between older and newer ways of reading him. For example, it is interesting that he continues (pp. 186–8) to see in Augustine a 'unitarian' tendency in part based on his supposed reliance on a 'psychological' analogy.

he consequently sees Christian life as shaped by the Trinity. Some central themes are developed, others adumbrated. Most importantly, at a number of points through the book I discuss ways in which Augustine understands Christian life as a growth towards a contemplation that is also a participation in the divine life. Augustine sees this growth as occurring through the reformation of the soul by Christ and Spirit. The exploration of faith is an activity both philosophical and, for those so gifted, an integral part of the reformation effected through grace. Chapter 6 hints at a number of ways in which Augustine sees the Spirit as active within the Body of Christ, demonstrating that for all his insistence on the interior leading of the individual Christian, Augustine sees the work of sanctification as a corporate and ecclesial work. The Epilogue to the book in part draws together some of these themes, but there is room here for a host of further studies.

II

Like most authors I would be delighted if readers begin with the Introduction and make their way through the whole of this book. Nevertheless, without offering a hostage to fortune (or reviewers) it may be helpful to note that there are a number of points at which one could begin reading. Chapters 1–3 form a distinct unit, discussing the origins of Augustine's Trinitarian theology. I argue that Augustine's texts, even those written before his baptism in the spring of 387, reveal a twofold engagement with non-Christian Platonism and with Latin pro-Nicene theology. Over the years that follow, these initial engagements are sustained, Augustine's developing Trinitarianism being formed significantly by his anti-Manichaean concerns. These concerns set an agenda and push Augustine in directions that will mark his Trinitarian theology throughout his career. In 393 we see Augustine's pro-Nicene debts emerge with far greater clarity in the *De fide et symbolo*, a text whose importance has been consistently underrated. These chapters revolve around very detailed readings of a few early texts in Augustine's corpus and will be hard going for those readers unfamiliar with this material. Nevertheless, for a persuasive case to be developed, this work is necessary.

Chapters 4–6 also form a unit. Chapter 4 initially considers a summary text from *De trinitate* 1 whose date is uncertain but which likely contains some early material, and ends with a wider consideration of Augustine's attitude to the text of Scripture as a foundation for doctrinal argument. Chapter 5 considers the background to Augustine's account of our

possible growth in understanding of Trinitarian faith, looking at his early engagement with the Liberal Arts tradition. It is this engagement, despite a number of significant shifts, that will shape his career-long meditation on the character of understanding and analogical reasoning. Chapter 6 discusses Augustine's 'Christological epistemology' which emerges in and which lies at the heart of *De trinitate* 1–4. Only as we come to understand how Christ teaches about the immaterial and simple divine life through speaking in temporal and material terms can our intellects ascend towards understanding of that divine life.

In Chapters 7–10 I approach Augustine's mature Trinitarian ontology, his account of the divine three as irreducible even as the Trinity is necessarily the one simple source of all. Chapter 7 considers Augustine's treatment of Son and Spirit as revealers of the Father's 'hidden eternity'. It is the revelation by Son and Spirit of the Father that provides the dogmatic foundation for Augustine's account of our ascent towards contemplation. At the same time, this discussion begins to suggest an account of the role of the Father and the nature of the divine communion very different from that one might expect from summary accounts of Augustine's Trinitarian theology. After an initial outline of Augustine's understanding of the divine being and substance, Chapter 8 explores Augustine's rejection of genus and species terminologies for explaining the divine unity and diversity and looks at the alternative language he suggests. Chapters 9 and 10 argue that hints about the relational existence of the divine three found in *De trinitate* 5–7 only come to fruition outside that work, and particularly in exegesis of John 5.19 and Acts 4.32. In his mature reading of these texts Augustine develops an account of the Spirit as the one who – as the Father's eternal gift – eternally brings into unity Father, Son and Spirit. In this account we find one of the most striking and fruitful, if also most idiosyncratic, of pro-Nicene Trinitarian theologies.

Finally, Chapters 11 and 12 also form a unit, focusing on aspects of *De trinitate* 8–10 and 14. My goal here is to draw out the experimental nature of the arguments offered and the problematic status of describing the argument as analogical. The practice of reflection Augustine recommends and models is one in which the terms of Trinitarian faith guide investigation of the *mens*, and investigation of the *mens* promotes understanding of the terms of faith: the entire process occurs within the grace-led life. In these discussions we see the mature product of Augustine's early engagement with the Liberal Arts.

Throughout this text readers expecting detailed engagement with the numerous modern abuses and (more recently) celebrations of Augustine's

Trinitarian theology will be disappointed. I have also restricted my overt discussions of the great body of scholarly writing on Augustine's Trinitarian thought; I have purposely focused on exposition of his texts. Similarly, extensive discussion of Augustine's understanding of what has come to be termed 'selfhood' is also absent. Some of these discussions have been very useful, but I have wanted to resist diverting attention from Augustine's discussions of the Trinity itself. In the interests of retaining readers who may not be familiar with Augustine's texts – and those of the others considered through the book – I have also quoted a little more extensively than strictly necessary.

III

In the preface to *Nicaea and its Legacy* I suggested that this treatment of Augustine would constitute a companion volume. While this is still the case, it is so in ways that may not be immediately clear. Most directly, I intend this book to offer an account of one of the most significant, idiosyncratic and compelling examples of pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology. In *Nicaea*, I argued for the importance of particular shared themes among pro-Nicene theologians and suggested the importance of further work on the relationship between different pro-Nicene traditions. This book offers both an example of how those themes are refracted by one particular author's work and thus something of how that author relates to his own tradition. Rather than assuming that Augustine is representative of 'Western' tradition, I suggest ways in which Augustine demonstrates common themes found in virtually all pro-Nicenes, ways in which Augustine shares themes with other Latin pro-Nicenes, and ways in which Augustine's developing theology separates him from those other groups. Of course, my own thinking about many of the questions in *Nicaea* has itself changed considerably over the past few years. It is my hope to produce a much larger and more comprehensive version of *Nicaea* at some point in the future.

In the second place, my intention is that this book model aspects of the theological practices I commended in the last chapter of *Nicaea* (and which are for the most part a selection of those used by many other historical theologians). Frequently it has been the more polemical aspects of that discussion that have caught the attention of readers.³ Without much

³ For further discussion of *Nicaea*, see the papers contained in a special edition of *HTR* 100/2 (2007).

overt discussion my hope is that the patterns of attention to Augustine's texts I show here give further indications of how I think some of the positive aspects of that earlier discussion might be borne out.

One aspect of that earlier discussion hidden, I suspect, by the broad nature of my argument about the structure of modern 'systematic' theology, was my statement that I did not think I was offering a dense vision of what theology should 'look like'. While I think I can isolate some of the factors that have made modern systematic theology engage the legacy of Nicaea so thinly, I do not think that we can pretend that we can practise theology simply as Christians did in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. In part, this is so because of some significant differences in the social contexts and structures within which we practise. In part, it is so because Christians (at least those who accept the Spirit's guidance of the Church in the ways at which I hinted there) find themselves at the end of much further definition and discussion of the structure of our basic dogmas and mysteries. In part, it is so because our adaptation of Nicene theological practices should, I suggest, sit alongside our adaptation of some forms of modern historical consciousness. We need to learn a different plurality of reading practices than that which the ancients assumed.

In the context of such uncertainty about the practice of theology – and here it is important to remember that my fundamental concern is with our theological thinking about the most basic questions of dogmatic theology – what then should we do? One aspect of the answer to this question must be that we will not all do the same thing. Just as an author or teacher is most self-deluded when she imagines her book to be the only one on a putative reader's shelf, so we must think of multiple ways beyond modern theological practices. The ways in which I choose to practise as theologian and historian will not be the only game in town. It is against this background that I strongly suggest the importance of learning modes of close attention to those held up before us in the Church's memory. Eventually I will have to produce a longer study of how 'newness' enters theology, but for the moment it is necessary only to restate the principle suggested towards the end of *Nicaea's* last chapter, that I see little need, in our attempts to understand the most basic articles of faith, for separate moments of 'historical' and 'systematic' theology. My own contribution to conversation about the future of dogmatic theology is to suggest that exploration of the Trinitarian theology of a figure such as Augustine necessarily combines fidelity to those the Church holds up before us in its memory with the arrival of newness into the world.

It may also be worth saying that in any such longer study I would argue that the modes of attention and accountability to the past that a theologian ought to show should be understood not only as displays of appropriate scholarly commitment, but also as modes of prayer. Reverence for those held up in the Church's memory need not be an alternative to critical study, but a mode of testimony to the action of God in human lives that were always only on the path of sanctification: we may combine attention to the failings of those the Church holds up before us with confidence that their thought provides an ever-trustworthy point of reference in our own search to understand the faith. In other terms, attention to the surviving texts of an author is perfectly compatible with imagining those authors not to be dead, but as now living in and through the light of Christ. We imagine them now perhaps not as ever-present defenders of their works, but as aware of the failings of those very same texts, aware that all our searching is completed in final contemplation. Thus our historical investigations may be rigorous and searching even as we are guided towards these authors as constant foci for the attention. That attention rewarded is also of course the work of grace. If our historical work is of value in the struggle to understand what we believe then it is so as both our work and that of the Spirit:

When people see [your works] with the help of your Spirit, it is you who are seeing in them. When, therefore, they see that things are good, you are seeing that they are good. Whatever pleases them for your sake is pleasing you in them. The things which by the help of your Spirit delight us are delighting you in us. 'For what man knows the being of man except the spirit of man which is in him? So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.'⁴

⁴ *conf.* 13. 31.46 (CCSL 27. 269).

Giving wings to Nicaea

‘the perception of incorporeal things quite overwhelmed me and the Platonic theory of ideas added wings to my soul ...’¹

ON BEING AND NOT BEING A ‘PLATONIST’

There is a long-standing charge that Augustine’s Trinitarian theology differed from that of his predecessors and was not a truly Trinitarian theology because it began as an adaptation of Plotinus’s or Porphyry’s accounts of the three primary realities or *hypostases*.² In this chapter and the next I will refute this charge and consider how we can better envisage the multiple influences on Augustine’s earliest Trinitarian writing. The last clause of the previous sentence intentionally limits the scope of my investigation. We should not assume that Platonism had an influence of the same character on all aspects of Augustine’s theology.³ The influence that non-Christian

¹ Justin, *Tryph.* 2. 6.

² The language of three *hypostases* is not, of course, Plotinus’s own. At *Enn.* 5. 1.7, for example, Plotinus speaks of the three poetically only as τὰ θεῖα (‘divinities’); it is probably Porphyry who is responsible for introducing the terminology in the titles of the *Enneads* (e.g. with reference to *Enn.* 5. 1, *vit. Plot.* 25): Περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων; and in his own summaries, for example frg 221F (ed. Andrew Smith, *Porphyryii philosophi fragmenta* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993)): ἄχρι γὰρ τριῶν ὑποστάσεων ἔφη Πλάτων τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ προελθεῖν οὐσίαν. For a particularly clear discussion of the relationship between Plotinus and Porphyry, see Steven K. Strange, ‘Porphyry and Plotinus’ Metaphysics’, in George Karamanolis and Anne Sheppard (eds.), *Studies on Porphyry*, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, Supplement 98 (London, 2007), 17–34.

³ I am consciously using the wider term ‘Platonism’ rather than ‘Neoplatonism’ here. Throughout the chapter I will use the term ‘Neoplatonism’ to refer to texts by the non-Christian authors modern scholars commonly identify as such. I will also use the term to designate ideas that Augustine took from those texts in forms that are distinctively the possession of Neoplatonists as opposed to earlier members of the Platonic tradition. In all other contexts I use the simpler ‘Platonism’ to designate ideas that are found in a range of Christian and non-Christian authors beyond the bounds of Neoplatonism as such. Many of these ideas were cherished by Neoplatonists, but designating them as such too easily leads students of Augustine to forget that they are not distinctively Neoplatonic.

Platonist texts had on his understanding of dialectic as a philosophical tool will not necessarily have been the same as the influence of those texts on his earliest understanding of the Trinity. Thus my concern is not with 'the influence of Platonism on Augustine', but with the specific influence of Platonism on Augustine's early Trinitarian theology.

It is important, however, to begin by locating the specific arguments of this chapter within the broader context of modern scholarly debate about Augustine's 'Platonism'. While that scholarship has been divided over the possible identification of his early Neoplatonic readings as Plotinian or Porphyrian (and over the role of Christians already influenced by such texts), it has been virtually unanimous in rejecting the idea, popularized by Prosper Alfaric in the first half of the twentieth century, that Augustine converted to Platonism before he converted to Christianity.⁴ Rejecting such theories, modern scholarship has focused on identifying the particular texts and doctrines that were of most importance to Augustine and, to a much lesser extent, on understanding how Augustine adapted these doctrines. This last question is, however, of great importance; many significant debates have at their core decisions about the extent to which Augustine's use of a particular Plotinian or Porphyrian terminology implies his acceptance of all that the terminology implied in its original context.⁵ These questions have been rendered yet more difficult by the gradual recognition that we must take account of Augustine's *on-going* engagement with Platonic sources. Most importantly, the engagements that are evident in the *Confessiones* or the *De Civitate Dei* cannot be taken as a secure guide to Augustine's readings many years previously.⁶

⁴ Prosper Alfaric, *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin. i. Du manichéisme au néoplatonisme* (Paris: Émile Nourry, 1918). No one piece of secondary literature provides a sufficient overview of the vast body of scholarship on Augustine's early knowledge of Neoplatonism. Nevertheless, Robert Crouse, 'Paucis mutatis verbis: St. Augustine's Platonism', in George Lawless and Robert Dodaro (eds.), *Augustine and his Critics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 37–50, offers a particularly incisive account of the state of play (and his notes refer to just about every significant author in this field). Crouse and I differ over what it means to talk of the 'Neoplatonic tradition', as will become clear later in the chapter. Carol Harrison's recent *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) argues strongly for a fundamental continuity in Augustine's theology.

⁵ One of the best examples here is Robert O'Connell's long insistence that Augustine believed in the 'fall' of each soul into the material creation from a prior state of blessedness. The thesis is argued with particular clarity through his *St Augustine's Early Theory of Man, A.D. 386–391* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968) and *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987). On the reaction to O'Connell, see Ronnie Rombs, *St. Augustine and the Fall of the Soul: Beyond O'Connell and his Critics* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 2006).

⁶ Ignoring this principle seems to me to be particularly endemic among some who argue strongly for the maximal influence of Porphyry on the early Augustine. John J. O'Meara, *Porphyry's*

Focusing on the character of Augustine's *adaptation* of material from Platonic texts is, at the very least, important because Augustine did not participate in some of the most fundamental traditions that linked together late antique Platonists. Platonism was not only a tradition of doctrines, it was also a tradition within which particular texts were valued because of their explanatory and even revelatory power, and it was a tradition within which particular questions had come to be valued as focal points of thought. David Sedley has convincingly argued that late antique Platonists were held together not so much by a set of doctrines, as by a commitment to the authority of Plato and to the traditions of interpretation and commentary of both Aristotle and Plato by which consideration of Plato himself was structured.⁷

While Augustine valued a number of Platonist authors, his knowledge of the texts that formed what we might term the 'imaginative library' of thinkers such as Plotinus and Porphyry was weak. For example, he appears to have known only a little of the commentary traditions noted in the previous paragraph.⁸ At the same time a text such as the *Chaldean Oracles*, treated by many late antique Platonists as having the very revelatory power mentioned in the previous paragraph, was probably regarded

Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1959) offers a particularly clear example of the tendency to use evidence from the post-400 period to interpret Augustine's earliest work. A recent ingenious example is provided by Pier Franco Beatrice, 'Quosdam Platoniorum Libros: The Platonic Readings of Augustine in Milan', *Vigil de Christianae* 43 (1989), 248–81. Beatrice argues that Augustine read fragments of Plotinus in a translation of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* made by Victorinus (and that the person *immanissimo typho turgidum* at *conf.* 7. 9.13 is Porphyry). The argument, however, relies on an unwarranted assumption that the presence of anti-Porphyrian themes in the *conf.* 7 account (and in *civ.*) means that the same knowledge of Porphyry must have been present in 386–7. Rejection of this account does not take away from the difficulty of any attempt at solving this question: Beatrice, rightly, draws attention to the difficulty of finding clearly Plotinian allusions in Victorinus – as opposed to extensive engagement with Porphyry – even though he is named by Augustine as the translator of the *platoniorum libros* at *conf.* 8. 2.3.

⁷ See David N. Sedley, 'Plato's *Auctoritas* and the Rebirth of the Commentary Tradition', in Jonathan Barnes and Miriam Griffin (eds.), *Philosophia Togata II: Plato and Aristotle at Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 110–29. In the background to Sedley's argument lie two other pieces: Pierre Hadot, 'Théologie, exégèse, révélation, écriture dans la philosophie grecque', in Michel Tardieu (ed.), *Les Règles de l'interprétation* (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 13–34; and Pierluigi Donini, 'Testi e commenti, manuali e insegnamento: la forma sistematica e i metodi della filosofica in età potellenistica', *ANRW* II. 36.7 (1994), 5027–100. See also most recently G. R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). An excellent introduction to the developed commentary tradition of late antiquity is provided by Richard Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed* (London: Duckworth, 1990). See also his excellent collection of source extracts, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 AD*, 3 vols. (London: Duckworth, 2005).

⁸ See Chapter 8, pp. 212ff.

with abhorrence by Augustine, if he knew it.⁹ Marius Victorinus and Synesius of Cyrene offer useful points of comparison here as both seem to have engaged this text even as Christians and struggled to find ways in which its mysteries might turn out to be those of the Christian faith.¹⁰ We should also note that Augustine's accounts of philosophical history, found in such different works as the *Contra Academicos* and the *De Civitate Dei*, are frequently dependent on Cicero, on Varro and on Augustine's second-century North African compatriot Apuleius of Madaura.¹¹

At the same time, Augustine shows little interest in many of the questions that late antique Platonists treated as nodal points of the arguments and discussions constituting their tradition. The most important examples concern the relationships of participation and dependence between the highest levels of reality: Augustine predicates of God attributes that Plotinus not only attributes only to *either* the One or *Nous*, but which also seem to him mutually exclusive. Augustine predicates of his 'first principle' the activity of thinking without even bothering to refute Plotinus's understanding of why the simple One could not be involved in the divisions of self-thinking.¹² Indeed, one might even say that there is a significant continuity between the way that Augustine and a much earlier thinker such as Irenaeus (engaged with what modern scholars term 'middle' rather than 'neo' Platonism) primarily use qualities predicated of *Nous* to describe the nature of God.¹³

Augustine is then a Platonist in ways that need careful definition. He is a Platonist, first, in the sense that he adopts and adapts a number of *doctrines* that he appears to have encountered in non-Christian Platonist texts. Some of these are peculiarly Plotinian or Porphyrian, others he seems to have met in those authors but are not distinctively theirs. Although there is no space (or need) here to offer an extended

⁹ Even if from no other source, it seems highly probable that he knew some through Porphyry's use in his *Philosophy from Oracles* (see *civ.* 19. 23).

¹⁰ For a brief introduction to the Chaldean oracles and their interpretation by late antique Platonists, see Polymnia Athanassiadi, 'The Chaldean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy', in Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 149–83.

¹¹ For an initial sense of the significance of Cicero in Augustine's early account of the history of philosophy, see the passages in *acad.* referenced by Maurice Testard in his *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, 2 vols. (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1958), 2. 1–7. For Augustine's knowledge of Apuleius, see Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 1. 17–28 and 1. 29–33; James J. O'Donnell, 'Augustine's Classical Readings', *RecAug* 15 (1980), 144–75, for Apuleius, see 149–51.

¹² For example, Plotinus, *Enn.* 5. 3.10–13. Augustine's mature discussion of the ways in which the soul's self-thinking mirrors the divine is examined in Chapters 10 and 11.

¹³ See, for example, Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.* 2. 28.4–5 (SC 294. 280).

discussion of exactly what Augustine read in his initial encounters with non-Christian Neoplatonism, it seems most likely that Augustine's earliest readings were from Plotinus.¹⁴ We are, however, unable to say whether he read whole treatises, or only a compilation of extracts translated by Marius Victorinus.¹⁵ Through the first two decades of the fifth century one can trace an increasing engagement with Platonic texts and a deeper knowledge of Porphyry.¹⁶ Thus questions about the content of Augustine's Platonic readings must always be accompanied by temporal specification.

Second, we should not forget that Augustine adopted doctrines from Neoplatonic texts in the context of a struggle to overcome, in the first place, the challenge of Manichaean dualism and materialism and, in the second place, his turn to Ciceronian Scepticism that we can trace during 385–6.¹⁷ It is, then, no accident that Augustine's early accounts of Platonism emphasize the secure epistemological foundation for knowledge of God that he takes Platonism to offer. Similarly, Augustine highlights an anti-Manichaean privative view of evil as one of the key gifts of his Platonic engagements, even though such a theory is hardly a prominent

¹⁴ For our purposes it will only matter what Augustine can be shown to have read in his earliest treatments of the Trinity. The literature on this question is vast. For two good summary discussions, see James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 2. 421–4; Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 43–55. In the couple of years following his first discovery in 386 we can trace with a high degree of probability echoes of passages from around nine Plotinian treatises (1. 6, 3. 2–3, 4. 3–4, 5. 1, 5. 5, 6. 4–5). Other scholarship has variously suggested around ten more with varying degrees of plausibility (see TeSelle, *Augustine*, 44–5). For comparative lists that have been suggested, see Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 68–71, esp. 70. Lest one's tendency to see possible parallels becomes too strong, all scholars of the question should bear in mind Goulven Madec's strong riposte to Robert O'Connell: 'Une lecture de *Confessions* VII, IX, 13–XXI, 27. Notes critiques à propos d'une thèse de R.-J. O'Connell', *REAug* 16 (1970), 79–137.

¹⁵ This is a discussion in which there are few certainties. Attempts to argue that Porphyry's *Sententiae* was the source fail both for lack of clear evidence and because of the presence of Plotinian material absent from *sent.* (e.g. the discussion of 'measure' in *Enn.* 1. 8.2, see below, pp. 31f.). Some scholars have suggested Porphyry's lost *Philosophy from Oracles* as the source of the Plotinian passages known to Augustine (see note 16, below). Without any real textual evidence about the contents of the work, Ockham surely encourages us to great caution about this suggestion? Despite the 75 years of scholarship published since his book, Paul Henry, *Plotin et L'Occident. Firmicus Maternus, Marius Victorinus, Saint Augustin et Macrobe* (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1934) still offers a model of sanity in its methodological reflections, see esp. 63–103.

¹⁶ The case for knowledge of Porphyry in the Cassiciacum period is much less certain. Du Roy's suggestion that there is no need to suspect the presence of Porphyry at least until Augustine returned to Milan in 387 (*L'Intelligence*, 186–95) has much to recommend it. Extensive knowledge of Porphyry only becomes reasonably easy to demonstrate from c.400.

¹⁷ See *conf.* 5. 18–19, 25, *util. cred.* 20. Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 39–52, offers a very useful summary of the ways in which a revival of scepticism was intertwined with Augustine's increasing distrust of Manichaean answers in the months before his conversion. See also Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, 1. 81–129.

feature of Plotinus himself and finds itself (obviously enough) in conflict with Plotinus's discussion of (undifferentiated) matter as the most probable source of evil.¹⁸ In this regard Augustine's emphasis upon the structured numerical harmony of all things under their creator is best viewed as an amalgam of some themes from his Neoplatonic readings and material from earlier Latin sources that we place, perhaps too easily, under the heading of 'Pythagorean'.¹⁹ Augustine thus adapts themes from his early Neoplatonic readings for very particular purposes. His enthusiastic self-description as a member of the Platonic 'school' at the end of the *Contra Academicos* is akin to Augustus claiming to be re-establishing the Roman Republic, but preserving those institutions by gradually accumulating and assimilating sufficient avenues of authority that the 'republic' could be sustained within a very different system of governance!

Lastly, we must not forget that Augustine was also a Platonist in the sense that he belonged to a tradition of Christians who had undertaken very similar adoptions and adaptations since at least the mid-second century.²⁰ Through this chapter and the next I will argue that Augustine's discovery of this tradition in the persons of Victorinus and Ambrose, and then in a host of other Latin theological texts of the fourth century, was probably simultaneous with his discovery of non-Christian Neoplatonism. When we consider developments in his theology that appear to be inspired by his Neoplatonic engagements, we will need to ask how far those developments stem from those engagements, and how far and in what ways they stem from on-going reading of his Christian peers and predecessors.

¹⁸ See *Enn.* 2. 4.14–16. I assume here the priority of Plotinus for which I have been arguing and will continue to argue; one could make a stronger case that this theme reflects Porphyry, but it seems to me more likely that we are simply seeing Augustine adapting Plotinian themes for his own anti-Manichaean purposes.

¹⁹ On the phenomenon of 'Neo-Pythagoreanism' in late antiquity and as a feature of Neoplatonic texts, see Dominic J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). Ilsetraut Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1984), 101–36, argues that the strong interest in number apparent in *ord.* stems from Augustine's dependence on Porphyry and his Pythagorean tendencies (for the name Pythagoras, see *ord.* 2. 20.54). Her account is, however, at the least controversial. Even if one accepts the convincing arguments of Aimé Solignac, 'Doxographies et manuels dans la formation philosophique de saint Augustin', *RecAug* 1 (1958), 113–48, esp. 124–37, that much of Augustine's preoccupation with number owes to Nichomachus of Gerasa, he himself seems to have been what O'Meara (*Pythagoras*, 22) describes as a 'pythagoreanizing Platonist'. The question of 'Neo-Pythagoreanism' recurs in Chapter 8.

²⁰ One of the best examples being Ambrose himself, whose debts to Neoplatonism may have been mediated to a remarkably large extent by other Christian authors. See Goulven Madec, *Ambroise et La Philosophie* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1974), ch. 1.

Do I, then, think it helpful to use ‘Platonism’ or ‘Neoplatonism’ as a generic heading and then speak of Christian and non-Christian species?²¹ No, not as simply put as this. I understand ‘Platonism’ and ‘Neoplatonism’ in the first instance as non-Christian traditions, many of whose doctrines were drawn on by Christians in the imperial period. Christian Platonists are in many ways constantly parasitic on this non-Christian tradition, sometimes revealing themselves to be considerably out of step with developments in contemporary Platonism.²² Some Christians were, of course, exceptions and able to participate in contemporary Platonist debates even while holding to Christian commitments. And yet ‘parasitic’ in isolation also gives the wrong impression: over time Christian ‘Platonists’ developed their own traditions of how (and which) Platonist doctrines might be adapted to Christian ends within the bounds of developing Christian discourse. There was thus also an emerging Christian Platonist tradition in late antiquity, even if this tradition did not name itself as such (in distinction from other versions of Christian belief). As will become clear, I am also convinced that the complexity of the links between Christian and non-Christian Platonism is better conceived the more we move away from assuming the fundamental incompatibility between Christianity and the non-Christian Platonism and towards a more piecemeal examination of the use made by Christians of Platonic doctrines.

In the remainder of this chapter I focus first on the most substantive attempt in the last half-century to argue that Augustine’s understanding of the Trinity is dependent on Neoplatonism. The bulk of Olivier Du Roy’s *L’Intelligence de la Foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustin* concerns the early Augustine, but his intention is to show that Augustine’s early philosophical debts governed his mature *De trinitate* and thus were deeply

²¹ One of the most articulate advocates for this position is Wayne Hankey. Crouse, in ‘Paucis mutatis verbis’, quotes his ‘Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot’, in Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (eds.), *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (London: Routledge, 1998), 139–84. Of Hankey’s recent writing one might also mention his ‘Judaism, Islam, and Christianity in Medieval Europe, Difference and Unity: The “Religions of the Book” and their Assimilation of Hellenistic Philosophical Theology’, in Susan Harris (ed.), *Multiculturalism and Religious Freedom* (Charlottesville: St Peter Publications, 2005), 81–127. One significant reason for the difference between our accounts is that Hankey uses the term ‘Neoplatonism’ in ways that enable him to speak of one continuous tradition (even if one that undergoes radical shifts) from Origen and Plotinus through to the Reformation (and beyond). My own concern is with a usage that better captures the dynamics of interaction in late antiquity. We do, however, share a sense that Neoplatonism (partially as a conduit for Platonism more broadly) had a significant *and positive* effect on developing Christianity.

²² This is not to say that Christians, and Christian Platonists, did not contribute to changes in Platonic traditions, but tracing influence in this direction is a far more complex matter than tracing the influence of non-Christians on Christian writers.

influential on later Western Trinitarian theology as a whole.²³ English-speaking theologians – and some scholars of Augustine – have tended to assume Augustine’s Trinitarian theology is dependent on Neoplatonism without offering detailed discussion of that influence. We should no longer let such assumptions pass untested. Consideration of the most detailed argument for wholesale Neoplatonic influence should make clear the importance of exercising more care in our accounts of Augustine’s development.

OLIVIER DU ROY’S THESIS

Du Roy’s thesis may be summarized in three steps.

(a) In his writings from Cassiciacum, Augustine sees the Incarnate Christ as providing ancillary assistance to those too weak for the true life of reason.²⁴ The anagogic turn within and ascent towards God that constitutes the life of reason is a participation in the Trinitarian structure of reality. What to the casual reader might seem to be merely faculties or functions of the soul are actually the three divine realities themselves: for example, intellect in human beings is that reality as such.²⁵ In order to show that the entirety of our return to God is governed by this Trinitarian structure, Du Roy expends considerable effort arguing that *ratio* in these works stands in for the Spirit and is dependent on Plotinus’s account of the *logos* that flows from *Psyche*.²⁶ In this first phase, Du Roy argues, Augustine has some understanding of ‘the rule of faith’, but his

²³ I am very grateful to Kate Wilkinson for her extensive help articulating the flow of Du Roy’s argument. In what follows I have also learnt much from Chad Gerber’s *The Spirit of Augustine’s Early Theology: Contextualizing His Pneumatology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming 2011), a work which should be consulted for further treatment of all the texts I have discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

²⁴ See, for example, Du Roy, *L’Intelligence*, 170: [commenting on *sol.* 1] ‘Mais quelle sera cette voie progressive vers la Lumière? Augustin n’en connaît pas encore d’autre que la recherche philosophique.’

²⁵ For example, Du Roy, *L’Intelligence*, 143–7, discussing correspondences between texts from *sol.* 1 and *Enn.* 5. 3. Du Roy’s reading of *ord.* 2. 11.30–1 discussed below offers another example.

²⁶ The influence of Plotinus’s three *hypostases* is extensively argued first with reference to *ord.* 2. 9.26: see Du Roy, *L’Intelligence*, 127–30. Pages 130–43 then supplement this argument with an extensive treatment of the end of *ord.* 2, esp. 2. 11.30–1, a text I discuss below. The extent to which this scheme also enables an anagogical ascent of the soul becomes clear in his ch. 6, esp. pp. 183–96. I am grateful to Chad Gerber for pointing out to me that it is rarely noticed that Robert O’Connell in his *St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Man*, 121–31, esp. 123–4, argues much less tentatively than Du Roy for the equation of *ratio* and Spirit at *ord.* 2. 9.26. I have not dealt with his case in this chapter as it is less developed than that of Du Roy.

interpretation of it is dependent on his grasp of the relations between the Plotinian *hypostases* and is economic in character, entirely focused on explaining how God makes possible our ascent.

(b) Du Roy sees this initial understanding of the Trinity as changing during Augustine's year in Rome (387–8) and during his years in Thagaste prior to ordination (388–91). Slowly Augustine moves away from a model of the anagogic ascent of the soul to one in which the soul ascends towards a vision of the Trinity reflected in the threefold structures of the created order (an order in which multiplicity is always drawn towards unity), and thence to a vision of the Trinity itself. He has advanced beyond his earliest understanding of the Trinity, but is increasingly reliant on an *exitus–reditus* scheme for understanding reality. Father, Son and Spirit share in the creative action, and that which they create is structured to enable our return to contemplation of the Trinity. This understanding of the Trinity is still fundamentally economic. As all the Trinitarian persons have a role in causing, ordering and sustaining the created order, so the persons in reverse order draw human beings back towards God.²⁷ This picture becomes clear in Augustine's anti-Manichaean commentaries on Genesis begun at Thagaste and in *De musica* 6,²⁸ and culminates in what Du Roy sees as the latest sections of the *De vera religione*.²⁹ Here Augustine attempts to meld his new model of the Trinitarian structure of reality with his earlier insight into the soul's interior ascent. The Incarnation – despite Augustine's increasing insistence upon its importance – is still understood as providing a way of knowledge for those unable to ascend by philosophy.³⁰

It is also in *De vera religione* and in *Epistula* 11 that we begin to see the effects of this theology. For example, if one assumes that the persons work inseparably and that our most basic knowledge of the Trinity comes

²⁷ The emergence of this theme in *sol.* 2 is discussed in Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, chs. 6–7. Du Roy contrasts the earlier style of anagogy found at *lib. arb.* 2. 3.7ff. with that found towards the end of this discussion at *lib. arb.* 2. 13.35–16.41. The former section of text relies on a retreat from the senses towards that which enables one's judgement. The latter section (which Du Roy takes to be the result of a later redaction) speaks of ascent culminating in vision of the creative Trinity that has left its mark (through the imprint of wisdom and number) on the creation as a whole. It is this mark in creation that stimulates and enables the return inward. The place of these Trinitarian structures in creation reveals Augustine's increasing reliance on an *exitus–reditus* scheme. For this whole discussion, see *L'Intelligence*, 242–56.

²⁸ Du Roy's understanding of this theme comes out particularly clearly in his reading of *mus.* 6, see *L'Intelligence*, 282–97.

²⁹ The argument is pursued through Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, chs. 9 and 10, but is most clear in discussion of *vera rel.* 55. 110–13: *L'Intelligence*, 369–79.

³⁰ See Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 381, 398–401.

from observation of the creation, then we are led to ask why only the Son becomes incarnate. Our response will eventually be some form of appropriation theory (which Du Roy takes to undermine the distinctiveness of the persons).³¹ In this period Augustine also begins to identify the Spirit as both the Charity and the Gift that conforms us to the Son. Lastly, we should note that Du Roy reads the works of this period as demonstrating a wide range of source material, including increasing knowledge of the *regula fidei* and adaptation of Varronian and Ciceronian themes to sketch his emerging account of creation. Nevertheless, a Neoplatonic understanding of anagogy still governs Augustine's patterns of adaptation.³²

(c) The last stage in Du Roy's thesis concerns the later effects of the early works on Augustine's mature Trinitarian theology. Through developing his 'psychological' analogies Augustine attempts to deepen his account of the soul's anagogy by explaining how the soul discovers itself to be illuminated by the work of the creative Trinity.³³ At the same time, while Augustine certainly spends more time talking about the role of the Incarnate Word, it remains impossible for him to integrate incarnational theology into his account of the Trinity in creation and our ascent towards it.³⁴ The use of psychological analogies pushes Augustine increasingly clearly towards a monistic account of God in which the distinctions between the persons – and their specific roles in the drama of salvation – are downplayed. Du Roy sees the problems of Augustine's mature theology both as resulting from the experiments of his earliest writings and then as responsible for wider failure in later Western theology.³⁵

A BRIDGE TOO FAR: DU ROY'S METHOD

There are some aspects of Du Roy's discussion that I will ignore *in toto* through this chapter. I will save, until Chapters 5 and 6, Du Roy's argument that the Incarnation is persistently extrinsic to Augustine's account of

³¹ For example, Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 397.

³² For example, Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 419: 'J'entends par là cette relative indépendance de l'intelligence par rapport à la foi, non pas tant dans son contenu, qui reste soumis à la *regula fidei*, que dans sa démarche et son élan. Cette démarche reste fondamentalement une reprise de l'anagogie plotinienne, personnalisée toutefois en une rencontre et une soumission de l'âme à la Vérité.'

³³ Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 438.

³⁴ For both these two sentences, see Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 441–50, see also 456–8, esp. 457: 'La profonde expérience de l'amour Chrétien et surtout de l'unité ecclésiale [found in the mature pastoral writing of Augustine] ... n'a pas eu le poids suffisant pour counterbalancer la pente de son intellectualité néo-platonicienne.'

³⁵ Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 458. For his brief sketch of the later legacy of Augustine see 458–66.

how one grows in knowledge of the Trinity.³⁶ I will also leave aside – until Chapters 10 and 11 – his understanding of the latter half of the *De trinitate* and its legacy for later Western theology. I will focus instead on Du Roy's account of Augustine's earliest Trinitarian theology's 'dependence' on Plotinus's three *hypostases*. One small example of Du Roy's method, his treatment of *De ordine* 2. 11.30–1, will be our point of departure.

The second book of the *De ordine* probably dates from the first months of 387 and is a text to which we will return at a number of points in this chapter and the next.³⁷ The passage with which we are concerned is the beginning of a section devoted to the meaning of *ratio*:

Reason is a mental operation [*mentis motio*] capable of distinguishing and connecting the things that are learned. But only a rare class of people is capable of using it as a guide to the knowledge of God or of the soul; either of the soul within us or that which is everywhere [*quae aut in nobis aut usque quaque est animam*]. This is due to nothing else than the fact that, for anyone who has advanced towards objects of sense, it is difficult to return to himself [*redire in semetipsum ... difficile est*] ... My incompetence would be equalled by my arrogance if I should profess that I myself have grasped it already. Nevertheless, insofar as reason has deigned to reveal itself in the things that appear familiar to us, let us now examine it to the best of our ability ... Reason, then, proceeds from a/the rational soul into reasonable things which are done or spoken [*ergo procedit ratio ab anima rationali, scilicet in ea quae vel fiunt rationabilia vel dicuntur*].³⁸

Du Roy's interpretation of this passage revolves around a series of parallels he draws with Plotinus's late treatise *Ennead* 3. 2. Plotinus devotes this latter text to an account of the links between our cosmos and *Nous* in order to demonstrate that the world is rationally governed and that we are capable of moving towards its source:

(3. 2.2) So Intellect [Νοῦς], by giving something of itself to matter, made all things in unperturbed quietness; this something of itself is the rational principle [λόγος] flowing from Intellect. For that which flows from Intellect is the rational principle, and it flows out always, as long as Intellect is present among realities

³⁶ One of the most trenchant critics of Du Roy in this regard has been Goulven Madec. For a taste of Madec's reading of the role of Christ in the earlier works of Augustine, see his *La Patrie et la Voie. Le Christ dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin* (Paris: Desclée, 1989), 51–82. See also the brief survey of recent scholarship and bibliography from Basil Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 10–13.

³⁷ The works with which we will be concerned in this chapter are as follows: *Contra academicos* (Book 1 probably dates from late 386, Books 2 and 3 from early 387), *De ordine* (Book 1 probably dates from late 386, Book 2 from early 387), *Soliloquia* (again Book 1 probably dates from late 386, Book 2 from early 387), *De beata vita* (winter 386–7, written between the two books of *c. Acad.*).

³⁸ *ord.* 2. 11.30–1 (CCSL 29. 124–5).

... This All of ours is not Intellect and rational principle, like the All there, but participates in intellect and rational principle ...

(3. 2.16) The rational principle ... is not pure Intellect or absolute Intellect [οὐκ ἄκρατος νοῦς οὐδ' αὐτονοῦς]; it is not even of the kind of pure soul but depends on soul, and is a sort of outshining of both [ἐκλαμψίς ἐξ ἀμφοῖν]; intellect and soul (that is, soul disposed according to intellect) generated this rational principle as a life which containing in silence a certain rationality [γεννησάντων τὸν λόγον τοῦτον ζῶην λόγον τινὰ ἡσυχῇ ἔχουσιν]. All life, even worthless life, is activity [ἐνέργεια] ... So the activity of life is an artistic [τεχνική] activity ... in the universe the battle of conflicting elements springs from a single rational principle; so that it would be better for one to compare it to the melody which results from conflicting sounds.

To draw these passages from Augustine and Plotinus together, Du Roy makes a series of links. First, he parallels Augustine's talk of reason 'proceeding' with the same language used in a more clearly threefold passage at *De ordine* 2. 5.16. In this passage, which we will consider below, Augustine speaks of *principium* and *intellectus*, and seems to speak of a third reality 'flowing' from the second which is then possibly equated with the Spirit.³⁹ At the same time Du Roy draws attention to yet another threefold passage at *De ordine* 2. 9.26 which appears to link together *principium*, *intellectus* and *ratio*.⁴⁰ On the basis of these links, Du Roy argues that *ratio* at *De ordine* 2. 11.30–1 *must* be more than human reason and, agreeing with earlier source work by Aimé Solignac, he suggests that *ratio* is equivalent to the *logos* of *Ennead* 3. 2, flowing from the world-soul (which Du Roy sees hiding under Augustine's *anima rationalis*) and ordering the cosmos.⁴¹ Having drawn these conclusions, Du Roy reads Augustine's extensive discussions of reason's functions in the remainder of the *De ordine* as an outline of the Spirit's functions. Du Roy is not simply arguing that the Plotinian third *hypostasis* is equivalent to Augustine's Holy Spirit. It is the *logos* of the late *Ennead* 3. 2 that he argues is the source of Augustine's earliest pneumatology.⁴²

³⁹ See below, pp. 26f. ⁴⁰ See *ord.* 2. 9.26 (CCSL 29. 122).

⁴¹ Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 130–42, esp. 134–5. See Aimé Solignac, 'Réminiscences plotiniennes et porphyriennes dans le début du "De ordine" de saint Augustin', *Archives de Philosophie* 19 (1936), 148–56.

⁴² This *logos* is probably to be understood as the lowest level of soul; see John Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 84–102. As Gerber, *The Spirit of Augustine's Early Theology*, ch. 2, points out, Robert O'Connell is one of the few who make the direct equation between Plotinian *Psyche* and Augustine's early account of Spirit. Gerber offers a full discussion of O'Connell's argument which shows it to be even more problematic than that of Du Roy. It should be noted that I have here been convinced by Gerber's argument and the

Du Roy's argument is a detective exercise worthy of the most famous inhabitant of 221B Baker Street, but it rests on weakly founded assumptions and contains serious contradictions. First, he assumes that Augustine makes a clear separation between *intellectus* and *ratio* which follows one Plotinus makes between *Nous* and *Logos* in *Ennead* 3. 2. One might fairly easily, however, read Augustine as seeing significant overlap between the two. In such a reading, both of the passages with which Du Roy parallels *De ordine* 2. 11.30ff. might be read as primarily binitarian, speaking of *principium* and *intellectus* but being simply vague about the relationship between *intellectus* and the *ratio* that is personified as coming from the *principium* and being present in us. Du Roy expends no real effort arguing against such a reading other than offering his chain of links. Second, Du Roy assumes that a few statements of uncertain meaning concerning the soul's divinity override Augustine's clear statements that soul – our souls or the world-soul – stands on our side of a basic Creator/created distinction.⁴³ Indeed, given the compelling evidence that Augustine did for some time accept Plotinus's account of the world-soul,⁴⁴ it seems far more likely that Augustine interpreted Plotinus as possessing a binitarian account of the highest reality. The ease with which modern writing has presented Neoplatonic triadic accounts of the highest realities as an 'obvious' source for Christian Trinitarianism obscures from us the variety of ways in which Christians may have read Neoplatonic texts.⁴⁵ Third,

account in my 'Giving Wings to Nicaea: Reading Augustine's Earliest Trinitarian Theology', *AugStud* 38 (2007), 23–6, is superseded.

⁴³ See, for example, *ord.* 2. 5.17 (CCSL 29. 116): 'Anima vero unde originem ducat quidve hic agat, quantum distet a Deo, quid habeat proprium quod alternat in utramque naturam ...?' The two *naturae* referred to here are the natures of God and the mortal creation. For the essential mortality of the human soul, see *ord.* 2. 11.31 (CCSL 29. 125): 'homo est animal rationale mortale ... Nam ut progressus animae usque ad mortalia lapsus est, regressus esse in rationem debet; uno verbo a bestiis, quod rationale, alio a diviniis separator, quod mortale dicitur.' Cf. *ord.* 2. 18.47. The definition of *homo* probably comes from Cicero, *acad.* 2. 7.21. The account of the soul's status can be helpfully compared to Cicero, *Tusc.* 1. 26.65–27.66: Cicero's account of the soul's divinity is both somewhat imprecise and yet far more direct in its assertion than anything we find in Augustine's *ord.* For the possibility of the soul's reformation see, for example, *ord.* 1. 2.4 and 6.10. It seems to me far more plausible that Augustine's uncertainty about describing the nature and role of the soul stems from his still trying to hold to the idea of the individual soul's fall from a pre-lapsarian state, than from his holding to but never stating clearly a belief in the individual soul's participation in the third of Plotinus's three primary realities.

⁴⁴ See *imm. an.* 15. 24, *an. quant.* 32. 68, *mus.* 6. 5.13. For discussion, see Roland Teske, 'The World Soul and Time in Augustine', in *To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 219–23; Gerard O'Daly, 'anima, animus', *AugLex*. The world-soul appears very clearly as the third *hypostasis* in Porphyry; see, for example, *Sent.* 30.

⁴⁵ See John Dillon, 'Logos and Trinity: Patterns of Platonist Influence on Early Christianity', in G. Vesey (ed.), *The Philosophy in Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989),

and along similar lines, Du Roy's argument ignores the fact that we lack any text in which Augustine equates the world-soul and the Spirit. It is implausible that Augustine understood and appropriated something of the Plotinian world-soul *and* saw the *Logos* emanating from that world-soul as the Spirit. Thus, while Augustine seems to have appropriated Plotinian language to describe Father and Son with ease (whether or not those parallels also show the influence of his Latin Christian peers), we have no clear evidence that he did the same with regard to the third Plotinian *hypostasis* and the Spirit. Du Roy's hermeneutic of suspicion pushes the texts towards a bridge too far.

I focus on Du Roy's treatment of the Spirit not only because it reveals methodological questions we must ask of his readings *in toto*, but because of its necessity for his argument. For Du Roy's account of Augustine's failure there *must* be a relationship between Augustine's Holy Spirit and some facet of what Du Roy takes to be Plotinus's system. Only thus can Du Roy show that Augustine's earliest Trinitarian theology should be read as in essence a cosmological system enabling our return to the divine. Releasing ourselves from this account of Augustine will enable us to think again not only about his accounts of the Trinity, but also about his accounts of our ascent towards understanding, our progress in knowledge.

THE TRIPOTENT FATHER, SON AND SPIRIT

The foregoing argument should not, however, be taken as a rejection of Du Roy's book *in toto*. Du Roy offers an excellent description of the anti-sceptical and anti-Manichaean context within which Augustine undertook his initial Platonic readings, and at many points he offers penetrating analyses of the sources Augustine engages in these early works. In what follows I suggest an alternate reading of Augustine's earliest Trinitarian debts drawing on (and at times further criticizing) the work of Du Roy, but also drawing heavily on the work of Nello Cipriani.

At *De ordine* 2. 5.16, Augustine identifies God as Father, Son and Spirit:

that philosophy which is true and – if I may speak thus – genuine, has no other business than to teach what is the Principle without Principle [*principium sine principio*] of all things, and how great an Intellect rests in it [*quantus que in eo maneat intellectus*], and what has flowed from it for our salvation, but without any

1–13, for some helpful remarks. Augustine's possible use of Neoplatonic noetic triads – such as being/life/mind – is discussed in Chapters 5 and 10.

degeneration [*quidve inde in nostrum salutem sine ulla degeneratione manaverit*]. The venerated mysteries – which liberate people by a sincere and unshaken faith (not confusedly [*confuse*], as some, or abusively [*contumeliose*], as many, charge) – teach that this Principle is one omnipotent God, and that he is the tripotent [*tripotentem*] Father and Son and Holy Spirit.⁴⁶

Du Roy treats this passage as revealing an unsuccessful attempt by Augustine to unite his Plotinian speculation with the ‘rule of faith’.⁴⁷ In fact, Du Roy’s vague reference to the ‘rule of faith’, while not strictly inaccurate, misses the extent to which Augustine interweaves themes from his non-Christian Neoplatonist readings with expressions of Trinitarian faith found in the key Latin theologians of the 355–80 period. It misses, in other words, Augustine’s engagement with the very Latin Nicene theology that one would expect a Christian of his education and location to read.⁴⁸

The term *tripotens* is extremely rare in Christian Latin, and may have been coined by Marius Victorinus, in whose works it appears twice as a synonym for the Greek τριδύναμις.⁴⁹ The term was not used by any other Latin Christian author and appears only this once in Augustine’s corpus. Nello Cipriani argues that this parallel is the most obvious of a series of links to Victorinus in the passage.⁵⁰ For Cipriani, Augustine’s description of the Father as *principium sine principio* does not find clear parallels in Plotinus,⁵¹ but such parallels are to be found in the letter of Candidus the

⁴⁶ *ord.* 2. 5.16 (CCSL 29. 116).

⁴⁷ Du Roy, *L’Intelligence*, 113: ‘Ces formules, qui attestent une foi déjà très ferme, voisinent avec des très audacieuses spéculations. Aussi faut-il étudier d’abord comment Augustin conçoit le rapport de cette speculation avec la règle de foi qu’il entend ne jamais transgresser.’

⁴⁸ Augustine himself uses the notion of ‘rule of faith’ in particularly interesting ways, see my ‘Augustine on the Rule of Faith: Rhetoric, Christology, and the Foundation of Christian Thinking’, *AugStud* 36 (2005), 33–49.

⁴⁹ Victorinus, *adv. Ar.* 1. 50 (CSEL 83/1. 144–5): ‘hic est dues ... tripotens in unalitate spiritus ... tres potentias ...’; 1. 56 (CSEL 83/1. 153): ‘Facta enim a tripotentis spiritu’. The Greek term is to be found at 4. 21 (CSEL 83/1. 257): ‘τριδύναμις est deus, id est tres potentias habens’.

⁵⁰ Nello Cipriani, ‘Le fonti cristiana della dottrina trinitaria nei primi Dialoghi di S. Agostino’, *Aug(R)* 34 (1994), 253–312, here 264–5. Cipriani is one of only a few contemporary scholars who are prepared to countenance Augustine knowing Victorinus’s anti-Arian works: though he maintains this opinion not in the face of scholarly opposition, but in the face of a scholarly assumption that has received virtually no attempt at validation in recent decades. In Chapter 10 I consider Augustine’s possible use of Victorinus in *trin*. See also Cipriani, ‘Le opere di Sant’Ambrogio negli scritti di Sant’Agostino anteriori all’episcopato’, *La Scuola Cattolica* 125 (1997), 763–800. Two other pieces of particular significance for the interpretation of the texts with which I will be concerned in this chapter are F. Cavallera, ‘Les premières formules trinitaires de s. Augustin’, *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 31 (1930), 97–123, and J. Verhees, ‘Augustinus Trinitätsverständnis in den Schriften aus Cassiciacum’, *RecAug* 10 (1975), 45–75.

⁵¹ At *Enn.* 1.8.2 – a text Augustine probably read in 386 – the One is described as the *arche* of all. The possibility of influence from Plotinus here is increased when we note that there are strong parallels between the same Plotinian text and *b. vita* 4. 34, discussed in the next section of this chapter.

‘Arian’ possibly composed by Victorinus as a foil for his own refutation, and the phrase is again used (with approval) in Victorinus’s reply.⁵² When we come to Augustine’s equation of the Son and *intellectus* we could, of course, fairly easily read this as Augustine’s adaptation of Plotinian *Nous*.⁵³ But, if we are secure in noting the other two parallels in Victorinus, then we can at least say that Augustine must have known Victorinus’s own description of the Son as *intellectus* and *Nous*.⁵⁴ Moreover, Augustine’s description of this *intellectus* as *in [principio] maneat* parallels Victorinus’s description of the *Logos* as *in patre manens*.⁵⁵ Cipriani’s preference here is for Victorinus as Augustine’s source, but I think it more important to note the complexity Cipriani reveals. The evidence does not permit us to make a clear decision between these two possible sources in every case; but overall it does render highly plausible the judgement that Augustine is engaged with both.

It is impossible to discern with certainty the Trinitarian reference of, or sources for, the brief mention in Augustine’s text of that which flows from the Son *sine ulla degeneratione manaverit*. Cipriani argues that the verb *mano* is not used in Augustine’s early works in a sense that demands we translate as ‘emanate’, which might be taken to indicate a relationship between Augustine’s earliest pneumatology and Plotinus’s third *hypostasis*.⁵⁶ Then Cipriani suggests that the text might be taken to be a reference to the Incarnate Christ’s descent. But there does seem to be a parallel here to Victorinus’s account of the generation of Son and Spirit occurring *nulla ... mutatione*.⁵⁷ While we are now in the realm of speculation, Cipriani has convincingly shown the problematic status of Du Roy’s reading.

⁵² See *ad. Cand.* 1. 3 (CCSL 83/1. 4): ‘Principium autem sine principio. Praecedit enim nullum principium ante se habens’; cf. Victorinus, *ad Cand.* 16 (CSEL 83/1. 33–4). See Cipriani, ‘Fonti Christiane’, 264–8.

⁵³ The equivalence of *Nous* and *intellectus* is clear enough: the depth of the connection may be seen, for example, in the parallel between Augustine’s description of *intellectus* at *ord.* 2. 9.26 as ‘in qui universa sunt, vel ipse potius universa’ and Plotinus’s language at *Enn.* 1. 8.2 and 5. 3.5.

⁵⁴ For example Victorinus, *adv. Ar.* 1. 60.

⁵⁵ Victorinus, *adv. Ar.* 1. 44 (CSEL 83/1. 134). Cf. Ambrose *fid.* 4. 11.143ff.

⁵⁶ Cipriani, ‘Fonti Christiane’, 266–7. Nevertheless, one cannot rule out a reference to the Spirit. Note, for example, the uses of the same verb to describe God’s providential bestowing of goods at *sol.* 1. 1.4, and its use at *b. vita.* 2. 10 to describe what seems to be an allusion to the Spirit’s *inflammatio* of Monica (CCSL 29. 71): ‘quantum, poteram, intellegente, ex quo illa et quam divino fonte manarent’. In discussing Du Roy’s account of *ord.* 2. 11.30, I emphasized the range of assumptions he makes about both Augustine and Plotinus: in the assumption that language of ‘emanation’ indicates an identity marker of Neoplatonism, I suggest we see a further dimension of the common but erroneous assumptions about Neoplatonism made by scholars of Augustine.

⁵⁷ Victorinus, *adv. Ar.* 4. 21 (CSEL 83/1. 257).

My interest here, however, is not simply in this series of parallels to Victorinus, but also in what Augustine does *not* take from Victorinus. Most importantly, Augustine fails to copy Victorinus's description of the Trinity as *tres potentiae*, a phrase used in the very same texts in which we find *tripotens*. In fact, other than Victorinus, no Latin Nicene Christian author of the fourth century describes God as *tres potentiae*: in the context of late fourth-century pro-Nicene theology, description of God as *una potentia* had become a standard and central formulation.⁵⁸ Although Augustine does not yet seem to grasp the extent to which the unity of the divine power was a standard statement of late fourth-century pro-Nicene orthodoxy, in his use of *tripotens* but avoidance of *tres potentiae* we may detect a rudimentary awareness of where Victorinus's theology was idiosyncratic and unacceptable within Augustine's immediate context.

While the prayer with which the *Soliloquia* opens makes no use of power terminology, it does provide a contemporary indication that Augustine already understood Latin Nicene insistence on the divine unity.⁵⁹ The prayer begins by addressing the Father as *Deus*, the same term is then used in subsequent phrases which seem to address both Son and Spirit, and the whole passage concludes with the statement that God is 'one God ... one true eternal substance, where is no discord, no confusion ... where Begetter and Begotten are one'.⁶⁰ For Augustine to understand the problem with Victorinus's *tres potentiae*, and to be able to replicate statements of the divine unity, he did not need a very detailed knowledge of contemporary Latin Nicene theology, but some knowledge of basic principles is evident – and while Augustine could well have gained this knowledge in conversation with someone such as Simplicianus, we have strong evidence for an initial literary engagement with Latin Nicenes towards the end of 386.⁶¹

⁵⁸ See Michel René Barnes, "One Nature, One Power": Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic', *SP* 29 (1997), 205–23. At the beginning of the next chapter I discuss the characteristics of Latin pro-Nicene theology.

⁵⁹ It must also be remarked that 'power' is rarely an important technical term in Trinitarian theology for Augustine. It is not until late in his career (c.418) that the unity of the divine power appears in summary statements of the divine unity. See, for example, *ymb. cat.* 5 and 9; *trin.* 15.3.5, *serm.* 215. 8. This absence tells us little about when Augustine encountered the terminology: it is clear enough that he had, for example, read Ambrose's *De fide* long before 418. In his attack on Faustus (c.398–400) he is also able to articulate a basic definition of power: *c. Faust.* 20. 2 (CSEL 25/1. 542): 'ad uirtutem pertinere uideatur operari et efficere'.

⁶⁰ *sol.* 1. 4. (CSEL 89. 7): 'unus deus ... una aeterna et vera substantia, ubi nulla discrepantia, nulla confusion ... ubi qui gignit et quem gignit, unum est'.

⁶¹ Cipriani also suggests a variety of other parallels that seem less compelling. A few, however, deserve note. With reference to this passage, Goulven Madec had suggested that Augustine's description of the mysteries as liberating not 'confusedly' (*confuse*) or 'abusively' (*contumeliose*)

In this light it is unlikely either that Augustine's Trinitarianism took form primarily as the filling out of the 'rule of faith' with Plotinian content, or that the full force of Augustine's Trinitarianism is economic. His concern in his earliest texts is most certainly to articulate a notion of God that opposes both Manichaeism and Scepticism, and to that end Augustine emphasizes God's establishment of a unified and intelligible created order that enables human return to contemplation of God (as we shall discuss further in the following chapters). But, at the same time, Augustine is already struggling to integrate material from non-Christian Platonism with an account of God *in se* found in contemporary Latin theology, most likely learned from Victorinus and Ambrose.

DE BEATA VITA

To take our argument forward we must look back. The short dialogue *De beata vita* was completed in the winter of 386/7 during the writing of the *Contra Academicos* (and probably only a few months before *De ordine* 2), and thus is Augustine's first completed writing as a Christian.⁶² At its end we find:

Thus, whoever is happy possesses his measure, that is, wisdom [*habet ergo modum suum, id est sapientiam*]. (34) But what wisdom should be so called, if not the wisdom of God? We have also heard through divine authority that the Son of God is nothing but the Wisdom of God, and the Son of God is truly God ... But do you believe that Wisdom is different from truth? For it has also been said: 'I am the Truth'. The Truth, however, receives its being through a supreme measure, from which it proceeds and towards whom it turns itself when perfected [*Veritas autem ut sit, fit per aliquem summum modum, a quo procedit et in quem se perfecta convertit*] ... Who is the Son of God? It has been said The Truth. Who is it that has no father? Who other than the supreme measure? ... (35) A certain admonition [*admonitio*], flowing from the very fountain of truth urges

was perhaps a reference to the two alternatives of Sabellianism (which confused the persons) and Arianism (which Augustine saw as offering an account that outrageously insulted the Son). Cipriani builds on this suggestion by noting that the terms used in *ord.* parallel *discrepentia* and *confusio* at *sol.* 1. 1.4 (for both Madec and Cipriani, see Cipriani, 'Le opere di Sant'Ambrogio', 768–9). He then notes that on a number of occasions Ambrose describes Sabellius as confusing the persons and the 'Arians' as introducing a separation (*discretio*) of power between Father and Son and as insulting the Son when they claim that 1Cor. 15.42–28 implies the Son's ontological subordination. See Ambrose, *fid.* 1. 1.6, 1. 1.8, 2. 3.33, 5. 12.149 (Ambrose's phrasing may owe something to the letter sent west by the Council of Constantinople in 382). Cipriani similarly parallels Augustine's description of God as *una aeterna vera substantia, ubi nulla discrepentia* with Ambrose's *una sola substantia divinitatis* and his comment on Father and Son, *quibus non discrepare inter se*.

⁶² *retr.* 1. 2.

us to remember God, to seek Him, and thirst after Him tirelessly. This hidden sun pours into our innermost eyes that beaming light ... Our mother, recalling here those words that still deeply adhered in her memory, awoke to her faith, as it were, and, inflamed with joy, uttered this verse of our priest: 'nurture those that pray, O Trinity'.⁶³

Du Roy acknowledges that in Augustine's description of the Son as Wisdom and Truth we probably see reference to 1 Corinthians 1.24 and John 14.6, but he suggests that we may also see Plotinus's portrayal in *Ennead* 5. 5.8 of Intellect as Wisdom itself and Wisdom as true substance.⁶⁴ The heart of Du Roy's treatment, however, concerns Augustine's description of the Father as *summum modum* and of the Son as perfected in generation by turning towards that measure. Augustine is the first Latin theologian to speak of the Father as *summum modum*, and the title is confined to his earliest and Manichaean works.⁶⁵ Du Roy (again following Solignac) sees a variety of Plotinian sources behind this language.⁶⁶ At *Ennead* 5. 5.4, Plotinus states that the One is the measure of all subsequent to it, and yet not measured. The One cannot be understood as the unity of the duality that is subsequent to it, as if the first in a numerical series.⁶⁷ In *Ennead*. 1. 8.2 the One is the measure and limit (μέτρον πάντων καὶ πέρας) of all else, and on this basis Plotinus asserts the non-existence of evil. In this language we probably see one source for the links Augustine draws between the nature of God and the non-existence of evil.⁶⁸ At the same time, Augustine's understanding of the Son as turning to the supreme measure 'when perfected' possibly represents a garbled version of

⁶³ *b. vita* 33–5 (CCSL 29. 84–5). The final quotation is from Ambrose, *Hymn* 2 ('Deus Creator Omnium'). If we can suppose that Augustine knew the full text of the final verse from which Monica quotes, then he had already to hand at least one concise statement of the unity of the divine power: 'Christum rogamus et Patrem, Christi Patrisque Spiritum; unum potens per omnia, fove precantes, Trinitas'.

⁶⁴ Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 155. See Plotinus, *Enn.* 5. 5.8: εἰ ὁ νοῦς ἐγέννησε τὴν σοφίαν' καὶ εἰ φήσουσι, πόθεν; Εἰ δὲ ἐξ αὐτοῦ, ἀδύνατον ἄλλως ἢ αὐτὸν ὄντα σοφίαν. Ἡ ἄρα ἀληθινὴ σοφία οὐσία, καὶ ἡ ἀληθινὴ οὐσία σοφία. The use of *sapientia* in this text does not necessarily reflect 1Cor. 1.24, but the contemporary reference at *c. Acad.* 2. 1.1 is certain and demonstrates that Augustine already knows something of the text's utility.

⁶⁵ The term occurs at *c. Acad.* 2. 2, *b. vita* 4. 34, *div. qu.* 6, *nat. b.* 22, 41, and almost at *c. Sec.* 9. Augustine's fullest and clearest usage is at *nat. b.* 22.

⁶⁶ Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 156–61.

⁶⁷ *Enn.* 5. 5.4: '[the One] is a measure and not measured [μέτρον γὰρ αὐτὸ καὶ οὐ μετρούμενον]'.

⁶⁸ We should, however, be careful at this point. Plotinus is not simply content (as is Augustine) with asserting evil's non-existence: while he is clear that the soul's evil consists in a declension from goodness and beauty, he also assumes that absolute/primal/essential evil may well be some sort of form of formlessness and stand in relation to the existence of matter as such (*Enn.* 1. 8.3ff.). As ever, Augustine's Platonism is very much his own.

Plotinus's account of the manner in which Intellect is constituted by its gaze upon the one in *Ennead* 5. 1:

[Soul] is a reflection of intellect – and for this reason it has to look to Intellect; but Intellect in the same way has to look to that God, in order to be Intellect ... by its return to it it sees: and this seeing is Intellect.⁶⁹

Du Roy will be on far thinner ice when he turns to the pneumatological material in the passage and to its overall import, but we will come to this separately.

When Cipriani treats this passage he cannot resist pointing out that Du Roy's analysis shows 'un certo imbarazzo' precisely because Du Roy has been forced to acknowledge Augustine's complex *adaptation* of Plotinian language to his Christian context.⁷⁰ Cipriani then suggests that Augustine's patterns of adaptation are themselves echoed in Victorinus. Even if there is no one sentence which directly parallels Augustine's formulations, statements that Christ is the Truth, that the Father is the cause of the Son and the Son 'proceeds' from the Father may be found together on a single page of Victorinus's *Adversus Arium* 1.⁷¹ Cipriani argues that we also find in Victorinus the same combination of technical language linking the Son's procession with the idea of the Son's conversion to the Father.⁷² Augustine's insistence that there would be no Truth without

⁶⁹ *Enn.* 5. 1.6–7: ἀλλὰ ψυχῆς μὲν ἀνυμδρὸς ὁ λόγος—ὡς γὰρ εἰδωλὸν νοῦ—ταύτη καὶ εἰς νοῦν βλέπειν δεῖ· νοῦς δὲ ὡσαύτως πρὸς ἐκεῖνον, ἵνα ἢ τοῦς ... ἢ ὅτι τῆ ἐπιστροφῆ πρὸς αὐτὸ ἑώρα· ἢ δὲ ὄρασις αὕτη νοῦς. See also *Enn.* 5. 1.5, 5. 3.11, 5. 4.2ff., 6. 7. I quote from 5. 1 because of our near certainty that Augustine knew a translation of this text, despite the fact that in the last sentence the subject of ἑώρα is unclear. It could be either the One or Intellect: we have no idea how the translation that Augustine encountered read. In asserting that the Truth turns towards the supreme measure 'when perfected' Augustine seems not to grasp Plotinus's point. There is, as we shall see in Chapter 9, some question as to whether Augustine made use of this Plotinian theme in his mature account of the Son's 'seeing' of the Father.

⁷⁰ Cipriani, 'Fonti cristiane', 269.

⁷¹ Cipriani, 'Fonti cristiane', 270. See Victorinus, *adv. Ar.* 1. 13–14 (CSEL 83/1. 72–3): 'Sed maior Pater, quod ipse dedit ipsi omnia et causa est ipsi filio ... Christus enim veritas ... Quod Christus et a patre processit'.

⁷² Cipriani, 'Fonti cristiane', 270–1. Here Cipriani combines two passages from Victorinus. First, *adv. Ar.* 1. 13 (CSEL 83/1. 72): 'Filius autem, ut esset, accepit et in id quod est agere ab actione procedens in perfectionem veniens, motu efficitur plenitude'. With this Cipriani links the account of the Son's conversion towards the Father in *adv. Ar.* 1. 51 (CSEL 83/1. 147): 'rursus in semet ipsam conversa, venit in suam patricam existentiam ... et perfecta in omnipotentem virtutem'. Cipriani is drawn to this text because of its use of *conversa*, but in context the text may well be concerned with the Incarnation as much as the eternal generation. Nevertheless, the idea Cipriani needs is expressed even more clearly a few lines above without any ambiguity (CSEL 83/1. 147): 'Sed quoniam ... ista motio, una cum sit, et vita est et sapientia, vita conversa in sapientiam et magis in existentiam patricam, magis autem retor motae motionis, in patricam potentiam'. It should, however, be noted that Augustine's 'in quem se perfecta convertit' is odd in seeming to locate the moment of perfecting prior to the turn to the Father. Victorinus is closer

Measure, or vice versa, is paralleled by both Victorinus's and Ambrose's sense that Father and Son are mutually entailing.⁷³ Finally – and here he stretches the parallel – Cipriani suggests that Augustine's language of the Father as *summum modum* finds a precedent in Victorinus's description of the Father as *inmensus* but the Son as *mensus atque inmensus*.⁷⁴

Cipriani, however, treats this text differently from *De ordine* 2. 5.16. There he attempted to replace Plotinus as the most significant source with Victorinus; here he argues that Augustine's very probable engagement with Plotinus is shaped by his reading of Victorinus and Ambrose.⁷⁵ Although I think Du Roy and others before him are correct in their identification of the sources for Augustine's description of the Father as *summum modum*, Cipriani shows here that we need to envisage Augustine undertaking these adaptations in the context of reading other Latin pro-Nicene theologians who read non-Christian Platonists in similar ways. His adaptation of this theme, for example, follows well-established Nicene precedent in presenting the *summum modum* as a Son who is also truly God: the dynamic of unity and distinction between the *summum modum* and God is expressed in Nicene Trinitarian language, not that of any potential non-Christian source. Thus, we need not only to consider the most plausible sources for particular terminologies, we need also to consider the ways in which multiple sources may be reflected, and the ways in which Augustine's Christian readings may be guiding his readings in non-Christian Platonism.

Augustine's description of the 'hidden sun' pouring its 'beaming light' is, Du Roy plausibly suggests, founded in the language of Ambrose's hymns, specifically *Splendor Paternae Gloriam*. Ambrose speaks of the Sun as the 'true Sun' sending its radiance, the Spirit, to illuminate the sensible world.⁷⁶ Du Roy, however, also asserts that Augustine interprets this language by means of the notion of *ratio* as it appears in the *Soliloquia* and the *De ordine*.⁷⁷ For Du Roy, Augustine uses *admonitio*

to Plotinus, as is the mature Augustine (see the discussion of Augustine's interpretation of John 5.19 in Chapter 9).

⁷³ Cipriani, 'Fonti cristiane', 271. As examples, Cipriani gives Victorinus, *adv. Ar.* 3. 17.20, 1. 42.18; Ambrose, *fid.* 1. 8.55, 4. 9.108.

⁷⁴ Victorinus, *Hymn* 1. II (CSEL 83/1. 286).

⁷⁵ Cipriani, 'Fonti cristiane', 270: 'È opportuno però osservare che alcuni di questi temi potrebbero essere giunti ad Agostino non solo dalla lettura diretta delle *Enneadi*, ma anche attraverso il filtro delle fonti cristiane'.

⁷⁶ Ambrose, *hymn* 2. 5–8 (Fontaine, *Ambroise*, 185): 'Verusque sol, illabere / micans nitore perpeti, / iubarque Sancti Spiritus / infunde nostris sensibus.' For commentary, see Fontaine, *Ambroise*, 188–92.

⁷⁷ Du Roy, *L'Intelligence*, 164.

in two discrete senses: the external *admonitio* consists of the teaching of Christ or another teacher whose role is to direct us inwards; the internal *admonitio* is the *ratio* which leads us to contemplate God and is the Spirit.⁷⁸

Cipriani and others have attacked this account, first, by undermining the clear distinction between senses of *admonitio* that Du Roy describes.⁷⁹ The term has a foundation in Latin rhetorical tradition where it describes advice or a mild form of *obiurgatio* or pithy rebuke intended to recall someone to awareness of appropriate ends, often by suggesting an appropriate model for imitation.⁸⁰ The term is also often distinguished from teaching as such, thus undermining the certainty with which Du Roy locates a certain type of *admonitio* as teaching administered by Christ. Augustine has likely chosen this term because of its traditional connotations in a discussion of the moral life. Furthermore, while Augustine does speak of external and internal *admonitiones*, a number of texts from Augustine's early (if not earliest) works state directly that the two *admonitiones* both form hope and love in the Christian.⁸¹

Moreover, Augustine's attribution of these functions to the Spirit is best understood, Cipriani argues, within the general thrust of other Latin pro-Nicene theology. Both Ambrose and Victorinus describe one of the Spirit's roles as providing confidence in the faith and knowledge that shapes hope and love, even if the technical rhetorical term *admonitio* is not used directly of the Spirit. Ambrose presents Gratian as handing back the Basilica that had been appropriated for Homoian worship because the Spirit internally instructed Gratian so strongly in the true faith that no external *admonitio* was needed.⁸² In a more directly theological vein, Cipriani points to Victorinus's description of the Spirit as complementing the work of Christ by providing knowledge and assurance.⁸³ These

⁷⁸ Du Roy, *L'intelligence*, 163–5.

⁷⁹ Cipriani, 'Fonti cristiane', 272–81; Jean Doignon, 'La "praxis" de l'*admonitio* dans les dialogues de Cassiciacum de Saint Augustin', *Vetera Christianorum* 23 (1986), 21–37; for a general treatment of the term in Augustine, see Goulven Madec, '*admonitio*' in *AugLex*.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Cicero, *orat.* 2. 83,339. The fullest ancient discussion is to be found in Seneca, *ep.* 94. 25. Quintilian *inst.* 4. 1 offers another nice example of the function of *admonitio* as a device focused on the goal of moving the emotions: 'cuius animus [that is, the mind of the *iudex*] spe metu admonitione precibus, vanitate denique, si id profuturum credemus, agitandus est. Sunt et illa excitandis ad audiendum non inutilia'.

⁸¹ Cipriani cites *div. qu.* 83. 68,5 (c.390?) and *lib. arb.* 3. 20,57 (396?), both of which speak of internal and external drawing by God, but neither of which uses the language of *admonitio*, and *Simpl.* 1. 2.2 (c.396), which does (CCSL 44. 25): 'incipit autem homo percipere gratiam, ex quo incipit deo credere uel interna uel externa admonitione motus ad fidem'.

⁸² Ambrose, *spir.* 1. 1.19. ⁸³ Victorinus, *adv. Ar.* 4. 17.

parallels help to some extent, but they become more convincing when we place our text from *De beata vita* in the wider context of Augustine's other very earliest pneumatological discussion.

The prayer with which the *Soliloquia* commence includes the following section, a section more dense with scriptural citation than any other in the earliest work:

God, through whom we conquer the enemy [cf. 1John 4.4], it is you whom I beseech; God through whom it has been granted us that we should not perish utterly; God by whom we are reminded so that we might remain on guard; God through whom we separate good from evil; God through whom we flee evil and pursue good ... God through whom 'death is swallowed up in victory' [1Cor. 15.54]; God who converts us; God who strips us of that which is not and clothes us with that which is [cf. 1Cor. 15.53–4]; God who makes it possible for us to be heard; God who fortifies us; God who leads us into all truth [John 16.13] ... God, who sees to it that 'to those who knock it will be opened' [Matt. 7.8]; God who gives us the 'bread of life' [John 6.38, 45]; God through whom we thirst to drink, and after that drink we will thirst no more [see John 6.35]; God who brings to the world the knowledge of sin, and of justice, and of judgement [John 16.8]; God through whom we condemn the error of those who think that there is no merit in souls before your eyes; God, through whom we are not enslaved to 'weak and needy elements' [Gal. 4.9]; God, who cleanses us and prepares us and for our heavenly reward: come to me in your kindness.⁸⁴

Only Jean Doignon in recent years has argued that the passage as a whole is not structured as a threefold appeal to each of the persons of the Trinity. Doignon prefers to read the text as following established philosophical forms and as a sequential treatment of various aspects of God's role in the soul's ascent.⁸⁵ Few scholars have been convinced that Doignon's analysis entirely undermines the plausibility of a Trinitarian reading; it seems more likely that Doignon has opened the way towards seeing this passage as another in which a wide variety of Christian and non-Christian sources are combined. In the prayer as a whole – beyond the passage quoted above – Neoplatonic influence is most clear in Augustine's presentation of the Father as the source of an intelligible and harmonic cosmic order, and of the Son as Truth, Wisdom, Life and the intelligible Light in whom existence itself occurs. It is to this existence in the Truth that we must be recalled through purification. The first two Trinitarian

⁸⁴ *sol.* 1. 3 (CSEL 89. 6–7; text modified).

⁸⁵ Jean Doignon, 'La Prière liminaire des *Soliloquia* dans la ligne philosophique des Dialogues de Cassiciacum', in J. den Boeft and J. van Oort (eds.), *Augustiniana Traiectana* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987), 85–105, here 87–9. On the prayer, see also Du Roy, *L'intelligence*, 201–3; Cipriani, 'Fonti cristiane', 290–4.

persons are thus entreated within a prayer structured by a vision of ascent and the cosmos typical of the early works.⁸⁶

Doignon reads the section of text quoted above as following the same fundamental lines, the scriptural material merely filling out fundamentally Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophical themes.⁸⁷ While Doignon may be correct in his identification of Augustine's philosophical sources, he offers no explanation of why Augustine chooses in this one section to use scriptural texts so densely. Without simply arguing for exclusively theological sources, in opposition to Doignon's classical set, I suggest we can read this discussion as reflecting a very early attempt by Augustine to articulate a pneumatology within a pro-Nicene context, but one that demonstrates Augustine has yet to seize upon any clear focus. Some of the texts Augustine cites are clearly pneumatological. John 16.8 and 16.13 are the most obvious, but they give us little idea of his immediate theological context. Some of the texts are much less obviously pneumatological, Matthew 7.8 and Galatians 4.9. As Cipriani observes, while neither of these texts is used in pneumatological contexts by Victorinus or Ambrose, Victorinus's *Hymn* 2 directly attributes to the Spirit the function of opening the gates of heaven as the witness to Christ.⁸⁸ There is, however, more to be said.

Echoes of pro-Nicene pneumatology appear clearly when we consider the *functions* attributed to the Spirit in this passage. The understanding of the Spirit as sustaining in existence is found in both Victorinus and Ambrose.⁸⁹ Ambrose also frequently refers to the role of the Spirit in raising the dead (and using 1Cor. 15.52), in part because of a concern to show that the one who works in Christians is the one who has the power of raising the dead.⁹⁰ Thus, against a reading of this passage as focused entirely on the Spirit's role in the moral life, Augustine may well be following pro-Nicene precedent in identifying the Spirit's work as that of one who operates with the power of God. The use of John 6.35 and 6.38 or 45 is distinctively Augustine's.

The passage also locates the use of *admonitio* within a wider theological context. *De beata vita* 4. 4–5 and *Soliloquia* 1. 1.3 indicate that Augustine's earliest pneumatology is not best interpreted as the adaptation of Plotinus's *Logos*, but as an attempt to accommodate his initial grasp of pro-Nicene pneumatology within a notion of ascent deeply shaped by his

⁸⁶ Doignon, 'La Prière liminaire', 89–93. ⁸⁷ Doignon, 'La Prière liminaire', 93–6.

⁸⁸ Victorinus, *hymn.* 2. 111. ⁸⁹ Victorinus, *hymn.* 3. 11; Ambrose *spir.* 2. 5.33 and 35.

⁹⁰ Ambrose, *spir.* 3. 20.153–21.159; *exc. Sat.* 2. 75–6.

initial readings in Neoplatonism. Once again we are negotiating a field of uncertainty bounded by Augustine's earliest Christian literary engagements. It is not at all clear how the Spirit's eternal role is envisaged, but we have already seen enough hints to know that Augustine has begun to devote attention to the eternal relationship of Father and Son, and Augustine presents the Spirit here, at a minimum, as a third who operates with divine power.

AUGUSTINE'S ENGAGEMENTS

We must, then, move away from envisaging the independent genius of Augustine using selections of the *Enneads* to reinterpret Latin philosophical tradition and fill out the bare bones of a traditional 'rule of faith'. When we build on the best of Cipriani's arguments to correct Du Roy it is most plausible that Augustine's earliest Trinitarian theology resulted from a reading of both non-Christian and Christian Platonists, the latter sources (most probably Victorinus and Ambrose in the winter of 386–7) being deeply imbued with both adapted Platonic doctrines and some key themes of late fourth-century Latin pro-Nicene theology. Our task, then, is to find a way of describing the relationship between two streams of literary engagement that probably began during the latter half of 386, months before Augustine's baptism. I suggest three conclusions follow from the investigations of this chapter that help towards this end:

(i) Augustine adopted and adapted themes from non-Christian Platonic texts in three areas: his account of the character of divine existence as immaterial, omnipresent and simple; his account of the Father's role as *principium* in the Trinity; his account of the Son as *intellectus*. The first we have not discussed in any detail in this chapter, even though it is presupposed in all of the texts we have considered. This theme is fundamental in Augustine's anti-Manichaean and anti-Sceptical arguments for the cosmos as an intelligible order stemming from the creative activity of the Father (in the Son and through the Spirit).⁹¹ When we see how Augustine also insists on the informing and illuminating presence of the second person throughout the cosmos as continually equal to and 'in' the first, then it is clear that his understanding of the divine nature already provides Augustine with the context in which to assert that the irreducibility of Father, Son and Spirit does not imply belief in three deities or a

⁹¹ Chapter 2 offers more extensive references to this theme in the earliest works.

hierarchy of divinity. His arguments to this effect are still hesitant: they will change and mature considerably.

The second and third themes – Augustine’s account of the Father’s role as *principium* in the Trinity, and his account of the Son as *intellectus* – are apparent in both the *De ordine* and *De beata vita* texts, as we have seen at some length. These two themes not only helped Augustine develop his understanding of the Father’s and the Son’s individual characteristics, but also of their mutual relations. Augustine understands the Son’s equality and inseparability from the Father through an account of the Son as the *intellectus* resting in the Father, and as the Wisdom and Son born from the Father. That the Father is *principium* of Son and Spirit is already clear, although we can say little as yet about the character of that *principium*.

(2) This last example draws our attention to one of the central features of Augustine’s early engagement with Neoplatonism in the area of Trinitarian theology: his adaptation is shaped by his understanding of some basic pro-Nicene principles about the relations between the persons. While Augustine draws on some features of Plotinus’s account of *Nous* and its relationship to the One, many features that Plotinus would think of as necessary are ignored because of the demands of pro-Nicene theology.

Thus, Augustine’s initial readings in Latin Nicene theology seem to have both encouraged and bounded his adaptations of non-Christian Neoplatonism. Latin Nicene theologians – especially Victorinus and Ambrose – *encouraged* Augustine in the sense that they modelled for him ways of using the non-Christian Platonist texts he simultaneously encountered, and areas where such adaptation might be fruitful. At the same time our evidence seems to suggest that his readings in Latin Nicene theology also *bounded* Augustine’s adaptation. This ‘bounding’ does not imply that Augustine’s adaptation of non-Christian Platonism was not highly personal, it only indicates that the boundaries within which that adaptation occurred were established by the adaptations of his predecessors and peers, and by the dynamics of their existing theologies. In some cases Augustine directly copies aspects of earlier adaptation, in others he develops his own adaptation but follows clear parallels in his Christian sources. But, as I have noted, he already seems to be aware of how a theology such as that of Ambrose offers a standard of orthodoxy in his context in ways that Victorinus’s cannot.

In this analysis, it is also the case that Augustine’s earliest Trinitarian theology cannot be understood as functionally economic. While in these earliest works we observe Augustine attempting to articulate an account

of God and world that will enable our return to God, it is clear that he was simultaneously beginning to articulate an understanding of how the three irreducible and co-equal persons might be understood to constitute the one God.

(3) We can identify some points at which Augustine did *not* draw to any great extent on the doctrines he found in his early Neoplatonic readings. It is difficult to show that Augustine took from non-Christian Platonism significant material that guided his earliest pneumatology.⁹² In broader terms, there is no convincing evidence that Augustine took from Plotinus a conception of *three* 'primary realities' that shaped his overall account of the relations between Father, Son and Spirit. Indeed, one can fairly ask whether there is proof that Augustine at this stage understood Plotinus to have an account of three primary *hypostases*, all of whom Augustine would have recognized as divine. Our evidence allows no certain answer, but it is at least plausible that Augustine saw the three *hypostases* as One, *Nous* and the world-soul (this last being understood as more a created than a divine reality).⁹³ There may, then, be far more accuracy than scholars customarily assume in Augustine's comment in *Confessiones* 7 that he was encouraged in his initial readings in non-Christian Platonism by finding there echoes of Christian belief in the Father and Son, God and Word.⁹⁴ The comment may well be true *both* in the sense that Augustine read those non-Christian texts at the same time and to some extent in the light of his developing understanding of Christian belief *and* in the sense that in those non-Christian texts what he found was indeed echoes of belief in Father and Son, not Spirit.⁹⁵

I suspect that if overheard by many modern theologians my account of Augustine's earliest theology would seem only a little less problematic than Du Roy's. I share with Du Roy the assumption that some Platonic

⁹² In addition to the directly textual arguments offered in this chapter, it is strange that while Augustine's use of Plotinian material to describe Father and Son is fairly obvious, Du Roy himself has to admit the difficulty of showing the Plotinian sources for Augustine's earliest pneumatology. Why is Augustine's appropriation so hard to trace in the case of this one *hypostasis*?

⁹³ One might ask whether Augustine engages in any detail with Neoplatonic noetic triads such as that of being/life/mind. I discuss this question in Chapters 5 and 10. There is no presence of such triads in Trinitarian discussions in Augustine's earliest works.

⁹⁴ *conf.* 7. 9.13.

⁹⁵ I think the first time Augustine directly attributes to a Neoplatonist author belief in *three* divine realities is in his discussion of Porphyry at *civ.* 10. 23 (CCSL 47. 296–7). The passage is an interesting one in the light of this chapter's discussion both because Augustine is clearly puzzled at Porphyry's account (and note that he does not see it as parallel to his own account of the Spirit as *vinculum*) and because Augustine appears to attribute to Plotinus precisely a view of the *principales substantiae* as One, *Nous* and World-Soul.

doctrines were fundamental to Augustine's Trinitarian theology. I also assume that this is so for virtually all significant fourth- and fifth-century Trinitarian writers. Du Roy and I, of course, differ markedly about how Augustine's particular engagement with Platonic doctrines shaped his theology. One of the ways in which we differ is that Du Roy assumes – in a manner that unites him with the greater number of modern systematic theologians – that the degree of influence 'Platonism' has on a theology is virtually an index by which we may judge its corruption. The account I have offered in this chapter not only questions Du Roy's hermeneutic of suspicion as a bad method of reading intellectual development, but it also (if implicitly) questions his assumption that Platonism necessarily corrupts.

Developments in post-critical exegesis have opened the way for very different attitudes to the relationship between Platonic and Christian doctrines. Theologians and historians of theology are now more likely to view the history of exegesis as revealing a plurality of methods rather than a progress from less to more scientific interpretation. In this more pluralistic climate students of early Christianity have become much more attentive to the particular reading practices that shaped pre-modern theologians as they explored the text of Scripture in doctrinal reflection. Elsewhere I have argued for our recognizing the importance of 'grammatical' exegesis within the doctrinal debates of the fourth and early fifth centuries. By the term 'grammatical' I refer to the sorts of reading practices that were learnt at the hands of the *grammaticus* and the *rhetor*. Three such techniques deserve note here. First, one technique already deeply embedded within Christian exegetical practice by Augustine's time was the consideration of particular pieces of scriptural vocabulary by means of the persuasive philosophical and scientific resources of late antiquity. Thus, scriptural use of such terms as *dunamis*, *hypostasis*, *ousia* was understood as appropriately parsed by using contemporary arguments about the meaning of such terms. Second, ancient readers learnt to interpret particular scriptural terms and statements in the light of parallels from elsewhere in the text. Third, the same ancient readers learnt to interpret particular sections of text within an overall construction of a text's argument and structure. Once we see how such reading practices constituted a particular style of doctrinal exegesis, and not simply a bad anticipation of modern scholarly practice, then we find ourselves as scholars facing new and hard questions about how we judge the effects of Platonic doctrines on any given author.

One cannot simply assume that the presence of doctrines that originate with non-Christian Platonic authors entails a given author being

inevitably subject to the intellectual positions that are supposed to be the necessary corollaries of *any* 'Platonism'. We must make a variety of philosophical, theological and aesthetic judgements about the manner in which and the skill with which Platonic doctrines are integrated with texts taken to be authoritative. We will need, of course, to do so in different ways or to different ends depending on whether we see ourselves as theologians or intellectual historians. Just as Du Roy's generation of scholars developed a new sophistication in their attempts to trace source allusions and borrowings in Patristic authors, changes in our understanding of Patristic exegesis force upon this generation of scholars a need to focus attention on how we interpret the adaptation and often cannibalization of philosophical resources by a given author. We need to be more sophisticated in considering how Christian authors use the ideas they find persuasive and we need to develop more overt criteria by which we assess the character of a synthesis attempted.

Alluding to Plato's *Phaedrus*, Justin Martyr famously writes of his first encounter with Platonism: 'the perception of incorporeal things quite overwhelmed me and the Platonic theory of ideas added wings to my soul'. Something of the sort might well have been said by Augustine himself, but I suspect it is better to put into Augustine's mouth a modified version: 'for me', he might well have said 'Platonism added wings to Nicaea'. Of course the close reader of Justin will note that he immediately continues, 'So that in a short time I imagined myself a wise man. So great was my folly that I fully expected immediately to gaze upon God'. However, the assumption that Augustine's earliest theology followed the same order – Platonism providing its content until Augustine came (but failingly) to his Christian senses – is far more tenuously founded than it seemed either to Du Roy or to those theologians who have argued in his wake.