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THE WEIGHT OF LOVE:

LOCATING AND DIRECTING THE SOUL
IN AUGUSTINE’S EARLY WORKS

By Ian Clausen

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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The aim of this thesis is to explore the weight of love in Augustine’s early works (AD 386-95). By the weight of love, this thesis refers to the location and direction of the soul *qua* lover. According to Augustine, every soul has a journey to attend to, and every journey comes replete with obstacles on the way. To negotiate these obstacles involves attending to the weight of love, taking care to place the soul in relation to the truth. To achieve this, Augustine embarks on three pivotal early works to develop an itinerary for spiritual awakening. In *De Academicis* (AD 386), he forges a path “from Cicero to Christ” in order to deliver the soul from scepticism, and to present it to the true philosophy. In *De vera religione* (AD 390-1), he paves a way “from aversion to transcendence” in order to overcome Manichean pride, and to embrace the humility of Christ. Finally in *De libero arbitrio* (AD 388-95), he charts a course “from faith to understanding” whereby the soul overcomes temptation to blame God for sin, and gains awareness of its location as a sinner in Adam. By examining each itinerary in chronological order, this thesis establishes the place of love as a driving mechanism in the early works, and thereby reveals a profound continuity in Augustine’s early approach to the soul as lover.
I, Ian Clausen, declare that this thesis has been composed by me, that the work is my own, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree of professional qualification.

[Signature]
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TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

For this thesis, I draw upon several translations of Augustine’s works. Where I have provided the English translation, I indicate in a footnote. Latin text is based on the Nuova Biblioteca Augustiniana catalogue of Augustine’s works. Full (Latin) title for each work is provided in footnotes.

For Each Itinerary:

For Itinerary #1:
King, Peter, trans., Against the Academicians and the Teacher (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1995).

For Itinerary #2:
Borruso, Silvano, trans., On Order (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007).

For Itinerary #3:
King, Peter, trans., On Free Choice of the Will, Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
Introduction

THE LONG SURRENDER TO LOVE

The Soul as Lover

In the religious thought of St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430), the spiritual life is envisaged as a journey of desire.\(^1\) And on this journey one is either on the way to loving to God, or one is on the way to loving something other than God. There is no middle way or tertium quid on this journey, for Augustine. To envisage it is to embrace an illusion; to place oneself on it is to suffer a self-delusion. In this delusion, one is unaware of one’s location and direction. One does not know where one is or is going, for one refuses to know oneself as a lover on the way [in via]. For this reason, the spiritual life is not just a premise of self-knowledge; it is self-knowledge itself. To know oneself as a wayfarer, a lover on the way, is to embody the spiritual life in a self-conscious mode. In Augustine’s account, even to reach this point achieves a modest first step. So many lovers would seem to forget or wish away their location, opting for the delusion of having no attachments whatsoever. The motive is not hard to grasp when we understand true self-knowledge, not as knowledge of self in isolation, but as knowledge of self in relation to a final end.\(^2\) Since to face that final end is to face the truth of one’s love, many turn from it or hide from it lest their true location be exposed. When they do, their love becomes opaque to their very self, a mystery they encounter only in moments and fragments. The opportunity is still there to piece the fragments together, but not without assistance from the hands of (divine)

\(^1\) “[H]is most characteristic image of the spiritual life”, says Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo: A Biography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967; 2000), p. 145. Brown claims this image is most characteristic of Augustine’s later career; whereas we maintain that Augustine deploys it at an early point in his development (cf. De beata vita 1.1-5).

\(^2\) For this reason, the concept “self” can be a misleading term when applied to the study of Augustine: see Cavadini, John C., “The Darkest Enigma: Reconsidering the Self in Augustine’s Thought”, Augustinian Studies 38:1 (2007), pp. 119-132.
love itself. It is into those hands that Augustine, as a needful lover himself, entrusts his own attempts to help others along the way.

In the earliest phase of his prolific writing career (AD 386-91), Augustine invites us to step forward as lovers on the way by encountering and reflecting upon the reality of love’s weight. Following his conversion to Christ in AD 386, Augustine has much he wants to say about the weight of the soul’s love, and much he thinks he can do for love on behalf of his friends. By analysing some of his attempts to help his friends along the way, this thesis illustrates the place of love in Augustine’s early thought. It holds forth that the weight of love is indeed a weighty concept—always standing behind and informing Augustine’s approach to the spiritual life, it delivers him to profound insights on human nature and divine reality.

To set forth the terms and occasion of this thesis, we begin by examining love as a concept itself. Through the lens of two guiding metaphors, love as journey and love as weight, we outline the significance of love in Augustine’s theology as it relates to key facets of the soul’s formation and enlightenment.

Love as Journey

Augustine’s depiction of the spiritual life as a journey of desire invites reflection on what it means to be a lover on the way. To begin with, it has nothing to do with movement across physical terrain. “This is a journey which is made not by any geographical location on earth, but by the desires of our minds [affectibus...
It is a movement that depends on neither intellect nor will, but intellect and will moving in conjunction with love’s direction. “The foot of the soul is properly understood as love. When it is misshapen it is called concupiscence or lust; when it is well formed it is called love or charity”. Love confers meaning on the movement of the soul, but this meaning can be good or bad depending on the object. Though often we invoke love as a positive disposition, Augustine well foresees the mixed blessing that love can become. It can hold the soul back from pursuing a worthwhile object; bind the soul to objects it ought not to desire; motivate the soul to break free from those objects; and set the soul on the right track to ultimate fulfilment. No matter the object or journey we undertake, love is the determinative factor in how it all turns out. It is not just the means to the end that we seek. It is also in some sense the end itself. “Love moves a thing in the direction towards which it tends. But the dwelling-place of the soul is not in any physical space which the form of the body occupies, but in delight [delectatione], where it rejoices to have arrived through love [per amorem]”.

As the fullest mode in which we exist as humans, love pertains to a way of being that enables us to seek and name the good. By connecting us to the goods of reality, so to

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On the continuity of love in Augustine, William Babcock writes: “Augustine’s cupiditas is not mere lust. It is a rendering of the hopeless fragility and desperate outcome (both for self and for society) of love’s search for fulfilment where fulfilment cannot be found. Certainly this love is flawed, morally flawed, ‘the root of all evils’; but it is to be understood, all the same, as nothing less than love: love loving the wrong thing and thus love entangled in the web of unhappiness that it has spun for itself”, “Cupiditas and Caritas: The Early Augustine on Love and Human Fulfilment”, The Ethics of St. Augustine, ed. W. Babcock (Atlanta, GA: Scholar’s Press, 1991), p. 59. Eric Gregory also chimes in: “All human beings love and live in a reality governed by love. There is a fundamental continuity between all loves and desires whether or not they are distinguished as ‘natural’ or ‘supernatural’”, Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 257.

8 Enarrationes in Psalmos 9.15, trans. Boulding. This suffices as a first objection to the claim, put forward by Anders Nygren and his followers, that Augustine reduces love to a mere instrument of eudaimonia. As this passage shows, the end of love is not just the object of love; it is the soul’s delight in the object it seeks to possess. See Burnaby, Amor Dei, p. 109.
speak, love (dis)positions us in relation to an object we desire. It may even disposition us to many objects at once, multiplying our sense of attachment and belonging to reality. When such attachments come into conflict, as is often the case with love, the lover faces a dilemma as to which way to turn. On the one hand, his successful elevation of one love above the other reveals the extent to which his other love was weak or inauthentic. On the other hand, the difficulty he may encounter while “ordering” his loves reveals how deeply he is defined by affective attachment. Even if he desires to pick one love over the other, the conflict itself, even love itself, seems to resist his every attempt.

Augustine gives an illustration of this in book VIII of the *Confessiones*. With his metaphor love as journey, he reflects upon both the soul’s unwillingness to will what it desires, and the challenge this poses to the spiritual life:

> But to reach that destination one does not use ships or chariots or feet… The only necessary condition, which meant not only going but at once arriving there, was to have the will to go [*velle ire*] – provided only that the will [*velle*] was strong and unqualified, not the turning and twisting first this way, then that, of a will [*voluntatem*] half-wounded, struggling with one part rising up and the other part falling down.¹⁰

In this passage, Augustine stipulates that the soul’s ability to make progress depends on the soul’s willingness (not “will”; see below) to pursue the true good. It is not enough simply to be a lover on the way. One must also be heading there with total devotion. Some objects, it seems, demand more than just showing up. To possess them, we must want them with all our heart, mind, soul, and even strength.¹¹ For that reason, Augustine rightly indicates that in respect to the spiritual life, willing is only as good as the desire that guides it. *The* will is not the origin or seat of the soul’s journey, as Henry Chadwick’s translation almost appears to make it,¹² but flourishes

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⁹ The whole of book VIII, if not the whole of the *Confessiones*, is an illustration of this.
¹¹ Or just heart, mind, and soul, if we follow Matthew’s Gospel (22:37).
¹² Compare Maria Boulding’s translation: “It was a journey not to be undertaken by ship or carriage or on foot, not need it take me even that short distance I had walked from the house to the place where
under the conditioning of the right object of desire. The ordering of this process is important to get right. Augustine’s notion of spiritual struggle is not a “voluntarist” notion, one which grounds human movement in an *a priori* volition, but it stems from an understanding of the soul as lover, which Augustine instantiates through his image of the wayfaring soul. To posit a will standing over the journey of desire, as in the voluntarist account, undercuts the basic essence of the journey itself. Hence the reason, perhaps, that Henry Chadwick varies his translation of *voluntas* so as to capture the affective aspect of Augustine’s inner conflict. “So also when the delight of eternity draws up upwards and the pleasure of temporal goods holds us down, the identical soul is not wholehearted in its desire [*voluntate*] for one or the other. It is torn apart in a painful condition”.

In sum, we identify love as journey as the “form” of the spiritual life in order to undercut the “formlessness” of a voluntarist account. Where a voluntarist notion holds validity in Augustine, it does so as an adversary to the spiritual life: the pride that deludes the soul into thinking it is in control, and which excuses it from taking

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seriously the claims of desire. In contrast to this, Augustine invites the soul to stop entertaining such formless thoughts, and to receive itself as a lover in pursuit of what it loves. It begins, he says, by stepping forward in surrender to the weight of love, and by taking on the light burden and easy yoke of Christ.

**Love as Weight**

If the form of the spiritual life is a journey of desire, the mechanics of the spiritual life are governed by desire; and that brings us to consider Augustine’s other image for love, expressed in a famous passage at the end of the *Confessiones*. “My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me”.  

The expression love as weight renders the soul almost passive, a passenger riding the train of love with no say-so on its direction. An absolute dependency on the movement of love seems strikingly like the opposite of genuine affection; after all, love is no love if not given in freedom, and freedom is by no means a passive affair. On the other hand, Augustine does insist on calling the weight of love his love, and seems almost to “find himself” by so identifying with it. Perhaps the matter is not as simple as freedom or no freedom; or perhaps the freedom we idealise is not the freedom our author assumes. In Augustine’s view, defining “freedom” in terms of unfettered choice rather describes choice in search of its freedom. One becomes free when presented with the true object of delight: when that which is beautiful, worthy, and good awakens the soul’s “choice” and commands its attention. To wake up to the reality of the good, true, and beautiful is to undergo transformation in the soul’s inner part. It is then that the weight of love, as a "motive force" evoked in us, starts to take over our trajectory and re-frame our perceptions. Freedom in this sense, for Augustine, is freedom to be where we are, fulfilling our created purpose to love God.

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19 Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, p. 94.
and neighbour. It is a state we must learn how to receive from God, rather than a state we maintain or manufacture on our own. But as for how we learn to receive freedom from the God who created us, the answer is that we learn to by surrendering to love’s weight. The weight of love will carry us to where we belong, says Augustine, if only we will allow it to awaken us to the truth.

To be precise, our surrender to the motion of love’s weight involves taking a step forward as a lover on the way. The only reason we would step forward is in response to something, and that something serves as the initial sparkplug that ignites the soul’s journey. That something may not be the end that we seek; or it may prove not to be the end that we assumed; yet by giving our attention to it in one way or another, we begin the process of slowly surrendering to the weight of true love. In stepping forward toward this object, our location as lovers is revealed. It may take some time to come to terms with this location, and it may take an even longer time to trace it back to its source. Even so, our rendering explicit the content of our location will enable us to take responsibility for its direction and destiny. In this way we are made less opaque in relation to ourselves, and more exposed to the light of truth that can guide us along the way.

At this point, we draw attention to the metaphysical assumptions that undergird Augustine’s metaphor love as weight. The background to his image is Aristotelian physics, and in particular Aristotle’s understanding of the natural motion of bodies.

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20 Indeed, the term “state” may be incorrect; “It is only necessary to know that love is a direction and not a state. If one is unaware of this, one falls into despair at the first onslaught of affliction”, Weil, Simone, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Crawford (London: Fontana Books, 1950), p. 93.


22 Stepping forward is an act of surrender, even if it seems like an act of assertion. The assertion is an illusion we nurture at love’s expense, opting to see ourselves as free-floating wills. But no assertion is possible without love underfoot; thus assertion is always already deception in some sense.

Centuries before the advent of Newtonian physics, Aristotle taught that bodies move in accordance with their own weight. When a stone falls, it does so by the weight of its own nature; and when fire rises, it does so by the weight of its own nature (or lack of weight).24 No matter the situation or set of forces at play, says Aristotle, bodies always tend in the direction pre-determined by their natures. These natures are not arbitrary in the sense of lacking design, but correspond to the body’s telos or “final place of rest”. Hence for Aristotle, movement of bodies constitutes a “scientific” law in that nature regulates the implicit pattern of each body’s movement.25 There is no way to deviate from this pre-determined pattern, and thus every body that exists follows the trajectory laid out for it.

To Augustine, Aristotle’s account of bodies in motion proved attractive as a way of describing the soul’s relation to its telos. On this view, an objective telos (i.e. the Creator God) lays a claim upon human nature and destiny, and this determines the particular shape of human desire and motion.26 Determined in this way to travel in one direction, the human soul could never wander too far from its place of rest, and always remains in some sense on the way to achieving it.27 When squared against the Christian doctrine of human corruptibility, however, Aristotle’s physics starts to grate against the assumptions of Christian morality. By allowing for the possibility that human nature can be corrupted, Christian doctrine re-defines what it is to be human, and more importantly how humans relate to their final place of rest. In this view, human ignorance betrays a much deeper sickness that originates in perversity of human desire.28 Since this perversity radically alters the trajectory we pursue, it throws into question Aristotle’s usefulness to the Augustinian paradigm. Thus in


25 Burnaby, Amor Dei, pp. 94-5.

26 For the objective aspect of love’s weight see O’Donovan, Self, World, and Time, pp. 114-5.

27 This is also the case for Plotinus, whose mythology of Eros describes the soul’s love as always one-directional, an imitation of true love. See Burnaby, Amor Dei, p. 94.

order to re-appropriate Aristotle’s “scientific” account of motion, Augustine locates motion in the sphere of “normative” action that allows for both the soul’s corruption, and the soul’s redemption.29 Here is one account.

In place of Aristotle’s scientific account of motion, Augustine re-interprets the mechanics of the soul’s journey as a process of re-receiving the gift of God’s love. As he puts it in the famous passage we quoted above:

My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift [Dono tuo] we are set on fire and carried upwards: we grow red hot and ascend. We climb ‘the ascents in our heart’ (Ps. 83:6), and sing “the song of steps” (Ps. 119:1). Lit by your fire, your good fire, we grow red-hot and ascend, as we move upwards “to the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 121:6). “For I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord” (Ps. 121:1). There we will be brought to our place by a good will, so that we want nothing but to stay there forever.30

Since the gift of love [donum] is not the same as the givenness of love [datum], that frees Augustine to re-imagine how the soul relates to its weight. To put it briefly: it relates to its “natural” weight not as an absolute given, a feature it can bank on and cease to consider, but as the site of a genuine moral encounter with God, the sphere wherein God calls the soul to step forward and surrender.

To give a brief account of this moral encounter, we draw attention to the role of Christ as example to imitate, and to the role of the Holy Spirit as the source of love itself. The place to begin is in the act of stepping forward as a lover: our response to a call or invitation that comes from outside. For the early Augustine, we may receive this call or invitation through anything at all that captures our attention. The beauty of creation, the suasion of philosophy, the example of saintly men and women, or even a simple question: all can serve as valid starting points for entering upon the journey, for all provide us with the occasion to step forward as lovers.

In addition to the invitation of created sources, there is the invitation of the One through whom all things are (re-)created, namely Christ. For Augustine, Christ in His human nature beckons the soul forth, and Christ in His divine nature gives form to the journey itself. In his earthly life and ministry, Christ admonished students to become zealous seekers of truth, wisdom, and happiness, promising that He would meet them on the way to fulfilment. *Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and the door will be opened to you* (Matt. 7:7). As Augustine explains about this verse in an early work against the Manicheans, this admonition is based on the premise that love is on the move, and that we are capable and willing to respond to love’s prompting. “It is love that asks, love that seeks, love that knocks, love that discloses, and love, too, that abides in that which has been disclosed”. He even goes to correlate the presence of love to the work of God the Holy Spirit, thus establishing an incipient “love pneumatology” to be honed in later works. But just as the Spirit works to awaken the soul to the truth of God’s goodness, so Christ works behind the scenes, so to speak, to orchestrate the way forward. He is the Form in which all things cohere and participate, declares Augustine, and the Wisdom that stretches outward to call the soul back to itself.

Another passage of significance for Augustine is Matthew 11:28-30: *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Here the message Christ delivers pertains directly to love as weight: combining an invitation with the promise of relief,

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31 Revised Standard Version.
33 Cf. *De moribus ecclesiae* I.17.31. See Chapter 5.
34 For the role of the Holy Spirit in the early works, defending Augustine’s “love pneumatology” as mostly continuous with his later thought, see Gerber, Chad Tyler, *The Spirit of Augustine’s Early Theology: Contextualizing Augustine’s Pneumatology* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2012).
36 Cf. *De vera religione* 39.72.
37 Revised Standard Version.
as in Matthew 7:7, Christ brings out a startling contrast between two ways of life, the ways of labour and freedom, that Augustine correlates with the vice of pride and the virtue of humility. Accordingly, Augustine argues that to embrace the yoke of Christ, one must imitate the humility of Christ by way of descent. The form of our reception of Christ’s invitation reflects the cruciform shape of spiritual self-divestment; and the need for such self-divestment, as Augustine argues in the Confessiones, is the pride that “elevates” the soul above the weight of all love.

He who for us is life itself descended here and endured our death and slew it by the abundance of his life. In a thunderous voice he called us to return to him, at that secret place where he came forth to us... To him my soul is making confession, and “he is healing it, because it was against him that it sinned” (Ps. 40:5). “Sons of men, how long will you be heavy at heart?” (Ps. 4:3). Surely after the descent of life, you cannot fail to wish to ascend and live? But where will you ascend when you are “set on high and have put your mouth in heaven”? (Ps. 72:9). Come down so that you can ascend, and make your ascent to God. For it is by climbing up against God that you have fallen. Tell souls that they should “weep in the valley of tears” (Ps. 83:7). So take them with you to God, for by his Spirit you declare these things to them if you say it burning with the fire of love.38

In commanding us to “Come down” from the mountain of pride, Augustine invites us to embrace the humility of our location as lovers. Stepping down from the height of pride to inhabit its humble station, the soul begins to open up to the message of Christ—the invitation of Matthew 7:7, Matthew 11:28-30, et cetera—which in turn begins to awaken the soul to its need for divine assistance.

The imitation of Christ, understood in terms of self-divestment and confession, forms an integral part—indeed a largely untold part—of how Augustine interprets his conversion in AD 386. In book VII of the Confessiones, Augustine highlights the contrast between Platonic presumption and Christian confession by way of appealing to the humility of Christ in Matthew 11:28-30.

38 Confessiones IV.12.19, trans. Chadwick. Emphasis added. Cf. Confessiones V.3.5, where Augustine is speaking against the pride of the Manicheans: “They have not known this way by which they may descend from themselves to him and through him ascend to them. They have not known this way, and think of themselves as exalted and brilliant with the stars. But see, they are crushed to the ground (Isa. 14:12-13) and ‘their foolish heart is darkened’ (Rom. 1:21-5)”, trans. Chadwick.
None of this is in the Platonist books. Those pages do not contain the face of this devotion, tears of confession, your sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a contrite and humble spirit (Ps. 50:19), the salvation of your people... In the Platonic books no one sings: “Surely my soul will be submissive to God? From him is my salvation; he is also my God and my saviour who upholds me; I shall not be moved any more” (Ps. 61:2-3). No one there hears him who calls “Come to me, you who labour” (Matt. 11:28). They disdain to learn from him for “he is meek and humble of heart”. “For you have concealed these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes” (Matt. 11:25).39

Also in a preceding passage, Augustine presents the weakness and meekness of Christ as the key to unlocking the door to salvation:

Your Word, eternal truth, higher than the superior parts of your creation, raises those submissive to him to himself. In the inferior parts he built for himself a humble house of our clay. By this he detaches from themselves those who are willing to be made his subjects and carries them across to himself, healing their swelling and nourishing their love. They are no longer to place confidence in themselves, but rather to become weak. They see at their feet divinity become weak by his sharing in our “coat of skin” (Gen. 3:21). In their weariness they fall prostrate before this divine weakness which rises and lifts them up.40

In these passages, Augustine highlights the fact that Christ guides and heals the soul, and that this process does not happen all at once upon believing in Christ. In fact, Augustine implies here that it is in encountering Christ in weakness first—that is, as a mere human being—and through imitating that weakness as well, that Augustine came to perceive Christ as the divine being He is.

This process chimes well with Augustine’s early approach to conversion. For the early Augustine, Christ invites us to take part in a journey by showing us how to live in surrender to God. Presenting Himself as an example not only to believe in but to imitate;41 and confronting us with the truth of our need for such an example,42 Christ

40 Confessiones VII.18.24, trans. Chadwick.
41 Cf. De vera religione 16.30-32.
42 Cf. De ordine I.9.27.
draws us into deeper knowledge of our location and direction, and through this into deeper awareness of our dependency on Him. Michael Cameron puts it well in reference to the early works: "Christ for [the early] Augustine was less a theological proposition and more a way of seeing. He was not preoccupied with exactly defining the constitution of Christ’s person in two natures... [rather] Christ for us wove himself into the warp and woof of Augustine’s thought". To press this point further, Christ certainly does feature within the journey of desire, but in such a way that perfectly conforms His Truth to the needs and struggles of the wayfaring soul. This point has methodological implications. In this thesis, our intention is to receive Christ in the early works, not as Augustine presents him dogmatically in later works, but as He figures and appears to us (and Augustine) through the journey of desire.

By allowing Christ to "show up" within the three itineraries we document, that is, we hope to provide fresh insight on the role played by Christ as it relates to the unburdening and transfer of love’s weight.

How then, or rather where does Christ show up in Augustine’s thought? The place to look, we suggest, is in the mechanics of the soul’s conversion, the process in which the soul prepares itself (or is prepared) to receive from God. As we hinted above, the process begins with an act of humility and self-divestment, which in turn leads to entering and acknowledging one’s location. “Christian humility makes no headway in those whom you see as persons of substance who are infected with [pride]. It makes them refuse to bow their necks to the yoke of Christ [Matt. 11:30], yet they harness themselves all the more tightly to the yoke of sin. They will not get away without being bound in service to someone or other”. In the absence of a “neutral

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44 In other words, we are not interested in speculating on the orthodoxy of the early Augustine, though we acknowledge that much remains to be discovered and discussed. For a recent attempt to revive the thesis of Prosper Alfaric, see Dobell, Brian, *Augustine's Intellectual Conversion: The Journey from Platonism to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

state” between service to Christ and service to something else, the soul always already occupies a position of service, and thus always already surrenders itself (sacrifices itself) to some object of delight. But even while this is true in a factual sense, it still needs to be made true in a personal subjective sense. As stated above, the enemy most obstructive to the spiritual life is the pride that rejects Christ by obscuring one’s location. Unless we come to inhabit a true self-awareness of our location, it is not clear how we can perceive Christ as the Answer to our journey. From that location, it becomes evident that our desire for freedom is to be fulfilled in submission to the easy yoke of Christ. Only in doing so, and by continuing to do so in the power of the Spirit, will the soul finally “come down” from its mountain of pride to embrace the humility of heart-felt confession. As Augustine caps off his own conversion story: “But where through so many years had been my freedom of will? From what deep and hidden recess was it called forth in a moment? Thereby I submitted my neck to your easy yoke and my shoulders to your light burden (Matt. 11:30), O Christ Jesus ‘my helper and redeemer’ (Ps. 18:15”).^46^ 

Love at the Centre: Augustine’s Early Works

As we will see below, these reflections on love fill in the necessary background to comprehending our approach to Augustine’s early works. The basic procedure that we adopt in this study is a synchronic examination of select writings from the corpus. Our selection is based on a number of factors relating to Augustine’s development as a writer. To begin with, our design is to offer an account of how Augustine treats the soul as lover on the way. Our intention is to take seriously Augustine’s purpose in each work, which means allowing each work to reveal itself in its own way and on its own terms. It is of secondary interest to us, though obviously important, to give a sense of “where Augustine is” on his own journey of desire. In recent years, many scholars have been rightly inspired to map out the contours of Augustine’s early development. The blossoming of scholarly publications in the area of the “early

^46^ _Confessiones_ IX.1.1, trans. Chadwick.
Augustine” stands to testify to its fecundity, and its enduring controversy.47 There is more to be said—there is always more to be said—about how Augustine developed into the revered Bishop of Hippo. Our purpose here is not to give that narrative or try to give that narrative, but we do wish to be sensitive to certain changes along the way. In one sense, we form our approach according to Augustine’s own recommendation: that insofar as he developed in the course of his career, so also are we invited to take part in it as well.48 Not to be pretentious or suggestive in any sense, but we suggest there are at least two ways scholars can approach the early works. They can either accept Augustine as he presents himself and “come down” from their lofty heights, or they can stand above and critique Augustine based on an established set of assumptions. No scholar could possibly do without assumptions of some kind, but the invitation is there, at least, to seek a better path. To put this another way, our attempt to bring clarity to Augustine’s early works proceeds on the assumption that these works are intended to implicate us. Whatever may be going on the particular page itself, there is equally as much going on, or should be going on, in the reader who reads them. This is not to say that the reader, i.e. this author, commits to a devotional reading of Augustine. But it is to insist that without acknowledging that devotion plays a part, the reader misses out on the significant things that Augustine has to say.

Correspondingly, we suggest that placing love at the centre grants us purchase on the


48 Cf. Retractationes I prol. 3, where Augustine invites us to imitate him when he progresses, not when he errs: “For, perhaps, one who reads my works in the order in which they were written will find our how I progressed while writing”, trans. Sister M. Inez Bogan. Cf. ep. 143.2; 143.7; 224.2.
substance of Augustine’s early thought.\textsuperscript{49} The great breakthrough in how we read and understand ancient texts, precipitated by the French philosopher Pierre Hadot among others,\textsuperscript{50} has also ignited renewed interest in the study of Christian authors, and in particular the most well-known author among them, Augustine of Hippo.\textsuperscript{51} There is little doubt, in fact, that Augustine viewed his writing and his teaching career as a means to inculcating love with his readers and students. His constant appeal to Christ’s double love command of (Matt. 22:37-40),\textsuperscript{52} his emphasis on asking, seeking, knocking (Matt. 7:7),\textsuperscript{53} and his commitment to the soul’s conversion and reformation to the divine image, all serve to present love as the site of one’s spiritual formation—and for that reason also the source of one’s spiritual frustration.

The way this cashes out in the early works of Augustine is that love takes centre stage in an \textit{implicit} way. Though indeed, Augustine has much to say on the subject of love’s movement, making appeals to it as often as he deploys the verbs \textit{velle}, \textit{amare}, \textit{diligere}, \textit{cupere}, and several others, his tendency is not to place love at the centre of attention, but to allow love to insinuate itself into the heart of the soul. The work of love proceeds silently and cryptically in his writings, we suggest, in order to bring to bear its full weight on the unsuspecting soul. The change that takes place \textit{on account of} love’s weight, then, is where love reveals its influence in the process of conversion.

\textsuperscript{49} For brief treatment of love in the early Augustine see Babcock, “\textit{Cupiditas} and \textit{Caritas}”, pp. 39-66. For the most part, however, Augustine’s early views on love are either disregarded, or subsumed under larger assessment of his intellectual development.


\textsuperscript{51} The benefits of applying to Augustine Pierre Hadot’s concept of “spiritual exercises” have increasingly been recognised by prominent scholars. For an overview of its application see Stock, Brian, \textit{Augustine’s Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 22-6. For positive use of Hadot see Topping, \textit{Happiness and Wisdom}, pp. 40-1; Kolbet, Ryan R., \textit{Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal} (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2009), pp. 1-16; Conybeare, Catherine, \textit{The Irrational Augustine} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Boone, Mark J., “The Conversion and Therapy of Desire in Augustine’s Cassiciacum Dialogues” (PhD Dissertation: Baylor University, 2010), p. 4f. For some critical reflections on Hadot’s approach see Harding, Brian, \textit{Augustine and Roman Virtue} (London: Continuum Publishing, 2009), pp. 22-6.

\textsuperscript{52} Cf. \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} I.8.13; \textit{De vera religione} 12.24; \textit{De musica} VI.14.43

\textsuperscript{53} Cf. \textit{De Academicis} II.3.9; \textit{Soliloquia} I.1.3; \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} I.17.31; \textit{De Genesi contra Manichaeos} II.2.3; \textit{De libero arbitrio} I.16.35.118; and countless other references.
In this thesis, our endeavour is to render this influence explicit by focussing on three early works that achieve such expression.

By presenting each work we analyse as an “itinerary” of the soul, we pursue a course from Augustine’s earliest period devoted to the Academics, to his later period focussed mainly on his former co-religionists, the Manicheans, to his attempt to bring coherence to an account of “the will” through engaging his interlocutors from the assumptions of Christian faith. To break this down into chapter segments: in Chapters 2 & 3, we develop a first itinerary “from Cicero to Christ” based on the Cassiciacum dialogue De Academicis (or Contra Academicos); in Chapter 4 & 5, we develop a second itinerary “from aversion to transcendence” based on the landmark treatise De vera religione; and in Chapters 6 & 7, we double back to the early dialogue De libero arbitrio (AD 388-95) in order to develop an itinerary from “from faith to understanding”.

As we argue throughout the course of each itinerary we map, the role of love can be detected in two interlocking ways. On the one hand, love motivates each and every assent of the soul. Any time the student agrees to an idea, sets out in search of an answer, or acknowledges his or her inability to penetrate the truth, love is making itself known through the dialectical process.

However, in order to capture the specific way that love guides the soul’s itinerary, we refer to the soul’s motional impact in terms of location and direction. In Chapter 1 we develop these terms as we intend them to be understood, but a brief definition of “location” is the soul’s placement in relation to God, and “direction” is the soul’s situation as a lover on the way. As it happens, though, location and direction form two sides of the same coin; for thanks to the weight of love, one is never somewhere without also going somewhere at the same time.54 To bring these terms together, we often speak of the soul’s “(dis)position” to this or that reality, enhancing or inhibiting the soul’s receptivity to the truth. For Augustine, the greatest obstacle to face the soul

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54 “Every kind of love has its own energy, and in the soul of a lover love cannot be idle; it must lead somewhere. Do you want to discern the character of a person’s love? Notice where it leads”, Enarrationes in Psalmos 121.1, trans. Boulding.
on its journey is its pre-disposition not to surrender to the motion of love’s weight. The way to counter this, of course, is to invite the soul on a journey of desire; but it is also to create the conditions in which such an offer is both acceptable and enticing. That brings us, then, to a second way in which love informs the early works: through infusing and driving Augustine’s commitment to help others. For indeed, what we find when we examine the early works is that Augustine approaches his readers not as theoretical experiments, but as individual wayfarers on a journey of desire. He gives them a chance to step forward as lovers, wherever they are, and he labours on their behalf to bring the weight of love to bear.
If Augustine defines the spiritual life as a journey of desire, he also perceives the mixed blessing that desire can become. It is the site of spiritual transformation, the place where God meets us. It is also the source of spiritual frustration, creating problems for the wayfaring soul. Treating it as both entryway and obstacle to God, Augustine knows that the spiritual life demands more than desire. Indeed, it requires desire to grow up into love, particularly to embody the virtues of faith, hope, and love.¹ For that reason, nurturing desire becomes the all-important task to facilitate the soul’s progress in the spiritual life.

To nurture love in the soul, Augustine must negotiate several problems that confront the soul along the way. Here in Chapter 1, our goal is to outline three problems that bedevil the spiritual life, and explore how they relate to Augustine’s early approach. In the first section devoted to (1) the problem of location, we draw on Augustine’s early reading of Genesis 3 to identify the ancient origins of creaturely displacement.² In the next section focused on (2) the problem of direction, we apply the insight Augustine draws from Genesis 3 to the fundamental dis-orientation of human existence, exploring this idea through the opening story of De beata vita.³ Finally in the third section centred upon (3) the problem of origin, we circle back to the beginning of humanity’s creaturely dislocation in order to frame an investigation into the origin of sin. As we hope to demonstrate in the course of our last itinerary especially, the origin of sin is never far off from the mind of our author, and informs a good deal of his early pedagogical approach.

¹ For the triad faith, hope, and love in the early works see Carol Harrison, Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 65-7.

² The text is De Genesi contra Manichaeos (AD 388-9), alternately entitled De Genesi adversus Manichaeos. It is the first of Augustine’s many attempts to interpret Genesis 1-3.

³ Written in AD 386, the first work Augustine finished as a new convert.
The Problem of Location

In the problem of location, the soul is confronted with its creaturely displacement as a result of the sin of pride. While he traces the origin of this displacement to the Fall of Adam in Genesis 3, Augustine applies the framework he derives from Genesis to his narrative of conversion in book VIII of the *Confessiones*.

In a cryptic aphorism that headlines this discussion, Rowan Williams writes: “The hardest thing in the world is to be where we are”. Williams’ point is that the practise of presence, our attending to our location at a particular moment, can be difficult to maintain in a world of distractions, and particularly when our location commands little to no interest. Alternatively, it may be the case that our location commands great interest, but for this reason generates anxiety and restless emotion. These moments of restless anxiety make it hard to “be where we are”, to the point where we may desire to be somewhere else. The key factor in this experience is that of emotional disturbance. It is the dislocating encounter with an outside reality that charges us emotionally with questions of existence, revealing what we here call “the problem of location”. But in order to get at the root of this problem of location, one needs to consider other factors that frame the experience.

For example, suppose a student cheats his way to a higher score on an important exam. Though typically a student of only mediocre talent, the student far surpasses even his own expectations, and finds himself under the spotlight with his peers, parents, and teacher. Suppose as well that this student successfully defends his score to his peers and parents. When called upon to defend his score in the presence of his teacher, his anxiety over the whole affair begins rapidly to increase. His teacher graciously gives him the benefit of the doubt. She frames her questions in such a way

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that invites him to confess, never once explicitly affirming either his guilt or his innocence. The effect of this is that the student becomes more anxious than before. It is one thing to be accused of wrong, quite another to praise oneself for the wrong knowingly committed. Buried under emotions of both shame and fear, the student barely surfaces with a convincing self-report. Here the problem is indeed one of location for the student; but the source behind this problem is not just the circumstance he inhabits, but the silent witness of the moral law, the teacher, and his own inner conscience.

In his encounter with inner conscience, particularly, the student reckons with himself as a responsible agent. Prompted by both his teacher and his knowledge of the moral law, his self-reckoning takes the form of an emotional disturbance (shame and fear) in which the student is confronted with the truth of his action. To be clear, what we mean here by use of the term “conscience” [conscientia] is awareness of oneself as a responsible moral agent. The ancient view of conscience, distinct from the modern view of a directive intuition, characteristically joins “self-consciousness” to human moral reasoning, thus creating a space in which to encounter the divine. As Oliver O’Donovan comments on its meaning in the patristic period: “Conscience is our self-opening to the probing interrogation and challenge of an encounter with God”.

Hence in the case of the cheating student who suffers emotions of shame and fear, conscience serves as his gateway to moral reality, and as the portal through which the moral law (or God) claims him as a sinner.

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6 O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, p. 305. O’Donovan goes on to discuss the limitations of this view with regard to the Paschal mystery, but it is not necessary to develop his point here.
In this way, conscience determines not the content of the moral law, but the form in which we experience the law as law unto us. It holds in place our relationship to moral reality, and defines the space from which we may attempt to flee when that reality condemns us for violating its order. Conscience, then, plays an integral role in framing our location. But the problem comes when conscience no longer holds us to account: when we decide to abandon our location in (moral) reality for an illusory one that suits our desire. The problem here becomes twofold. Not only is the student guilty of cheating on the exam, but he has convinced himself that his action is both commendable and just. As a result he covers over and silences conscience, and thus starts to lose moral purchase on “the way things are” [ordo rerum].

Adam Questioned by God: De Genesi contra Manichaeos II

In his early commentary on the creation and fall of humanity, De Genesi contra Manichaeos (AD 388-9), Augustine traces humanity’s problem of location to the disobedience of Adam. Even more revealing than his account of Adam’s first sin, though, is how he interprets the exchange between Adam and God while working out the implications of Adam’s rebellion. We pick up with Genesis 3 after the serpent’s deception (vv. 1-6). Seduced by the prospect of becoming like God, knowing good and evil, Adam and Eve disobey God by partaking of the forbidden fruit; feel shame at the sight of their newly exposed nakedness; and, growing fearful at the sound of the Lord walking in the cool of the day (v. 8), attempt to conceal their shame with the help of leaves from a figtree. According to Augustine, God’s first response to Adam and Eve conveys more than it seems. Posing the question Where are you? (v. 9), God only appears to betray His ignorance of the situation, but in fact invites His creatures

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8 Revised Standard Version (unless embedded in quotation).
to step forward and confess. “Adam is now questioned by God, not because God
doesn’t know where he is, but in order to oblige him to confess his sin”. Against the
“literalist” Manicheans who read this text as God’s confession, Augustine insists on
placing Adam and Eve at the centre of attention. From this point forward, he say,
Genesis 3 narrates a lesson in morality in which God calls humanity to reveal its
location, and humanity seeks ways to avoid facing the truth.

Instead of accepting God’s invitation to step forward from hiding, Adam makes a
fool of himself by seeking a way out. First, says Augustine, Adam betrays the fact that
he made a mistake. “[Adam] answered that when he heard his voice he hid himself,
since he was naked. His very answer was already an instance of a truly miserable
error—as though his being naked, as God himself has made him, could displease
God!”. To this, Augustine adds that Adam’s “truly miserable error” was to think
that “what was displeasing to oneself also displeases God’, an error Adam would not
have committed had he stayed “naked…of pretense, but clothed with divine light”.
But since Adam “turned away from [the divine light] and turned to himself…and
was displeased with himself as not having anything he could call his very own”, he
could not discern the intention behind God’s question Where are you?. He could not
discern it, implies Augustine, because he did not allow it to penetrate his conscience,
placing him at the centre of God’s interrogation. And if that is not bad enough,
Adam attempts it once again in response to God’s next two questions: Who told you
that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?
(v. 11).

If Adam’s first response betrayed his foolishness, his second response betrays the
truth concerning the origin of the Fall. Having revealed perhaps too much in his first
response, Adam attempts to use his second response to preserve his own innocence.

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11 Borrowing again from Williams, we might say that Adam failed to “live with the question” God
poses to humanity. Williams, Rowan, The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New
The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate (v. 12). Worse than blaming Eve or disobeying God’s commandment, Adam commits the blasphemous error of accusing God of sin. According to Augustine, the root of this error is the same root as the original sin: “Next, as is the way with pride, [Adam] doesn’t plead guilty to being the woman’s accomplice, but instead puts all the blame for his own fault on the woman; and in this way, with a subtlety seeming to spring from the cunning the poor wretch had conceived, he wanted to lay his sinning at the door of God himself. He didn’t just say, you see, ‘The woman gave it to me,’ but more fully: The woman whom you gave to me (Gen. 3:12)”.

For Augustine, this response is the more revealing of the two because it shows us the cause behind Adam’s disobedience. Pride had directed him away from the truth, and thus Adam lost his point of access to moral reality. “What else is pride, after all, but leaving the inner sanctum of conscience [deserto secretario conscientiae] and wishing to be seen outwardly as what in fact one is not?”. Indeed, Augustine goes on to say that Adam and Eve, in hiding from God, also hid themselves from the truth concerning their current location. “And so they hid themselves at themselves, in order to be troubled with miserable errors after forsaking the light of truth, which they themselves were definitely not”.

Adam and Eve, by abandoning their original relation to God, lost touch with the self-knowledge that would bring them to confess. According to Augustine, such self-forgetfulness is the consequence of pride, a sin that asserts itself in opposition to the truth. By allowing pride to block access to moral reality, his conscience, Adam opened up a path of ignorance for his descendants to follow. Commenting on the verse that says God “sent Adam away” from paradise (Gen. 3:23), Augustine calls attention to the weight of love behind Adam’s error and subsequent evasions. “Notice the nice choice of words, he sent him away, not ‘he shut him out,’ so that he could be seen to be as good as shoved out by the pressure of his own sins [ipso

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12 De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.17.25, trans. Hill.
13 De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.5.6, trans. Hill.
14 De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.16.24, trans. Hill
peccatorum suorum pondere] to the only place he was fit for”. The idea here is not that God commissioned Adam to fall away, but that God handed Adam over to the desires of his heart. Responsibility belongs entirely to Adam and Eve, not only for their sin, but also for their ignorance. In the end, the tragic irony is that their attempt to secure freedom only lands them in bondage to the weight of false love—the price one always pays when bargaining with pride.

Hiding from the Truth

Through his fatal wager with the sin of pride, says Augustine, Adam sets in motion a chain of (self-)deception. The first act of disobedience marked only the start: from there, Adam sought to conceal his location by hiding from the truth of his immoral deed, and even accused God for the sin that he committed. In this way, Augustine distinguishes pride as the origin of sin, from the sins which pride engenders through further disobedience. Pride represents the starting-point of sin, the “capital of all vices”, but it thereby begins to multiply itself into all manner of baser desires. As he explains in his commentary on the Psalms:

Yes, this is a great transgression, the fountainhead and source of all transgressions; as it is written, The starting-point of all sin is pride, and, lest you dismiss this as something insignificant, The starting-point of human pride is rebellion against God (Sir 10:12.14). This vice is no slight evil… From this vice, which is the capital of all vices because from it all the others are born, spiritual rebellion against God begins, as the soul wanders off into darkness and abuses its free will, and so other sins follow. Hence the soul squanders its substance with harlots and lives wastefully, until the one-time companion of angels is reduced to minding pigs.

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15 De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.22.34, trans. Hill.
17 Cf. De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.5.6, citing Sirach 10:12.
Defined as the root or origin of sin, pride sets in motion a journey of desire. While it does not define every sin that afflicts the human race, pride encompasses and lurks behind sin in variegated ways, multiplying the “affects” of human ignorance and self-deception. For that reason, it is through exposing and uprooting the sin of pride that one starts to peel the layers back of human (dis)location.

As an example of this, we turn to the narrative of Augustine’s conversion in the *Confessions* book VIII. Conceived as the critical turning point in his journey of desire, book VIII documents Augustine’s struggle to face his self-deception so as to place himself at the disposal of God’s healing grace. By framing this famous moment with a view to Genesis 3, we begin to grasp what the soul requires for its conversion and surrender, namely its return to the “place” of inner conscience.

Just as God invited Adam to step forward and confess, so God issues the same question to Augustine in book VIII: *Where are you?*. Though at no point referred to explicitly in book VIII, this verse can be heard echoing at virtually every point in the narrative; hence the words of Abraham Heschel ring true for Augustine: “It is a call that goes out again and again. It is a small voice, not uttered in words, not conveyed in categories of the mind, but ineffable and mysterious as the glory that fills the whole world. It is wrapped in silence; concealed and subdued, yet it is as if all things were the frozen echo of the question: *Where art thou?*.19 To begin with, Augustine recalls standing on the edge of his conversion when the stories of saintly men start to filter into his heart. It is at this point, he tells us, that he came into his conscience in a way that decisively placed him in moral reality, forcing him to come to terms with his lies and deception:

**Lord, you turned my attention back to myself. You took me up from behind my own back where I had placed myself because I did not wish to observe myself (Ps. 20:13), and you set me before my face (Ps. 49:21) so that I should see how vile I was, how twisted and filthy, covered in sores and ulcers. And I looked and was appalled, but there was no way of escaping from myself. If I tried to turn my gaze away, he went on relentlessly telling his tale, and you**

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once again placed me in front of myself; you thrust me before my own eyes so that I should discover my iniquity and hate it. I had known it, but deceived myself, refused to admit it, and pushed it out of my mind.\(^{20}\)

For so long having “refused to admit” his sordid condition, Augustine marks this as the moment he gives in to the truth and stands “before my own eyes” as a sinful needy person. Stories of exemplary religious devotion, together with a deepening sense of personal inadequacy, thus combine to deliver him into his true location in a way that brings God’s question to bear on his soul: Where are you?

In fact, Augustine alludes to Genesis 3 in the following passage. Beside himself emotionally, he portrays himself overcome “by a fearful sense of shame” as he “stood naked to myself, and my conscience complained against me”.\(^{21}\) The echoes of Genesis 3 are unmistakable. Augustine, it appears, has assumed Adam’s position in order to offer a new response to God’s question Where are you?. Whereas Adam sought a way to hide by abandoning inner conscience, Augustine finds that he has nowhere to hide and nothing to say in his defence. His journey at this point takes a turn for the better: once pierced by the authoritative witness of conscience, he begins surrendering to divine grace through heart-felt confession. “You, Lord, put pressure on me in my hidden depths with a severe mercy wielding the double whip of fear and shame, lest I should again succumb, and lest that tiny and tenuous bond which still remained should not be broken, but once more regain strength and bind me even more firmly”.\(^{22}\) Loosening and casting off the chains of deception, he is then able to step forward from his former place of hiding in order to adopt a humble posture of honest confession. In the spirit of offering a response to God’s question Where are you?, he metaphorically sheds the fig-leaves that once concealed his shame and fear to answer God truthfully: Here I am. Thus beneath the figtree representing Adam’s hiding, Augustine allows the truth of Scripture to speak on his behalf.

\(^{20}\) *Confessions* VIII.7.16, trans. Chadwick. The Oxford edition drops a phrase from Chadwick’s translation, which we have supplemented with the aid of Boulding.

\(^{21}\) *Confessions* VIII.7.18, trans. Chadwick.

\(^{22}\) *Confessions* VIII.11.25, trans. Chadwick.
From a hidden depth of profound self-examination had dredged up a heap of all my misery and set it “in the sight of my heart” (Ps. 18:15). That precipitated a vast storm bearing a massive downpour of tears. To pour it all out with the accompanying groans, I got up from beside Alypius (solitude seems to me more appropriate for the business of weeping), and I moved further way to ensure that even his presence put no inhibition upon me… I threw myself down somewhere under a certain figtree, and let my tears flow freely. Rivers streamed from my eyes, a sacrifice acceptable to you (Ps. 50:19), and (though not in these words, yet in this sense) I repeatedly said to you: “How long, O Lord? How long, Lord, will you be angry to the uttermost? Do not be mindful of our old iniquities.” (Ps. 6:4). For I felt my past to have a grip on me.\(^{23}\)

The “past” he refers to may be his own past, or it may also include the original sin of Adam and Eve.\(^{24}\) Whichever way we interpret it, Augustine wishes to step out from his place of concealment, and to cry out in humility for mercy and healing. Humility thus replaces pride as his spiritual (dis)position,\(^{25}\) and enables him to hear the words of Scripture—and the words of Paul in particular—as if for the first time. “I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled”.\(^{26}\)

The words of Paul in Romans 13:13-14 mark the moment at which Augustine enters the peace of salvation. His experience leading up to his encounter with Paul represents the process whereby Paul’s words became true for him, revealing to him his current state thanks to the humility of his confession. In this way, Romans 13 stands as the milestone or capstone to a conversion whose origin began earlier than book VIII.\(^{27}\) Indeed, it would be a mistake not to view book VIII as one phase in an on-going transformation of desire, stretching back to at least Augustine’s encounter

\(^{23}\) *Confessiones* VIII.12.28, trans. Chadwick.

\(^{24}\) Cf. *Confessiones* VIII.9.21 for reference to Adam’s punishment.

\(^{25}\) Cf. *Confessiones* III.4.9, where pride is cited as the cause of his misapprehension of Scripture.

\(^{26}\) *Confessiones* VIII.12.29, trans. Chadwick.

with Cicero in book III. What brought Augustine to read Romans in a different light than before (and no doubt he had read it before, when a Manichean) is the humility he earlier achieved through imitating Christ. In acknowledging his location as a fallen mortal creature, that is, Augustine learned how to respond to God’s question Where are you? in the spirit of surrender rather than defensive (self-)denial. So brought an end to his problem of location; and so marked the beginning of his freedom in Christ: “But where through so many years was my freedom of will? From what deep and hidden recess was it called out in a moment? Thereby I submitted my neck to your easy yoke and my shoulders to your light burden (Matt. 11:30), O Christ Jesus ‘my helper and redeemer’ (Ps. 18:15)”.

### The Problem of Direction

The problem of location has its origin in the perverse love of pride, but pride begets other sins that lead to the problem of direction. In taking the long view on recovery of the soul, Augustine focuses on symptoms before healing the sickness, and shapes his approach to souls in general around the legacy of pride’s affect.

According to Augustine’s reading of Genesis 3, the problem of location is one facet, indeed the deepest facet, of humanity’s condition in the aftermath of the Fall. As he explains in De Genesi contra Manichaeos, Adam’s pride set a pattern for divine-human relations that implicates Adam’s descendants in a quest for control, wresting the power that God alone possesses: “nothing is characteristic of sinners as wishing to put whatever they are accused of down to God. This come from that vein of pride by which the man sinned in wishing to be equal to God, free that is from his control just

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28 Indeed, Augustine’s encounter with Cicero’s Hortensius, referred to by Pierre Courcelle as a “first conversion” (see Chapter 3), is also mentioned again at Confessiones VIII.7.17.

29 Harrison, Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology, pp. 119-164.

as God, being the Lord and master of all things, is free from any outside control”.

As Ryan Topping points out, this diagnosis touches a deeper vein in the psychology of human sin, thus opening up new dimensions of moral and spiritual enquiry. On this account, human beings do indeed suffer from ignorance, but it is an ignorance firmly rooted in and orientated by self-deception. It inculcates a posture of self-forgetfulness and neglect, and sends the soul in a direction that it ought not to go in, a direction that further entrenches the problem of location. In this way, the problem of location implies the problem of direction by way of (dis)positioning the fallen soul toward other ends than God. This has implications for the soul’s status as a lover on the way, and also for how to treat the soul disposed by pride’s affect.

To begin with, Augustine teaches that as a result of the Fall, the soul labours under the twofold condition of “ignorance and trouble” [ignorantia et difficultas]. With ignorance implicating its knowledge (intellect) and trouble implicating its action (will), the soul is not properly fit to seek the true happy life, let alone to adhere to it in love and devotion. In De Genesi contra Manichaeos, Augustine insists that every soul born after Adam “finds the search for truth impeded by the perishable body”. He elaborates on this difficulty by appealing to 1 John 2:16; indeed, this presents him with a convenient shorthand for the multiplicity of the soul. Whereas the body is set back by the sin of carnal delight (cupiditas), the mind and soul are set back by the zeal for vain knowledge (curiositas) and through continual assertion of equality with God (superbia). On top of this, the soul suffers “trouble” from “thorns and thistles” of this life brought on as divine punishment for Adam’s rebellious sin. From this account of the variegated affects of pride, Augustine draws out the implication that to heal the sickness of pride, one has to treat the soul’s symptoms as a necessary starting

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31 De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.17.25, trans. Hill.

32 Topping, Happiness and Wisdom, pp. 77-8.

33 De libero arbitrio III.18.51.72-22.65.223, trans. Peter King. A more common translation of difficultas would be simply “difficulty”.

34 De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.20.30, trans. Hill.

35 Augustine summarises these three conditions at De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.26.40.

36 De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.27.41, trans. Hill.
point. The order of treatment, to put it more generally, must track with the soul’s current location, the (dis)position it inhabits as a result of the Fall.

The Love of Christ, the Order of Charity

Connecting back to our brief account of Christ’s role in the early works, we argue that Christ encounters readers not just in the form of explicit dogma (though He appears there as well), but in the methods Augustine uses to initiate conversion. This is a point Augustine makes quite plain in his works. Less a teacher than a facilitator of the One who teaches, Augustine positions himself as a kind of “mediator” relative to the true Mediator, Jesus Christ, by channelling the love of Christ through the way he approaches his students and readers. His approach begins by taking stock of “where the soul is”, allowing the soul’s disposition to shape his analysis. As we shall see, Augustine derives this principle from the exemplum of Christ’s life, and applies it to the soul’s condition as a multiplied creature.

To begin with, Augustine points out that God teaches the soul by con-forming His “method” to the multiplicity of human sin.

Just as the science of medicine, after all, while remaining the same and in no way undergoing change in itself [an ancient assumption], still varies its prescriptions for the sick, because our state of health is variable, so too divine providence, while being in itself absolutely unchanging, nonetheless comes to

See Introduction.

Cf. De magistro 13.46.

Though Augustine’s notion of Christ as Mediator took time to mature, it is present in the role he assigns to authority in salvation. For this point see Van Fleteren, Frederick, “Authority and Reason, Faith and Understanding in the Thought of St. Augustine”, Augustinian Studies 4 (1973), pp. 53-4.

In other words, the love of Christ (subjective genitive) is not absent from the early works. It is conveyed in the form of teaching that Augustine deploys. On the absence of Christ’s love see Cary, Phillip, Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 113, following Burnaby, John, Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of Augustine (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1939), p. 99. Cary’s criticism is a valid one: Augustine often interprets amor Dei as an objective genitive, our love for God, rather than following Paul’s (likely) meaning that God loves us. But as we argue here, Augustine communicates the love of God for humanity through imitating Christ’s example in his ministry and teaching.
the aid of changeable creatures in various ways, and in accordance with the
diversity of diseases commands or forbids different regimes—this in order to
bring back from the malady which is the beginning of death, and from death
itself, to their proper condition and state of being, and to strengthen them in it,
the creatures that are falling, slipping that is to say, into nothingness.41

Based on this premise that God heals “in various ways”, Augustine identifies his own
approach as an imitation of Christ by declaring his commitment to the soul’s present
location: “After all, in the spot where a person has fallen, there one has to stoop down
to him, so that he may get up again.” 42 “No one, after all, raises anyone up to where
he is unless he goes down a little toward where that other is”.43 Just as Christ came
down to us in order to heal our variable condition,44 so Augustine descends to the
neighbour in order to raise him up from his lowly position. This position includes
the specific (dis)position that frames the neighbour’s outlook, the orientation he
assumes in relation to reality. If the neighbour is sceptical, Augustine goes down to
where the sceptic’s obstacle lurks. If the neighbour is deceived, Augustine goes down
to where the deceiver’s poison operates. If possible, Augustine fulfils the calling of St.
Paul in 1 Corinthians (9:22b): I have become all things to all men, that I might by all
means save some.45 His commitment is to throw open every possible doorway so that
human beings can step forward and acknowledge their desire. This is what gives his
early works their to-and-fro character, though this is often mistakenly assumed to be
the result of poor planning. Far from it: as Étienne Gilson rightly points out about
the style of Augustine’s writing, its form is vested in the order of charity imposed on
the Christian. “Digression is Augustinism’s natural method. The natural order of an
Augustinian doctrine is to branch out around one center, and this is precisely the order
of charity.”46 For Gilson, a commitment to charity defines the order of Augustinian

41 De vera religione 17.34, trans. Hill.
42 De vera religione 24.45, trans. Hill.
43 Epistula 11.4, trans. Hill.
44 For development of this analogy see De doctrina Christiana I.10.10-14.13.
45 Revised Standard Version.
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education, and this explains the lack of systematisation one finds in the corpus. But the point is that charity not only defines the end of education for Augustine. It also infuses the entire process from start to finish.

In this respect, Augustine’s commitment to “descend” to his reader is an exercise that instantiates the conclusion it seeks. By con-forming his method of teaching to the location of the soul, Augustine imitates the Lord Jesus Christ in the humility of a wayfarer whose goal is to have others join him in pursuit of true happiness. Behind every question Augustine poses to his students, there is desire to help those students come to terms with their affections. In fact, Augustine’s early works are generically distinctive in that they couch dogmatic truths in dialectical frameworks, privileging a more participatory modus operandi. To understand the (theo-)logic behind this participatory framework, one has to appreciate the overall goal Augustine sets for his teaching, as well as the challenge he faces when trying to achieve it. The overall goal is an encounter with the truth of God; and the challenge is enabling the soul to step forward as a lover. In allowing the soul’s condition to determine the shape of his approach, then, Augustine opens up a space that the soul can inhabit as it struggles to come to terms with its spiritual destiny. In his view, this is the lesson put forward by the Incarnation. It is also the wisdom of the ordo caritatis.

46 Original emphasis. Gilson elaborates: “Perhaps the lack of order we find in Augustinism is due merely to the fact that it has an order different from what we expect. Instead of the synthetic, linear order displayed by doctrines which follow the process of the intellect, we find a method of exposition necessarily different because it is suited to a doctrine whose center is grace and charity. If we are dealing not so much with knowledge but with love, then the philosopher’s task is not so much to cause knowledge as to cause love. Now in order to arouse love we do not prove, we show... In Augustine’s works the digression that always seems to break the order of the discourse is really the order itself. Instead of leading us simply to God as to a terminus, he makes use of digression to refer us constantly to Him as to a center to which he must return no matter what route we have taken in leaving Him”. Gilson, Étienne, The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine, trans. L.E.M. Lynch (London: Lowe & Brydon, 1960), pp. 236-7.

47 For this aspect of Augustine’s early works see Conybeare, Catherine, The Irrational Augustine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 41 and passim.
The multiplicity of human sin demands a differentiated response, and such response Augustine gives to souls in his earliest works. Inspired by the example of God’s love for humanity, Augustine approaches the soul as a lover caught in a web of self-deception, whose needs both lie on the surface of the sea of desire, and lurk in the darker corners of the soul’s unfolding voyage. Thus taking each soul in its turn, treating the symptoms before the sickness, Augustine labours to give true love the occasion to step forward by crafting specific questions that reflect the soul’s location. With no special powers to create true love ex nihilo, Augustine is free to allow the work of love to operate on its own, and to focus instead on creating the conditions for progress to occur. To fulfil this function sums up the purpose of his early writing career. Whatever else he wishes to accomplish by way of theory or argument, if he fails to enable lovers to step forward and surrender, he has achieved nothing worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Of course such a function entails complications in relation to love. The ironic fact about the nature of the soul’s true love, even if one defines it as an inherent or innate concept, is that love subverts its own development in countless ways and forms, often for no better reason than temporary satisfaction. For Augustine, this reality makes for great wonder and frustration. Though committed to the eudaemonist axiom that all human beings desire to be happy, he is equally convinced that such desire cannot sustain the spiritual life, and that other desires the soul enjoys tend to obstruct its true progress. They even obstruct the soul’s capacity to respond to the truth itself—even, in fact, when Truth presents Himself in a form the soul can recognise.

But why is it that “truth engenders hatred”? Why does your man who preaches what is true become to them an enemy (Gal. 4:16) when they love the happy life which is simply joy grounded in truth? The answer must be this: their love for truth takes the form that they love something else and want this object of their love to be the truth; and because they do not wish to be deceived, they do not wish to be persuaded that they are mistaken. And so

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48 Indeed, ultimately for no good reason at all, Augustine will say. See Chapter 7.
they hate the truth for the sake of the object which they love instead of the truth. They love truth for the light it sheds, it hate it when it shows them up as being wrong (John 3:20; 5:35)… Yes indeed: the human mind, so blind and languid, shamefully and dishonourably wishes to hide, and yet does not wish anything to be concealed from itself. But it is repaid on the principle that while the human mind lies open to the truth, truth remains hidden from it.\(^{49}\)

According to this account, since the soul desires to be correct more than it desires to know the truth (or be known by the truth), the soul’s desire to know the truth is deformed and made impotent. Here echoes of Genesis 3 are once again present in the soul’s unwillingness to step forward from hiding. Though in principle able to take a step in that direction, the soul’s desires are so twisted into a knot of self-deception that to break free from it, the soul is reliant upon the strength of love’s weight.

But where does such strength come from? And how does one achieve it? In an earlier passage to the one above, Augustine explains that desire for happiness is not enough for the journey. One also has to submit to a process of purification.

Mention happiness, and all stand up, hands extended, to beg of you some alms as if they were poor wretches in the grip of a disease. But as wisdom begins to demand that they take themselves to the physician [Christ] and let themselves be cured by him, they return to their rags. Wasting away in the warmth of their rags, they scratch the itchy scabs of troublesome lust rather than submit to the physician’s prescriptions… That excellent and most beautiful Spouse, however, seeks other men, or better, other souls not happy with just getting on [non vivere... satis sit], but satisfied only with a happy life, and therefore worthy of his marriage bed.\(^{50}\)

An initial prompting may secure the attention of these would-be lovers of wisdom (i.e. philosophers); but on the suggestion that such lovers must “take themselves to the physician”, the weight of love that drove them forward gives way to the weight of love that drives them back. According to Augustine, such dynamic swinging from desire to desire tends to repeat itself ad nauseam among students of every kind. The only solution to its endless repetition is the increase of true desire, a deepening of the

\(^{49}\) *Confessiones* X.23.34, trans. Chadwick.

\(^{50}\) *De ordine* I.8.24, trans. Silvano Borruso.
soul’s restless longing to seek and find wisdom. Such nourishment of desire is of the
greatest importance to securing souls in what Augustine refers to as the “harbour of
philosophy” \textit{[portus philosophiae]},\textsuperscript{51} an image that may stand to represent either the
Catholic Church, or even Christ Himself.

In \textit{De beata vita}, Augustine invokes this image in relation to a discussion about the
search for the happy life. The tale he narrates concerns three seafarers on the way to
the happy life, but who each suffer specific setbacks as a result of their desires. To
begin with, Augustine ponders why human beings, save for a “few exceptional men”,
often fail to find the happy life they long to possess.\textsuperscript{52} He asks about the cause that
lies behind it: could it be that “either God or nature or necessity or our own will or
some or all of these in combination have cast us forth into this world as though upon
a stormy sea, apparently without purpose or plan”. After listing these possibilities,
though, he declines to give an answer. His concern at this point is not to solve the
problem of origin (see below), but to chart a course that makes the problem easier to
comprehend. Accordingly, he decides to focus attention on the location of three
seafarers. These seafarers stand to represent three forms of would-be philosophers,
for each of them are said to possess an aptitude “that philosophy can welcome” \textit{[quos
philosophia potest accipere]}. What is more, Augustine appears to model his account
of each seafarer according to the threefold account of sin in 1 John 2:16.\textsuperscript{53} We say
“appears to” because it is not stated explicitly at any point, and can be derived only by
attending to the state of each seafarer. Even so, such an exercise rather illustrates our
point: by taking each seafarer in turn according to the desires that guide them, we
shed light upon the logic which informs Augustine’s approach.

The group of seafarers most ambiguously related to in 1 John 2:16 happens to be the
first group; these are seafarers who make a short journey to a nearby shore, but then
decide to set up camp and terminate their voyage. In Augustine’s words, these men,

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{De beata vita} 1.1-5; cf. \textit{De Academicis} I.1.1, II.1.1.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{De beata vita} 1.1, trans. Teske (and following).

\textsuperscript{53} For another account see Jackson, M. G. St. A., “Augustine All at Sea: An Interpretation of the
“in full possession of reason” [compos rationis], try to attract their “fellow citizens” to imitate their accomplishment. The ambiguity in this account lies in characterising their accomplishment; in this respect, translator Roland Teske takes a different tack than a previous translator, Ludwig Schopp. To describe the relation of the seafarers to the citizens they admonish, Teske traces the phrase ad se back to the citizens, not the seafarers, and treats the phrase as an exhortation to turn to the self.

There, for whomever of their fellow citizens they can, [the seafarers] raise up some work of their own as a brilliant signal by which others might be warned and thus try to return to themselves [admoniti contentur ad se]. Conversely, Schopp traces the phrase ad se back to the seafarers, not the citizens, and gives a slightly less positive reading of the seafarers’ intentions.

There [the seafarers] establish themselves in such tranquillity that they erect for as many other citizens as possible a very bright sign of their own work, and through its enticement they extend tempting invitations to join them.

To be fair, Augustine’s Latin is somewhat ambiguous at this point. The phrase is so short as to license both readings, and it makes interpreting the seafarers as “the pride of life” a bit too hasty. However, it is worth noting that the ambiguity surrounding this first group may be purposeful on Augustine’s part, rather than accidental. He may want us to call into question these hortatory figures, even if he does intend for us to listen to their call. We come to see what this ambiguity might mean for Augustine when we turn in section 3 to the end of the tale.

The second group Augustine names is less ambiguous than the first: it comprises seafarers devoted to searching for “pleasure and honors”, and thus have forgotten the

54 De beata vita 1.2, trans. Teske.
55 De beata vita 1.2, trans. Teske. Teske interprets the seafarers as representing the Neoplatonic philosophers, a reading that could be sustained based on Augustine’s positive assessment (cf. De beata vita 1.4-5). However, it is not clear that Augustine endorses the seafarers the way Teske assumes—particularly since he places them in a story about wayward seafarers.
57 Unum est eorum, quos ubi aetas compos rationis assumpserit, parvo impetu pulsque remorum de proximo fugiunt, sesque condunt in illa tranquillitate, unde caeteris civibus quibus possunt, quo admoniti contentur ad se, lucidissimum signum sui alicuius operis erigunt.
“fatherland” they departed long ago. In Augustine’s judgement these seafarers are in a bad way, affectively speaking, until they happen upon “a violent storm and a hostile wind” that radically re-orientates their search for the happy life. After this encounter, the seafarers seek counsel from “books of wise and learned men” which cause them to “wake up” [evigilant] at the harbour philosophy. Thus it appears that unlike the first group that travels only a little way, the second group has the backing of a hidden divine providence that creatively re-orientates the sin of cupiditas.

Similarly with the third group of seafarers Augustine describes, the turning point arrives after a long hiatus in which the seafarers “wander… off course amid cloudy skies, either watching falling stars or captivated by some allurement”. Here the error seems representative of the sin of curiositas, and it too undergoes a re-orientation after “some disaster in their fortunes, like a storm opposing their efforts, forces these men into the peaceful and most desired life”.

With all three seafaring groups, then, including the ambiguous first group, Augustine breaks down the human quest for the happy life into multiple spheres of experience that affect the soul differently. By indicating the “fortuitous” way such spheres are transformed, moreover, he seems to imply that his involvement in assisting the seafarers relies in part on an intervention from an unknown source.

More importantly, this account provides a useful example of how Augustine treats the soul in a multiplied state. As we move throughout this study, we shall have some occasion to refer back to his seafaring analogy in order to throw fresh light upon his particular circumstance. Now we wrap up his account of the voyage by focussing on the single point at which all seafarers converge. This point, depicted as “one huge mountain”, stands to represent the pride that blocks the harbour the philosophy—the final obstacle the soul faces in its return to its origins.

58 De beata vita 1.2, trans. Teske.
59 For “hidden providence”, i.e. ordo, see De Academicis I.1.1, II.1.1-2; De ordine I.1.1-4.
60 De beata vita 1.2, trans. Teske.
The Problem of Origin

The tale of three seafarers converges at a single point, and this point represents the return to the spot where Adam fell. Augustine’s decision to place pride at the end of the journey illustrates his assumption that pride lies at the origin of sin: that one must work back to it through the healing of pride’s affects.

To open up this final section, we break down Augustine’s account of pride into three facets: (i) the temptation of the mountain, (ii) the role of (former) mountain-climbers, and (iii) the affect of the mountain on those who ascend it.

(i) Temptation. “For all these [seafarers] who are brought in any fashion to the land of the happy life there is one huge mountain set in front of the harbour itself. This mountain also creates great difficulties for those entering and should be much feared and carefully avoided. For it shines forth and is wrapped in deceitful light [Nam ita fulget, ita mentiente illa luce vestitur], so that it not only offers itself as a place to dwell for arriving voyagers who have not yet entered the harbour and promises to satisfy their longing for the happy life [eorum voluntati pro ipsa beata terra satisfacturum polliceatu], but it also frequently invites men to itself from the very harbour and sometimes detains them and delights them with its height, from which they can look down on the rest [caeteros despicere libeat].”

With this metaphor, Augustine draws attention to the starting point of human sin, the vice that constantly lurks behind the journey of every soul. Through enticing the wearied seafarers to take comfort on its slopes, this mountain threatens to overturn the progress of desire by prematurely satisfying the soul’s longing for true happiness. Not only does this mountain promise to placate desire; it also encourages its inhabitants to “look down on the rest”. The moral implication is that this mountain plunges the soul in other vices; that it nurtures a perverse self-knowledge in isolation.

61 De beata vita 1.3, trans. Teske (and following).
from the neighbour (and hence the self). Like Adam, this mountain is a symbol for self-elevation, an attempt to lord it over others in self-satisfied security.\(^{62}\)

(ii) Mountain-Climbers. “These men, nonetheless, often warn those coming lest they either be deceived by the hidden rocks below or think that they can easily climb up to where they are, and because of the nearness of the land [propter illius terrae vicinitatem] they with much good will [benevolentissime] point the way by which those arriving may enter. Thus, while they begrudge arriving men empty glory, they point out the place of security [locum securitatis ostendunt].”

On the other hand, Augustine recognises certain men from the mountain that offer their assistance to those down below. Though not revealing the identity of these men in the passage, he could be referring to the first group he described up above. For example, the mountain is said to gleam with a deceptive and attractive light, just as the first seafarers raised a “brilliant sign” to direct others on their way. Even so, Augustine’s description of these men of “good will” seems to indicate a different group than Neoplatonic philosophers. These men are seasoned veterans in their affiliation with the mountain, and seem to realise the great trap that its “hidden rocks” entail. Over against the temptation that the mountain embodies, they point others to nearby land that offers travellers a surer course, contrasting the “place of security” to the “empty glory” of the mountain. This appears to convey a subtle barb against high-riding philosophers, and perhaps implicates by extension the first group of seafarers (“in full possession of reason”).\(^{63}\)

(iii) Affect. “For what other mountain does reason want to be understood as something to be feared by those who are approaching or by those who have already entered philosophy except the proud pursuit of empty glory [superbum studium inanissimae gloriae] that has nothing full and solid within, so that it pushes under and swallows up those walking on it who are puffed up with pride [inflatos], and once it has


\(^{63}\) For this reading of compos rationis see Conybeare, The Irrational Augustine, p. 165.
wrapped them in darkness it snatches away from them the shining home which they had scarcely glimpsed”.

Finally, Augustine turns to disclose the meaning of the mountain, outlining some of the consequences that attend its inhabitants. His explicit reference to pride rounds off his use of 1 John 2:16 (as we argued above), while his account of pride’s affect supports his reading of Genesis 3. In this way, though still a few years from writing De Genesi contra Manichaeos, Augustine proves himself sensitive to the condition of humanity in the aftermath of Adam’s Fall and subsequent dislocation.

Framed with a view to his reading of Genesis 3, then, Augustine’s careful way of organising his approach to human pride suggests a degree of familiarity with this difficult subject. By refusing to answer the question of why the soul is on its journey, or rather by confessing he does not know the answer but is determined to find out, Augustine decides to focus instead on the soul’s current trajectory, and pave the way to answering the question “whence evil” [unde malum?] at a later point.

For this thesis, our claim is that a question unde malum? can be seen lurking in the background to Augustine’s early teaching. It lurks there for the simple reason that it defies easy explanation, or rather it tempts the soul to give any easy explanation by accusing God, not humanity. Given Augustine’s interpretation of Genesis 3, both his reading of God’s question and Adam’s response to that question, it would seem that the real challenge is not to answer this question full stop, but to find a way to position the soul to accept God’s offer of forgiveness and healing.

The problem of origin, as with the problem of location, consists in the visceral unwillingness of the soul to acknowledge its moral standing; its inclination to pass the blame off to anyone but itself. Thus in order to make a way to defusing this problem, Augustine decides to work in the margins of the soul’s spiritual journey, in

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64 In De vera religione, written a few years later, Augustine portrays pride as a mountain that must be overcome, and links it explicitly to 1 John 2:16. See De vera religione 38.71.

65 His uncertainty undoubtedly derives from his uncertainty about the soul in general, thus giving a moral shape to his confusion about the soul’s origin (see De beata vita 1.5).
order to insinuate the soul into a deeper awareness of its moral implication. To begin the journey, we turn to his engagement with the Academics in AD 386.
ITINERARY #1

DE ACADEMICIS
Chapter 2

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

To prepare for our first itinerary through *De Academicis*,¹ we bring into focus an important metaphor that appears in this period: “awakening” [*evigilare, excitare*].² We argue that awakening names a process of surrendering to love of truth, whereby the soul acknowledges its need for divine illumination, and thereby “put[s] on the Lord Jesus Christ”³. In the opening address to *De Academicis* book I, Augustine declares: “Therefore, that divine element in you [*divinus in te*], whatever it may be… that element, I say, which has been lulled to sleep by the lethargy of this life, a hidden providence has decided to awaken [*excitare*] by the various hard reverses you have suffered. Wake up! Wake up I beg you! [*Evigila, evigila oro te*]”.⁴ Directed to his friend and faithful patron Romanianus,⁵ this exhortation reveals that awakening is not only divinely guided, but that it concerns an inner awakening to the “divine element within”. That element, we suggest, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ

¹ Augustine’s Cassiciacum period includes *De Academicis* (or *Contra Academicos*) and *De beata vita*, both written in AD 386; *De ordine*, written between AD 386-7; and the *Soliloquia*, written somewhere around AD 387. Despite the different dates, the ordering of these works has proved controversial. In Phillip Cary’s “narrative order” account, *De Academicis* book I is followed by *De beata vita* and *De ordine*, and the finally back to *De Academicis* books II and III. Eric Kenyon reinstates the traditional order against Cary, placing the whole of *De Academicis* before *De beata vita*. In our approach, we accept Kenyon’s arguments against Cary’s account, but will use *De beata vita* as a secondary text to illumine *De Academicis*. See Phillip Cary, “What Licentius Learned: A Narrative Reading of the Cassiciacum Dialogues”, in *Augustinian Studies* 29:1 (1998), pp. 161-3; and Eric Kenyon, “The Order of the Cassiciacum Dialogues”, *Augustinian Studies* 42:2 (2011), pp. 173-188.

² For early examples of verbs *excitare* and *evigilare*, as well as correlative verbs *erigere*, *surgere*, and various cognates, see *De Academicis* I.1.3, I.9.24, III.10.22, III.19.42; *De beata vita* I.2, 1.4, 4.35; *De ordine* I.3.6, I.5.14, II.20.54; *Soliloquia* I.1.2-3. See also *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 4.5.

³ Romans 13:14, as cited at *Confessiones* VIII.12.29.

⁴ *De Academicis* I.1.3, trans. Peter King.

⁵ Fellow North African and long-time patron of Augustine’s educational pursuits, Romanianus has shared in many of our author’s intellectual breakthroughs and setbacks. Augustine’s latest decision to retire from his professorship in Milan is undoubtedly of interest to him, as is the report of Augustine’s “return” to the Catholic faith. Romanianus is a Manichean.
whom Augustine directly acknowledges at the end of *De Academicis*. In this initial chapter, we focus on developing this connection by addressing the three themes of audience, method, and objective. The first question we raise is, *why* the Academics? How does this exchange benefit both Augustine and Romanianus?

**Approaching *De Academicis***

In book IX of the *Confessiones*, Augustine looks back on his Cassiciacum *otium* with the help of Psalm 4. Interleaving comments on each verse of Psalm 4 in his account, he recalls the way that God had healed his spiritual sickness by attending to the wounds his love had inflicted. Where Psalm 4:3 reads, “‘Sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? And why do you love vanity and seek after a lie?’”, Augustine confesses: “For I had loved vanity and sought after a lie… As I heard the Psalm, I trembled at words spoken to people such as I recalled myself to have been”. The “people” he refers to are his former co-religionists, the Manicheans. They are the ones most on his mind at this critical juncture, providing him with fodder for spiritual reflection. As a Manichean he had been burdened with the weight of false love; now he enjoys freedom of love under the easy yoke of Christ (Matt. 11:30). What is more, Augustine hopes the same for his former co-religionists. Imagining them crying out to God with the prayer of Psalm 4:6, “Who can show us good?”, he prays that God would help them know the burden of their love, and acknowledge their need for God to intervene on their behalf.

In *De Academicis*, Augustine conveys a similar sentiment to his Manichean friend Romanianus. Though more subtle and rhetorical than his prayers in the *Confessiones* book IX, he still implores Romanianus to turn his love away from things of this

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6 *De Academicis* III.20.43.
7 *Confessiones* IV.4.8-11.
8 *Confessiones* IX.4.9, trans. Chadwick.
world,\textsuperscript{10} and to latch onto his budding desire for “another happy life…one that alone is the happy life”.\textsuperscript{11} In his opening address to book I, Augustine reveals how the transfer of love works by appealing to divine assistance.

With our prayers to God, Who has these matters as His concern, we shall, if we can, successfully entreat Him to restore you to yourself—for He will thereby return you to us as well—and to permit your spirit, which has been waiting to take a deep breath for a long time now, to come forward at least into the fresh air of true freedom.\textsuperscript{12}

Before this, Augustine also explains that in order to possess “the most secure goods”, our “divine spirit” [\textit{divinum animum}] must gain entry to “the harbor of wisdom” [\textit{portus sapientiae}].\textsuperscript{13} The point is clear, even if the images are not, that Romanianus presently sits at a crossroads on his journey of desire, and that Augustine pledges to assist him with God’s help in \textit{De Academicis}.

On that premise, it is curious to obscure that to assist Romanianus, Augustine devotes his attention not to the Manicheans, but to the Academics. The implications of his decision will be commented on momentarily, but one feature of \textit{De Academicis} ought to command attention first. It is not incidental that we cite the original title for this work, \textit{De Academicis},\textsuperscript{14} as opposed to the later more familiar title \textit{Contra Academicos}. The reason for this is not to be pedantic about titles, but to move beyond treating \textit{De Academicis} as mainly polemic. The vast majority of scholars, to be sure, do treat it as polemic,\textsuperscript{15} and this certainly can be justified based on contents.

\textsuperscript{10} Cf. \textit{De Academicis} I.1.1-3; \textit{De Academicis} II.3.9.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{De Academicis} I.1.2, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{De Academicis} I.1.1, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{De Academicis} I.1.1, trans. King.


therein. On the other hand, Augustine gives clear evidence of a different intention when he comments on *De Academicis* a few years after its publication (ca. AD 387-91). In an early letter addressed to his friend Hermogenianus, Augustine clarifies that his ambition was not to attack the Academics. It was to imitate their method and style of argument. “Not even in joking would I dare attack [*lacessere*] the Academics. After all, how would the authority of such great men fail to disturb me, if I did not believe that they stood for a far different view than is commonly believed? Hence, to the extent I could, I imitated them [*eos imitatus sum*] rather than attacked them, something I could never do”.[16] Even if he means to be ironic in this comment, Augustine still seems open to what the Academics have to say,[17] and more importantly to how they instruct others in the life of philosophy. With this in mind, we turn now to Augustine’s audience in this period in order to determine how the Academics conform to his plan.

**Audience: Romanianus, Scepticism, *Desperatio Veri***

Augustine makes two addresses to Romanianus in *De Academicis*, and each conveys valuable information on the subject of his friend’s location. Following an overture to his faithful patron in his first address in book I, Augustine zeroes in on a transformation that is starting to place: recent events, we learn, have destabilised Romanianus’ notion of true happiness, and brought him to a better place from which to embark on his journey. Indeed, Augustine sees this as nothing short of a miracle, urging Romanianus to perceive just how lucky he truly is.

Well, then I ask you *who* [*quisquam*], Romanianus! Who [*quisquam*] would dare to mention another happy life to you, one that alone is the happy life. Who [*quisquam*] could persuade you that not only were you not happy, but that you were especially unhappy in seeming to yourself not unhappy at all?

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[17] Although, Augustine does give a more standard polemical description in *Retractationes* I.1.1. There is room for both interpretations, it seems.
How rapidly you have come to realize this now, with the many great misfortunes you have endured.\textsuperscript{18}

Having already come in contact with Augustine’s reference to a hidden providence, we are led to discern that the “who” to whom this passage refers, assuming Augustine is being ironic rather than merely rhetorical, is not only a spiritual power, but a personal presence. Although the identity of this presence remains undeclared, it reveals to us that someone is causing Romanianus to wake up, and that Augustine merely wishes to contribute to the process.

Moreover, in placing Romanianus on a voyage to the happy life, Augustine appeals to images and terms strongly reminiscent of the second seafarers (\textit{De beata vita} 1.2, see Chapter 1). Parallels between the two accounts cover the most relevant aspects: temptation to honours and fortune (the sin of \textit{cupiditas}, we argued); run-in with a strong and hostile wind (the “great misfortunes” endured by Romanianus, probably financial in origin);\textsuperscript{19} and the mind’s eventual awakening at the harbour of philosophy (the same verb, \textit{evigilare}, appears in each story).\textsuperscript{20} Further insight is also gained on the location of Romanianus based on a reference to “books of wise and learned men” that awaken the seafarers. As for which books Augustine might have in mind for Romanianus, we reserve that for the end of this chapter.

In his second address to Romanianus in book II, Augustine further illumines the status of his wayfaring friend by defining four common obstacles that inhibit the journey. Setting aside the obstacles of both laziness and time constraints, conditions he now believes Romanianus has overcome,\textsuperscript{21} he focuses on the two obstacles that continue to pose threats, and which tie in directly to the purpose of his dialogue.

For the first obstacle, which he assigns to the Academic sceptics, Augustine cites the philosophical claim that no human being can find the truth. The emotional impact

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{De Academicis} I.1.2, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. \textit{Confessiones} VI.14.24.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{De beata vita} 1.2; for the harbour of philosophy, see \textit{De Academicis} I.1.1, II.1.1.

\textsuperscript{21} Or never suffered from, if Augustine’s glowing remarks about Romanianus are to be believed.
of this claim, rather than the truth of it per se, is what most worries Augustine in relation to Romanianus. If such a claim does not undermine desire, it may lead the soul to despair of finding the truth (desperatio veri).\textsuperscript{22} Accordingly, we might expect Augustine to use this chance to dismiss Academics in the strongest possible terms. But he does not. Instead, Augustine intimates that because of the Academics, Romanianus occupies a better position on the journey of desire. As he puts it to Romanianus: “You have often been angry at the Academicians: the more severely, in fact, the less knowledgeable you were about them; the more gladly, because you were led on by your love of the truth”.\textsuperscript{23} Apparently Romanianus is not only familiar with the Academics, but has drawn from them certain insights that have motivated his quest. Whatever the case, Augustine is more pleased that Romanianus, thanks to the Academics, is no longer beholden to Manichean certitude:

As for the second obstacle, namely that you perhaps assume that you have found some truth, despite the fact that you were searching and doubting [quaerens dubitansque] when you left us—if any superstition has returned to your mind, it will surely be cast out once I’ve sent you a discussion among ourselves concerning religion [disputationem de religione] or when I talk many things over with you in person.\textsuperscript{24}

Gesturing to his future work dealing with the Manichean religion (\textit{De vera religione}, see Chapters 4-5), Augustine reveals that the second obstacle facing Romanianus, the assumption of having “found some truth”, has been replaced by a new (dis)position of “searching and doubting”. Romanianus, then, inhabits a new disposition more attuned to the Academics; and that is why Augustine pledges to work with him in exchange with the Academics.

At the same time as he praises the Academic influence, Augustine holds firm to a negative view of the Academic legacy. The Academic legacy, when defined by the

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{De Academicis} II.3.8. At II.1.1, Augustine defines this obstacle as “our despair at finding [wisdom] [desperatione inveniendi], since the star of wisdom doesn’t appear to our minds as easily as the light does to our eyes”. Then at II.3.8, he warns Romanianus not to “underrate yourself and despair of your ever finding the truth [inventurum esse desperes]”, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{De Academicis} II.3.8, trans. King. Emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{De Academicis} II.3.8, trans. King. Emphasis added.
first obstacle above, runs the risk of either deterring would-be philosophers from ever joining rank, or causing despair among genuine lovers of wisdom (i.e. philosophers). The phrase that surfaces at a few places in Augustine’s early works is desperatio veri.\footnote{See De Academicis II.1.1, II.3.8-9; Retractationes I.1.1; Epistula 1.3.} This points to a danger always lurking beneath the veneer of Academic teaching, ready to empty true desire of its motive and purpose. Thus to conclude his first letter on the Academic sceptics, Augustine celebrates the new freedom he has won from despair: “I have broken for myself that most odious snare by which I was held back from the breast of philosophy out of a despair of finding the truth [desperatione veri], which is the food of the soul”.\footnote{Epistula 1.3, trans. Hill.} Having achieved this a few months before, in De Academicis Augustine turns to assist his friend in making the transition.

**Method: Dialogue and Conversion**

How does Augustine assist Romanianus in De Academicis? Having already given mixed signals concerning his view of the Academics, Augustine prepares to strike a difficult balance between two modes of approach, the one more supportive, the other more critical. First in support of the Academics, Augustine allows the Academics to give their account of philosophy that features their well-known emphasis on seeking the truth. In addition to this, the Academics proffer a sharp criticism of philosophy that undermines facile notions that the truth can be found. In both cases they prove effective against the Manichean teaching which has a tendency to cause its adherents not to seek the truth at all.\footnote{Cf. De Academicis II.1.1; De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.2.3.} But once Romanianus has fully entered his “searching and doubting” disposition, the next task is to re-direct him towards the object of true delight which the Academics falsely identify with the suspension of assent (epoche). Hence to critique the Academic thesis, Augustine subverts the Academic method by showcasing its limitations and inherent contradictions. His effort to “imitate” this
method seeks to accomplish these tasks by giving occasion for true lovers to step forward in search of truth. Let us explain.

To begin with, Augustine imitates the Academic method by adopting the genre of philosophical dialogue. As Catherine Conybeare has argued in her comments on Cassiciacum, Augustine’s decision to use dialogue has both practical and theoretical dimensions, each having something to do with his recent conversion. In practical terms, his decision was a calculated measure to appease the predilections of his main audience—not just Romanianus, but several “gentlemanly” patrons of non-Christian persuasion. With dialogue, Augustine could negotiate his “liminal status” without arousing too much suspicion of religious conversion. In theoretical terms, his decision actually enhanced his opportunity to re-examine the assumptions of ancient philosophy. With its inherent instability and “liminal” tendencies, dialogue provided the perfect medium for subverting self-confidence and re-directing desire to its appropriate end. Conybeare sums up the dialectic thus: “The [Cassiciacum] dialogues are eminently suited to a liminal, enquiring state. Their genre bespeaks a pursuit that Augustine’s patrons will find acceptably gentlemanly; at the same time, by foregrounding its artificiality, Augustine can use it to open up questions about the relationship of language to reality”.

Embracing the ancient genre of philosophical dialogue, Augustine makes sure to purge himself of its corresponding optimism. Wary that such optimism might lead to intellectual pride, he strives to channel optimism toward the Christian intellectual

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29 In addition to Romanianus, other interested friends/patrons (not all of them non-Christians) include Manlius Theodorus (*De beata vita*), Zenobius (*De ordine*), various correspondents (Hermogenianus), and Verecundus, the owner of the villa at Cassiciacum.


virtues, the faith, hope, and love that support the quest for wisdom.\textsuperscript{33} In addition, he traces wisdom to the authority of the Church, and in particular to the authoritative witness of his mother, Monnica.\textsuperscript{34} Through Monnica, says Conybeare, Augustine issues a challenge to cherished philosophical assumptions. His claim is that truth and wisdom, having been shown in Christ Incarnate,\textsuperscript{35} have enabled people like Monnica gain access to the “stronghold of philosophy”,\textsuperscript{36} surpassing the so-called rationality of gentlemanly philosophers. In this regard, he relies on the liminal mode of dialogue to grant Monnica unprecedented space to deliver her insights, thus expanding the intellectual scope of his readers and students.

Thanks to Conybeare and others,\textsuperscript{37} the elusive style Augustine adopts in his post-conversion writings has re-emerged as a key facet of his theological approach. Even R.J. O’Connell, a longtime critic of the early Augustine,\textsuperscript{38} came to admire Augustine’s subtle approach to his Cassiciacum audience. O’Connell argued that the dialogues embody “a thoroughly religious and specifically Christian style of understanding which the recent convert labels with the term ‘philosophy’”,\textsuperscript{39} and went on to affirm that Augustine “clearly expected that both his companions at Cassiciacum as well as his eventual readers would be equally able to decode his message, if only they paid

\textsuperscript{33} Cf.\textit{ De beata vita} 4.35,\textit{ De ordine} II.8.25, and\textit{ Soliloquia} I.


\textsuperscript{35} See\textit{ Epistula} 1.1-2 for the superiority of Christian philosophy; see\textit{ De Academicis} III.19.32-20.43 for Augustine’s exaltation of the Incarnate Christ. For Christ as Wisdom, Augustine cites 1 Cor. 1:24 (\textit{De Academicis} II.1.2). For Christ as Truth, he cites John 14:6 (\textit{De beata vita} 4.34).

\textsuperscript{36} Cf.\textit{ De beata vita} 2.10.

\textsuperscript{37} See also Stock, Brian,\textit{ Augustine’s Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).


\textsuperscript{39} O’Connell, R.J., “The Visage of Philosophy at Cassiciacum”,\textit{ Augustinian Studies} 25 (1994) p. 68. For the significance of this article in relation to O’Connell see Harrison,\textit{ Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology}, p. 17, n. 26.
sufficient attention to the text”. A coded message at Cassiciacum is not a novel idea, but O’Connell’s emphasis on its Christian content is highly suggestive. In response, we propose that if Augustine has a “hidden” message, it is to be found in the way he imitates the Academic sceptics.

In particular, Augustine’s posture toward his Cassiciacum students offers insight into his critique of the Academic method. For example, Augustine presents himself as fellow traveller, or co-seafarer, who only happens to be one step ahead thanks to recent developments. “For my part, I’m doing nothing at present except purging myself of futile and harmful opinions, so I’m undoubtedly better than you are”. Placing himself at the same crossroads as his friend Romanianus, he even confesses to an on-going struggle with the Academic thesis, and dramatises its effect on his intellectual pursuits. “[D]on’t you know that up to now there is nothing I perceive to be certain? I’m prevented from searching for it by the arguments and debates of the Academicians. They somehow persuaded me of the plausibility…that man cannot find the truth. Accordingly I had become lazy and utterly inactive, not daring to search for what the most ingenious and learned men weren’t permitted to find”. Taken as a literal accounting of Augustine’s present mind-set, this passage appears to contradict the fact that Augustine converted in AD 386. Interpreted as it ought to be interpreted, as a rhetorical performance, this passage not only supports his claim to have imitated the Academics. It also showcases his manner of subverting them by adopting their style of reasoning. In this passage, Augustine takes on the persona of an Academic who adheres to the thesis that no truth can be found. He embodies the revered method of Academic teaching, namely suspension of assent (epoche), to expose its inherent limitation and implication for philosophers, showing how its causes them to become “lazy and utterly inactive”. Not to stretch things too far, but his reference to the Academics as “ingenious and learned men” reverts back to his

40 O’Connell, “The Visage of Philosophy”, p. 69.
41 De Academicis II.3.9, trans. King.
“books of wise and learned men” in *De beata vita*. This time, it appears that the ingenious Academics lack resources to awaken souls at the harbour of philosophy. As if we needed reminder, this cancels out their candidacy as the ultimate source of wisdom in philosophy.

In Chapter 3, we develop Augustine’s imitation of the Academics by defining their relationship to the true philosophy. We discover that Augustine’s appreciation for Academic teaching extends as far as its inculcation of love of wisdom—as far as it inspires the desire to *ask, seek, knock* (Matt. 7:7). Where it fails, then, and where Augustine plans to abandon its teaching, is in its inability to support the weight of desire with a concrete promise—the promise of Christ to meet seekers who genuinely search for the one true happy life. *Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*

**Objective: Evigilare, Excitare**

Accordingly, Augustine’s objective in *De Academicis* is to facilitate awakening to the promise of Christ. It is to set up the conditions for such awakening to take place; and it is to deliver at the right time the answer to all philosophy, namely Christ. To develop this point, we turn back to Psalm 4.

In his commentary on the Psalmist’s command in verse 5, *Be pierced in your own room*, Augustine explains how the process works and to what end it is undertaken. “The command, *Be pierced*, may refer to the pain of repentance which the soul inflicts on itself by way of punishment, rather than being condemned and tormented by the judgement of God; or else *be pierced* is a wake-up call *[ad excitationem]*, prompting us to rise from sleep as though prodded with goads, so as to see *[evigilemus] the light of Christ*”. Drawing on the familiar verbs *excitare* and *evigilare*, Augustine indicates that to awaken is not to realise oneself, but to place oneself in position to receive the light of Christ. Waking up to the order of reality,

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“the way things are” [ordo rerum] as he puts it in a latter passage, the soul discovers that to give an answer to the Academic challenge, it has to depend upon illumination from the Wisdom of God. To outline this process, let us return to the catalyst for awakening, “books of wise and learned men”.

In De Academicis, these books correspond to three possible candidates: (i) Cicero’s Hortensius, (ii) Plotinus’ Enneads, and (iii) Paul’s Epistles. Taking these books in turn, we propose that each book has a role to play in awakening the soul, but that our author derives his greatest insight from the writings of St. Paul.

(i) Cicero’s Hortensius. In his opening address in book I, Augustine indicates that his Cassiciacum students, Licentius and Trygetius, have been reading Cicero’s Hortensius for their edification. An influential work in Augustine’s spiritual life, the Hortensius has apparently almost persuaded Licentius, Romanianus’ son, to dedicate his life to pursuing philosophy. In regards to Romanianus, however, it is notable that Augustine does not recommend the Hortensius as a source of wisdom. Though giving high praise to Cicero throughout the course of De Academicis, he encourages Romanianus to imitate his son in De Academicis, rather than to bother reading Cicero to glean the same insights. When he defines the remit for De Academicis, moreover, Augustine applies terms that could equally apply to Cicero’s Hortensius, calling his work “a foretaste to incite you to cling to [the breasts of philosophy] and suckle the more eagerly.” As Michael P. Foley suggests, this seems to fashion De Academicis as a kind of Christian version of Cicero’s Hortensius, possibly replacing Hortensius as the new protrepticus for readers of Latin. At the very least, Augustine

46 Illumination is Augustine’s answer to scepticism; see Harding, Brian, “Skepticism, Illumination and Christianity in Augustine’s Contra Academicos”, Augustinian Studies 34.2 (2003), pp. 197-212
47 To Romanianus Augustine reports: “I wanted to test what they [students at Cassiciacum] could do at their age, especially since Cicero’s Hortensius seemed already to have largely won them over to philosophy”. De Academicis I.1.4, trans. King.
48 De Academicis I.1.4.
49 De Academicis I.1.4.
holds that whatever merits attend to the Hortensius, it cannot produce the kind of awakening that true philosophy demands.

(ii) Plotinus’ Enneads. Cicero’s Hortensius takes one only so far down the path to spiritual awakening. As Augustine learned on his journey “from Cicero to Christ”, true awakening requires more than the desire for wisdom. It requires deep-seated commitment to the life of philosophy. Accordingly, perhaps the catalyst for a true awakening is to be found in another philosopher Augustine cites at Cassiciacum: Plotinus. For indeed, although Plotinus is not the main focus of De Academicis, one can hardly deny his influence on Augustine’s intellectual life.

In book III, Augustine pledges that no matter where his journey takes him, he shall never depart again from “the authority of Christ”. To this he adds, though, that when it comes to “the most subtle reasoning—for my character is such that I’m impatient in my desire to apprehend what the truth is not only by belief but also by understanding—I’m still confident that I’m going to find it with the Platonists, and that it won’t be opposed to our Holy Writ”. In his opening address to De beata vita, moreover, Augustine recalls how, “after I had read a very few books of Plotinus [Plotini paucissimis libris]… and after I had compared with those books the authority of those who have handed down the divine mysteries, I so burst into flame that I wanted to break all anchors – except that I was still disturbed by what some men would think.” According to Teske, the last clause gives Augustine’s explanation as to why he delayed retirement until the “vintage vacation”. That aside, the statement corroborates Augustine’s view in De Academicis that the Platonists, and especially Plotinus, had a hand in his conversion. But the question before us is not whether or not Plotinus informed Augustine. It is whether or not Plotinus is the right catalyst for awakening Romanianus. On this score, it is clear that despite invoking the image of awakening, Plotinus also falls short of fulfilling the call.

51 Cf. Confessiones VIII.7.17; De Academicis II.3.8.
52 De Academicis III.20.43.
53 De beata vita 1.4, trans. Teske.
54 Cf. Confessiones IX.2.2.
Highly esteemed in the mind of our author, Plotinus shares with Cicero the same significant, fatal limitation: both fail to acknowledge in their writings “the name of Christ”.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Confessiones} III.4.8.} As a result of this failure, Plotinus defines awakening as a self-generated process in which the soul realises its divinity as an immaterial substance. “This is not a journey for the feet… you must close your eyes and call instead upon another vision to be \textit{waked} within you, a vision, the \textit{birth-right} of all, which few turn to use”.\footnote{\textit{Ennead} 1.6.8, trans. Stephen MacKenna. Emphasis added.} Although Plotinus is prepared to link this process to a desire for wisdom,\footnote{“But what is it that \textit{awakens} all this passion [in the soul]? No shape, no colour, no grandeur of mass: all is for a Soul, something whose beauty rests upon no colour, for the moral wisdom the Soul enshrines and all the other hueless splendour of the virtues. It is that you find in yourself, or admire in another, loftiness of spirit; righteousness of life; disciplined purity; courage of the majestic face; gravity; modesty that goes fearless and tranquil and passionless; and, shining down upon all, the light of god-like Intellection”. \textit{Ennead} 1.6.5, trans. MacKenna. Emphasis added.} this desire aims for full release from the lower things of time,\footnote{Cary, Phillip, \textit{Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 120-1.} and brings nothing of the confessional element so essential to Augustine.\footnote{Against the Platonic tradition, Augustine views one’s life-story as a significant source of spiritual insight. See Stock, Brian, \textit{Augustine’s Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 59.} For this reason, although his “otherworldliness” is well known and criticised,\footnote{Cf. \textit{De Academicis} I.1.1, II.1.2, II.9.22.} Augustine can never fully follow Plotinus down the road to awakening. Human beings owe something to God their Creator, and that something is the humility of confession and love.\footnote{Self-awareness in Augustine works both ways: both an awareness that we belong to God, and an awareness that we are in need of His assistance. Contrast this with Plotinus: “Plotinus discusses the ideal of human freedom as an intellectual self-determination, a freedom from all that is below leading to a freedom of absolute absorption in a higher unity. To become free is to become self-aware by transcending one’s present status”, Clark, Mary T., \textit{Augustine, Philosopher of Freedom: A Study in Comparative Philosophy} (New York: Desclee Company, 1958), p. 18. Another way to put this is to say that for Plotinus, individuation is an accident that must be overcome: to stand before God is to be absorbed into God, disappearing into ecstatic union. Not for Augustine.} Thus while he invites Romanianus to search out another happy life, Augustine also reminds him to pray to God for help along the way.\footnote{For the role of prayer at Cassiciacum see Topping, \textit{Happiness and Wisdom}, pp. 97-105.} “Accordingly, while one should row against the
winds and waves of fortune with the oars of whatever virtues are available, one should first implore divine assistance with all devotion and piety, so that the resolute application of oneself to good studies holds to its course and no chance drives it astray from reaching the secure and pleasant harbour of philosophy”.

(iii) Paul's Epistles. If neither Cicero nor Plotinus leads to awakening of the soul, the writings of St. Paul present another viable option. For indeed, Augustine cites Paul explicitly in *De Academicis*, presenting him as a decisive influence on his spiritual conversion. To Romanianus he explains how, after reading the books of the Platonists, “stumbling, hastening, hesitating I snatched up the Apostle Paul. Truly, I declared, the [apostles] would not have been able to do such great deeds, nor would they have lived as they clearly did live, if their books and arguments were opposed to so great a good. I read all of it with the greatest attention and the greatest care”. And just after this, he adds that through his reading of St. Paul,

> no matter how little the light was that had already been cast by the visage of philosophy [*facies philosophiae*], it now appeared so great to me that if I could show it to—I don’t say ‘to you’, Romanianus, since you always burned with a hunger for it, despite your not yet knowing it...

The “visage of philosophy” began to shine on him more brightly than before, and it inspired him to “show it” to his friend Romanianus. Something in Paul, then, had an affect on him that went beyond that of Plotinus. The answer, of course, is that Paul showed him how to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Paul’s Epistle, there are two places that feature the event awakening. The first Augustine quotes directly in book VIII of the *Confessiones*: there recalling his spiritual sickness at the time of conversion, he says he had “no answer to make to you [God] when you said to me ‘Arise, you who are asleep, rise from the dead, and Christ

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63 *De Academicis* II.1.1.

64 *De Academicis* II.2.5; *De beata vita* I.4. See also *Confessiones* VIII.6.14, where he states that at the time of his conversion, Paul’s writings “were the subject of deep study for me”, trans. Chadwick.


66 *De Academicis* II.2.6, trans. King.
shall give you light’ [surge qui dormis et exsurgere a mortuis, et inluminabit te Christus] (Eph. 5.14). Invoking the terms surgere and exsurgere, two correlates to Augustine’s terms excitare and evigilare, Paul identifies the object of awakening as the light of Jesus Christ, a light the soul drinks in by rising from the dead. Another verse from Paul on awakening is even more suggestive: in Romans 13:11-12, just two verses before Romans 13:13-14, Paul describes the soul’s conversion as an awakening to the day. Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. As R.J. O’Connell suggested at the end of his career, an attempt to locate in the dialogues the influence of Romans 13:13-14 must take into account the rest of the passage as a point of departure. And indeed, Augustine does draw on the imagery of Romans both in his appeal to awakening, and in his account of day and night at Cassiciacum. Whether or not this is decisive proof of his use of Romans 13:11-14, it certainly alerts us to the parallel imagery that we find in Paul’s writings, and in particular to the radical conversion that both Paul and Augustine speak of. Hence from these parallels, we are able to argue not only that Paul had an influence on Augustine, but that the “books of wise and learned men” stand for the books of Holy Scripture.

67 Confessiones XIII.5.12, trans. Chadwick.

68 Revised Standard Version.


70 Augustine organises his dialogues around the passage of day and night, often deferring important questions until the light of next day. For example in book II he says: “I want us to be in full agreement today on what question is to be taken up [surgendum sit] in the morning”; and again in book III: “The night before last, we had gone to bed intending to address that postponed question and practically nothing else upon rising [surgeretur]”, trans. King.

To sum up: to the extent that St. Paul’s message is fulfilled by Cicero and Plotinus, Augustine is happy to solicit their support in rehabilitating the soul’s desire for truth. The limit with them, as always, is acknowledgement of the name of Christ, a name Augustine identifies with the “visage of philosophy”. On this basis, we can also clarify another aspect of awakening that has been interpreted by some scholars under Platonic assumptions. It is found in the opening admonition we cited at the start: “Therefore, that divine element in you, [divinus in te], whatever it may be…” As Augustine makes clear in later works, and begins to intimate at Cassiciacum, this divine element is not to be confused with the nature of the soul, but with the Face on which the soul looks with faith, hope, and love. It is in waking up to this Face, the Face of Wisdom Herself, that the soul begins to steady its ship amidst the stormy seas of life. Augustine in a later work:

Something you heard in the gospel perhaps also has a bearing on this: the boat was in peril on the lake, yet Jesus was asleep (Lk. 8:23). We are sailing across what you might call a lake, and there are plenty of gales and storms. Our craft is almost swamped by the daily temptations of this world. Why is this? It can only be because Jesus is asleep. If Jesus were not asleep in you, you would not be battered by such storms; you would enjoy inner calm, Jesus and you keeping watch together. What does this mean: “Jesus is asleep”? Your faith, which derives from Jesus, has nodded off….

What are you to do? Wake Jesus up [Excita Iesum], and say, “Master, we are perishing!” (Lk. 8:24). The currents in the lake are treacherous, and we are sinking”. He will wake up [Evigilabit], your faith will come back to you, and with his help you will reflect that the things that are given to bad people now will not stay with them. Good things either desert them while they are still alive, or are left behind when they die. But what is promised to you will last for ever.72

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Chapter 3

FROM CICERO TO CHRIST

Itinerary #1

The story of Romanianus, and particularly the location of Romanianus, gives us the clue to begin mapping the first itinerary in De Academicis. As we outlined in our last chapter, having entered a (dis)position of “searching and doubting”,¹ suspending in some degree his Manichean certainties, Romanianus is now properly poised to engage in dialectic through the medium of his re-discovered desire for the happy life.

With De Academicis, Augustine sets out to awaken Romanianus by guiding him down a path “from Cicero to Christ”. In awakening, Romanianus learns how to re-enter his location, and to present himself as a creature who depends on divine illumination. At the beginning, this simply requires an inspired love of wisdom, philosophia (Cicero).² But by the end of it, Romanianus will claim for himself a renewed self-awareness that leads him to pray the prayer: “Who can show us the truth?” (Christ).³

More specifically, this chapter argues that in De Academicis, Augustine defeats the

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¹ De Academicis II.3.8, trans. Peter King. See Chapter 2.
³ Quis…verum possit ostendere; see De Academicis III.5.11-6.13.
Academic sceptics with the aid of Psalm 4:6 (or a modified version of it). For it is after this verse is uttered near the start of book III that Augustine declares his victory over the Academic method, explaining his reasons why in the remainder in the text. His main reason, we discover, is that the praying of Psalm 4:6 invokes a moment of awakening to the light of Christ: a moment, that is, in which the soul steps forward as a lover to acknowledge its need for divine illumination.

The Logic of Awakening: Cicero

Philosophy means “love of wisdom”. Though it is possible to pass the time raising and answering questions, true philosophy takes its departure point in a movement of restless desire, a reaching forward to seek that which one lacks, needs, longs for. In order to provoke this longing in De Academicis book I, Augustine issues an invitation to seek out the truth. His basis for doing so is ostensibly derived from Cicero’s Hortensius, but in fact it draws upon another source that supersedes Cicero, and which provides the basis for his account of the true philosophy in De Academicis: the invitation and promise of Christ in Matthew 7:7.

Matthew 7:7 reads as follows: Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you (RSV). Taken on its own terms, this verse could be used in a self-justifying manner to validate all requests and baptise all desires. Yet Jesus does not promise to fulfil all requests; rather He reminds us that we have yet to learn how to ask God for anything. To avoid mishearing Jesus in Matthew 7:7, it helps to shift focus from the content of one’s request (though that is important) to the form of one’s approach to the things one desires. For example, if Jesus teaches that the whole world and everything in it belongs to God alone, it is vital that we relate to

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4 In Augustine’s corpus, Psalm 4:6 contains a variant on Latin: in Confessiones IX.4.10 it reads Quis ostendet nobis bona (“Who will show us good?”); in the Enarrationes in Psalmos 4.8 it reads Quis ostendit nobis bona (“Who has anything good to show us?”). We discuss this in Chapter 4.

5 Ps. 24:1: The earth is the LORD’s and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.
the world in a way that recognises God’s power and provision. For then, instead of assuming that we control our identities and destinies, we learn to receive ourselves both as the creatures God made us to be, and as the wanderers that God allowed us to become through sin and disobedience.

From this position, we might even start to see Matthew 7:7 as more than just a license, but a call to return to God. The verse can be partitioned into two parts: an “invitation” to step forward as lovers on the way; and a “promise” to meet lovers who ask, seek, knock. The invitation to step forward seems like an easy one to fulfil, and the promise adds confidence to the one who is searching. On the other hand, it would be foolish not to weigh up the cost before embarking on a quest to return to God. Whereas we assume that seeking and asking only require the effort we put into it, we should consider that the object we set out to possess demands something more from us than just trudging along the way. But what else could that “more” be save for the whole of our attention and love? For not only is there Matthew 7:7 to contend with; there is the also command in Matthew 22:37. And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind”. Consequently, it is not enough simply to step forward as a lover. One has to do so in the right spirit of devotion and piety.

That being so, the process still begins by accepting the invitation. According to Augustine, this can happen either by heeding the direct words of Christ, or by heeding the words of someone else who properly commands authority, like a Cicero. Indeed, Cicero’s ability to “stand in” for the authority of Christ (temporarily) is the reason Augustine engages Cicero in De Academicis. As we develop in this section, Augustine draws on a long history of encounters with Cicero to engineer the perfect segue to the journey of desire. By drawing on Cicero’s invitation to ask, seek, knock, Augustine proceeds not only to cite Cicero as an inspiring teacher and influence, but eventually to call Cicero as an authority into intellectual account.

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6 Revised Standard Version.
Augustine’s First Conversion: *Factus Erectior*

To frame Augustine’s approach to Cicero in *De Academicis*, we turn to summarise his previous encounters with the esteemed Latin philosopher. The basic details of Augustine’s first encounter appear in the dialogue *De beata vita*. Re-tracing his steps to the “harbour of philosophy”, Augustine singles out for special mention the influence of Cicero’s philosophical *protrepticus*, the *Hortensius*.

From my nineteenth year, when I received the book of Cicero’s called the *Hortensius* in rhetoric class, I was flame with such a love of philosophy [*amor philosophiae*] that I planned to devote myself to her immediately. But there was no lack of clouds on my voyage to confuse my course, and for a long while I admit I looked up to stars falling into the ocean and was led into error by them. For a kind of childish superstition [*superstitio… puerilis*] frightened me away from the search itself. And after I had been made more upright [*factus erectior*], I scattered that fog and was convinced that I should yield to those who teach rather than who command obedience. I fell in with men to whom that light seen by the eyes was thought of as deserving worship among the higher divinities.\(^7\)

The relevant parts of this passage have been bracketed in Latin. First, Augustine reveals that through exposure to Cicero’s *Hortensius*, a text initially assigned to him as part of his training in rhetoric,\(^8\) he acquired for the first time a love of philosophy, and thus started down the road to wisdom and happiness. At the same time, however, he confesses that he was held back from fully pursuing philosophy because of a “childlike superstition”. According to R.J O’Connell (following Pierre Courcelle),\(^9\) this superstition does not refer to Augustine’s philosophical materialism, but to the anti-philosophical persuasion of his mother’s North African Church.\(^10\) In other words, Augustine is saying that despite his interest in wisdom, the Church

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\(^7\) *De beata vita* 1.4, trans. Roland Teske.

\(^8\) Cf. *Confessiones* III.4.7.


failed to entice him in an intellectually stimulating manner, and left him bereft of the
direction he needed.

As a consequence, such direction would come from another more dubious source,
that is men promising Augustine to “teach” him the truth. In stark contrast to
authoritarian Catholics who “command obedience”, Manicheans seduced Augustine
into joining their sect—but only after Augustine says he was “made more upright”.
What *factus erectior* means here is subject to question. In Courcelle’s account, the
phrase is taken to refer to the condition of pride: Augustine is condemning his
youthful spirit for falling in with the Manicheans.11 Not persuaded by this account,
R.J. O’Connell has offered a more convincing account: by *factus erectior*, Augustine
means not the negative influence of Manichaeism. He means the positive benefits of
his past encounter with Cicero’s *Hortensius*.

The verb *erigere*, O’Connell points out, can bear out both interpretations. One sense
refers to pride, the other sense refers to loftiness in spirit.12 In context, though, the
positive sense coheres much better with a passage in which Augustine seeks to affirm
his “first conversion” with the *Hortensius*. It also connects with Augustine’s
emphasis on “standing upright” in *De Academicis*,13 and to the general attempt to
promote critical thinking throughout Cassiciacum. Furthermore, O’Connell draws
attention to other places in the corpus in which Augustine uses *erigere* in a positive
sense. In each Genesis commentary, starting with *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (AD
388-9),14 Augustine describes Adam’s creation in Genesis 1-2 as being made
“upright” [*erectus*] to the divine image and likeness. He means upright, of course,
not in a physical sense of uprightness (though he does suggest that!), but in the sense
of a spiritual capacity to reflect upon eternity: “our spirit ought to be held upright

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erectum], turned to things above it, that is to eternal, spiritual realities”.

In this way, O’Connell reads the process factus erectior in a way that bears theologically on Augustine’s early thought. According to this reading, not only did Cicero inspire Augustine to pursue the life of wisdom. He also served as the divine instrument to Augustine’s re-creation.

The mediation of God’s truth through a pagan philosopher stimulates reflection on Cicero’s role in De Academicis. To reinforce O’Connell’s subtle reading of De beata vita, first of all, we analyse Augustine’s later account of his “first conversion” in the Confessiones. Drawing upon the scriptural testimony to develop his account, Augustine places Cicero at the centre of his spiritual formation as exactly the kind of divine instrument that O’Connell portrays:

My God, how I burned, how I burned with longing to leave earthly things and fly back to you. I did not know [nesciebam] what you were doing with me. For “with you is wisdom” (Job 12:13, 16). “Love of wisdom” is the meaning of the Greek word philosophia. There are some people who use philosophy to lead people astray. They lend colour to their errors and paint them by using a great and acceptable and honourable name. Almost all those who in the author’s [Cicero’s] times and earlier behaved in this way are noted in that book and refuted. That text [Hortensius] is a clear demonstration of the salutary admonish given by your Spirit through your good and devoted servant [Paul]: “See that none deceives you by philosophy and vain seduction following human tradition; following the elements of this world and not following Christ; in him dwells all the fullness of divinity in bodily form” (Col. 2:8-9). At that time, as you know, light of my heart, I did not yet know these words of the apostle. Nevertheless, the one thing that delighted me in Cicero’s exhortation was the advice “not to study one particular sect but to love and seek and pursue and hold fast and strongly embrace wisdom itself,

15 De Genesi contra Manichaecos I.17.28, trans. Hill.
17 Indeed, O’Connell discerns in the use of the verb facere a possible hidden referent in the form of providence. This would tie in nicely with Augustine’s claims about providence, and particularly with his locating providence at the base of awakening. See O’Connell, “Factus Erectior”, pp. 28-9.
wherever found”. One thing alone put a brake on my intense enthusiasm—that the name of Christ was not contained in the book.\(^{18}\)

Again, various features of this passage command attention. First of all, Augustine reminds us of the etymology of the word *philosophia*, “love of wisdom”,\(^ {19}\) in order to substantiate his subsequent praise of Cicero’s *Hortensius*. Turning then to describe how the *Hortensius* affected him, he recalls becoming suspicious of the entire philosophical tradition, and interprets this as Cicero’s message providing a “clear demonstration” of St. Paul’s teaching. On the other hand, he acknowledges that at the time of this encounter with the *Hortensius*, he had no idea that it was God who was governing the process. The verb he deploys here, *nescire*, has a particular resonance in his early works, quite often marking the occasion of divine guidance and assistance.\(^ {20}\) For example, Augustine deploys it in *De Academicis* to describe his encounter with the “books of the Platonists”. “Now I confess that I looked back on the religion implanted on us as boys, binding us from the marrow, as though from a long journey’s end. Yet it was actually drawing me to itself without me realizing it [nescientem].”\(^ {21}\) Again, truth comes to him *via* a pagan philosopher, and Augustine only recognises God’s hand in it *post factum*. His point is that these authors, even though they did not intend it—and even though he was ignorant at the point of encountering them—became the instruments God used first to awaken his desire, then to call him back (eventually) to his childhood religion.

Cicero not only conveyed a negative message about philosophy. He also extended an invitation to pursue the life of wisdom. In an important quotation Augustine cites from the *Hortensius*, Cicero urges readers to seek and desire wisdom “wherever found”. The resonance of this invitation with that of Matthew 7:7 ought to be treated in the same way as the reference to Colossians: it is a text that mediated divine truth

\(^{18}\) *Confessiones* III.4.8, trans. Chadwick.


\(^{20}\) For the role of *nescire* at Cassiciacum see Conybeare, Catherine, *The Irrational Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 80f.

\(^{21}\) *De Academicis* II.2.5, trans. King.
to Augustine, despite Augustine not realising the divine mark within it. One difference, though, is that while Cicero conveys the invitation of Christ, he fails to convey the promise of philosophy contained in “the name of Christ”. To take this one step further, it is possible that in the aftermath of his “first conversion” by Cicero, Augustine was drawn to the Manicheans by their use of Matthew 7:7. As evidence for this, we draw attention to another early work, De moribus ecclesiae (AD 387-8), in which Augustine chides the Manicheans for their appeal to Matthew 7:7. Whether or not this is an accurate reading, his point remains: both the Manicheans and Cicero failed to fulfil his longing for wisdom.

Accordingly, when the Manicheans failed to make good on their promise to teach him—a realisation that took him some nine years to figure out—Augustine would turn once again to Cicero’s writings for advice, only to find that the Academic philosopher had no more to give him. In book IV of the Confessiones, Augustine recalls the after-shock of having abandoned Manichaeanism as a time of inner turmoil and spiritual distress. Drawing on imagery he used earlier in De beata vita, he relates how his soul foundered in a vast sea of differing opinions.

I was walking through darkness and “a slippery place” (Ps. 34:6). I was seeking for you outside myself, and I failed to find “the God of my heart” (Ps. 72:26). I had come into the depth of the sea (Ps. 67:23). I had no confidence, and had lost hope that truth could be found… I had been brought to that state of hesitancy and wavering. I was to pass through that from sickness to health, but with a more acute danger intervening, like that high fever preceding recovery which the physicians call “the critical onset” [accessio critica].

Similar to Romanianus’ disposition of “searching and doubting” in De Academicis, Augustine finds his vessel tossed about by severe winds of intellectual doubt, placing

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22 Accusing the Manicheans for failing to attend to love, Augustine tries to shame them by citing Matthew 7:7: “This is but to say what you yourselves have ever on your lips: ‘Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed’. It is love that asks, love that seeks, love that knocks, love that discloses, and love too, that abides in that which has been disclosed”. De moribus ecclesiae I.17.31, trans. Gallagher.

23 Of course, so did Holy Scripture—at first. Confessiones III.5.9.

24 Confessiones VI.1.1, trans. Chadwick.
him dangerously close to the abyss of desperatio.\textsuperscript{25} Though at this time he became acquainted with the preaching of Ambrose, he could not glean from it any wisdom to save his life due to the sickness in his soul that continued to afflict him. But if we are to attend to what he says about this sickness in book VI, it is clear that its main cause is not sceptical doubt, but Manichean pride. In his reckoning, scepticism acted as the antidote to pride, initiating the “critical on-set” that purged his lingering sickness. His real problem, he tell us, was a spirit of intellectual certitude, a self-confidence blocking his access to wisdom through humility. He writes: “I had not yet come to groan in prayer that you [God] might come to my aid. My mind was intent on inquiry and restless for debate”.\textsuperscript{26} “Being ignorant of what your [divine] image consisted in, I should have knocked (Matt. 7:7) and inquired about the meaning of this belief”.\textsuperscript{27} “Deceived with promises of certainty, with childish error and rashness I had mindlessly repeated many uncertain things as if they were certain. That they were false became clear to me only later”.\textsuperscript{28}

To be precise, Augustine’s claim is not that scepticism was good for his soul, but that scepticism proved effective as a means to purgation. To hold to this distinction, we suggest, helps us better understand how Cicero not only plays a positive role at Cassiciacum, but also poses a serious challenge to pursuit of the truth.

\textbf{Licentius vs. Trygetius: \textit{De Academicis} I}

Keeping in view this backstory to Augustine’s encounters with Cicero, we turn to develop Cicero’s role in \textit{De Academicis} I. Our reading has two parts. First we outline how Cicero’s ideas shape the dialogue in book I. Measured in accord with Matthew 7:7, these ideas support our claim that the Academics, to a limited extent, play a role in awakening desire in the Cassiciacum cohort. Second, we examine to what extent

\textsuperscript{25} For reference to desperatio veri see \textit{Confessiones} VI.1.1

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Confessiones} VI.3.3, trans. Chadwick.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Confessiones} VI.4.5, trans. Chadwick.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Confessiones} VI.4.5, trans. Chadwick.
Cicero’s teaching actually undermines or mitigates the Academic thesis. Though not apparent until book II of *De Academicis*, Cicero’s role in mitigating the Academic tradition opens the door to Augustine’s critique of some central sceptical claims, not least the Academic equation of wisdom with *epoche*.

Turning to book I, Augustine launches a conversation about truth by engaging with two students of his, Licentius and Trygetius. The goal of their initial dialogue is to set up the relationship between truth and happiness; and to do so, Augustine begins by focussing on our obligations to know the truth: “Do you have any doubt that we ought [*oportere*] to know the truth?” The obligation to know the truth is an idea taken from Cicero. For this reason, both students are eager to deny that they harbour any doubt about the need to know the truth. But Augustine is not finished with unfolding this idea, and so his next question brings to bear the concept of happiness: “if we can be happy while not apprehending the truth, do you consider the apprehension of the truth to be necessary [*necessariam*]?” As commentators point out, this question re- defines the terms of this debate by placing truth within the framework of classical eudaimonism. Within this framework, knowing truth no longer stands in isolation, but has been situated in the context of seeking the happy life. Consequently, Augustine’s students are faced with two options: either happiness is conditional upon possessing truth, obligating one to seek both in order to reach fulfilment; or happiness can be gained apart from truth, making the obligation to seek truth less pressing and comprehensive.

Unsurprisingly, both students arrive at opposite conclusions. First Trygetius, after a brief pause to consider this new question, draws on Cicero to set the terms for the subsequent discussion: “Surely we wish to be happy. If we can reach this condition without the truth, we don’t need to search for the truth”. On this view, happiness emerges as the more fundamental desire that determines the value of seeking the

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29 *De Academicis* I.2.5, trans. King.
30 *De Academicis* I.2.5, trans. King.
32 *De Academicis* I.2.5, trans. King.
truth. Whereas before no one doubted that truth should be sought, now it seems to depend entirely on the relation of truth to happiness. For Trygetius, happiness is so basic a desire that either truth is identified with it, or truth ought to be set aside. Conversely, Licentius suggests that though knowing truth is desirable, it is not the same as or even better than seeking the truth. In his view, one can derive the sort of happiness Trygetius seeks just by searching for the truth, rather than waiting to find it. There is no need to drive a wedge between happiness and truth; but there might be need to scale down one’s desire to know the truth.

According to Licentius, in concert with (some versions of) Academic scepticism, seeking truth is not simply a necessity of happiness; when conducted in a “perfect” manner with complete devotion, it is happiness itself. “This is human happiness… to search for the truth perfectly! This is to get a goal we can’t go beyond. Therefore, anyone who searches for the truth less insistently than he should doesn’t get to the goal of man”.\(^{33}\) Not only this, Licentius goes on to claim that in seeking the truth, one need not despair of failing to find it. “Anyone who takes pains to find the truth, to the extent that a man can and should, is happy—even if he were not to find it”.\(^{34}\) It is with this last clause that Trygetius registers his profound disagreement. Insisting that desire for truth logically entails desire to seek and find it, he retorts to Licentius: “Then man can’t be happy… How could he be, since he can’t attain what he desires so greatly?”.\(^{35}\) His retort, in fact, turns on a deep understanding of what it means to be a seeker who desires the truth. Notwithstanding the objective claim that truth and happiness are co-dependent, Trygetius insists on the subjective ground that to desire truth, one has to desire to possess it. What does this mean?

It means that for someone who truly desires to seek out the truth, his desire does not allow him to settle for less than truth. When the object of desire is the truth itself, rather than the true or truthlike, the genuine lover seeks the truth in order to possess it, and in fact equates possessing it with happiness itself. In suggesting that seeking

\(^{33}\) De Academicis I.3.9, trans. King.

\(^{34}\) De Academicis I.3.9, trans. King.

\(^{35}\) De Academicis I.3.9, trans. King.
alone can satisfy desire, then, Licentius contradicts the insight into the weight of true love. His version of human happiness is too facile and scaled down, while the desire he claims it satisfies suffers precisely the same fate. Accordingly, when it comes to defining the relation between wisdom and happiness, Licentius struggles to match his view with that of Cicero in the *Academica*.\(^{36}\) To begin with, Licentius disagrees with Trygetius over the definition of error. While Trygetius defines error as “always to be searching and never to find [truth]”,\(^ {37}\) Licentius defines it in Academic fashion as “approval of a falsehood as a truth”.\(^ {38}\) In this way, Licentius conveniently sidesteps the objectivity of truth’s claim by reducing the corresponding demand made by the weight of true love. Then in response to Trygetius’ account of wisdom as “the right way that leads to the truth”, Licentius retorts that the right way is “the diligent search for truth”.\(^ {39}\) This enables him to consolidate wisdom into his account of the happy life; but it puts him at odds with how Cicero famously defines wisdom as “the knowledge of human and divine matters”.\(^ {40}\) Indeed, when this definition appears towards the end of the dialogue, Licentius seems taken aback by its non-Academic pedigree. It inspires him for the first time to call Cicero into question; and to make his case against him, he cites the example of a well-known soothsayer, Albicerius, who has the gift of foresight to predict future events—but who also “indulges himself with countless prostitutes”.\(^ {41}\)

In essence, Licentius demands to know why Cicero’s definition does not force us to praise Albicerius for his knowledge of human things. If knowledge is the criterion by which the wise man is judged, then Albicerius has it in droves and lays claim to the title. Although debating this figure Albicerius seems like a digression in the text, R.J.

\(^{36}\) Although Licentius does cite Cicero in support of his view at *De Academicis* I.3.7, this is not fully reflecting of Cicero’s actual position. See below.

\(^{37}\) *De Academicis* I.4.10, trans. King.

\(^{38}\) *De Academicis* I.4.11, trans. King.

\(^{39}\) *De Academicis* I.5.14, trans. King.


\(^{41}\) *De Academicis* I.6.17, trans. King.
O’Connell extends its relevance beyond that of Albicerius to Christ. According to O’Connell, what is at stake here is how to distinguish the wise man from the fool, in particular “wise men” like Albicerius, who like the wise man Christ, are able to perform miracles. But in the case of Albicerius, replies Augustine, we have every reason to reject him as a legitimate wise man. After all, it is not just what one knows that makes a man wise. It is also how one knows it, and whether one communicates it to others. The test of wisdom resides in teaching and moral rectitude, Augustine implies; and on both counts, Albicerius miserably fails just like the Manicheans and the Academics. In the case of teaching, Albicerius fails to help others find wisdom, as do Academics and Manicheans, while in the case of morality, Albicerius fails to live out an exemplary life, as do Academics and Manicheans. In contrast to this, Augustine later sets forth the authority of the God-man, Jesus Christ, who graciously descends to teach us, and who graciously shows us how to live. But for now, Augustine concludes that in terms of Cicero’s definition of wisdom, “Albicerius had no share in the knowledge of human or divine matters…”

Apparently satisfied with this argument, Licentius still refuses to hand victory over to the definition of Trygetius. He decides instead that Cicero’s definition can be useful to his purpose, and offers up a strange interpretation of its constituent parts:

In fact, now for me to explain by a definition what I mean, wisdom seems to me to be not only knowledge but also the diligent search for knowledge of the human and divine matters that are relevant to the happy life. If you want to

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42 O’Connell, “Factus Erectior”, pp. 20-1. O’Connell treats this as an instance of authority and reason: whether or not we should believe others based on miraculous events.

43 O’Connell draws out the Manichean parallel, but does not refer to the Academics.

44 See above.

45 For Augustine’s moral critique of Academics see De Academicis III, for his critique of Manicheans see De moribus ecclesiae and De moribus Manichaeorum.

46 Cf. De Academicis III.19.42; De ordine II.9.27.

47 Cf. De vera religione 16.30-32.

48 De Academicis I.8.22. Here we follow Peter King in ascribing this speech to Augustine, not Trygetius. Among the reasons King cites for this (and here we agree) is the sophisticated content of the response, exceeding what Trygetius has so far put forth. King, Peter, trans., Against the Academicians and The Teacher (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1995), p. 172, n. 1.
split up this account [from Cicero], the first part, which embraces knowledge, belongs to God, whereas the latter part, which remains content with the search, belongs to man. God, then, is happy in the former condition. Man is happy in the latter.\(^{49}\)

Ingenious on its own terms, this account has no basis in Cicero’s understanding. Not that Licentius is that careful an interpreter of Cicero, for Cicero entertained other views about the Academic wise man that complicate his legacy within the sceptical tradition. To round off this discussion, we turn now to that legacy.

**Cicero’s Mitigated Scepticism**

Though familiar in some sense with Cicero’s writings, Licentius fails to appropriate the full extent of Cicero’s teaching. To draw this first step of our itinerary to a close, we highlight key features of Cicero’s philosophy as outlined in a book by scholar Harald Thorsrud.\(^{50}\) Our aim, needless to say, is not to comprehensively account for Cicero’s legacy, but to focus on certain aspects that are relevant to Augustine, and in particular to the “logic” informing spiritual awakening.

In relation to book I, the primary aspect to highlight is Cicero’s mitigation of the Academic method (*epoche*). According to Thorsrud, Cicero’s intent to transmit the Academic tradition follows certain key developments in sceptical reasoning, many of them initiated by the Greek philosopher Carneades.\(^{51}\) In response to Stoic objections to the Academic notion of wisdom, Carneades developed an anchor for Academic wisdom by introducing the idea of the “persuasive” sense impression (*to pithanon*). His idea was that the wise man, on certain occasions, could offer up his intellectual assent to impressions he found persuasive, thus deflecting the Stoic charge of the wise

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\(^{49}\) De Academicis I.8.23, trans. King.


\(^{51}\) Thorsrud, Ancient Scepticism, pp. 59-83.
man’s immoral “inactivity” [apraxia]. In advancing this concept of pithanon, Carneades also gave rise to a form of “mitigated scepticism” that reduced the wise man’s allegiance to the Academic method (epoche). Whereas epoche was traditionally identified as wisdom itself, Carneades began to re-formulate the purpose of epoche to be less strictly opposed to all dogmatic claims, and more focussed on the process of sifting out falsehoods. Though it is unclear how Carneades defined the concept to pithanon in his own life (he left no writings), what is clear is that by the time Cicero arrived on the scene, pithanon was already beginning to acquire epistemic status. Hence when translated the Greek pithanon into the Latin probabile and veri simile, Cicero not only codified the epistemic turn initiated by Carneades. He ushered in the definite end of scepticism itself. “Cicero… translates Carneades’ pithanon with the Latin probabile (i.e. probable or plausible) and sometimes veri simile (i.e. truth-like), and maintains that the sole purpose of the Academic argument pro and con is to ‘draw out or formulate the truth or its closest possible approximation’ (Ac. 2.7; see Ac. 2.60, 2.66; ND 1.11; Fin 1.13; Tusc. 1.8, 2.9...)”.

For Cicero, the aim of scepticism is no longer the exercise of pure dialectic. It is the struggle to reach the truth based on knowledge of the truthlike. To put a positive spin on this “mitigated scepticism”, Cicero holds that genuine knowledge is possible in this life, but only to a limited or probabilistic extent. One cannot be certain, as the Stoics are certain, that what one knows is in fact correct, but one can at least be a little bit confident based on careful calculation of the most likely truth-claims.

By identifying wisdom with the probable and truthlike, then, Cicero broke ranks with an earlier Greek tradition. In particular with respect to the Academic method epoche, he encouraged philosophers to view epoche not as an absolute end in itself, but as a

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53 For the scholarly debate over the epistemic status of to pithanon see Obdrzalek, Suzanne, “Living in Doubt: Carneades’ Pithanon Reconsidered”, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 31 (2006), pp. 243-79 (esp. n. 2); and Thorsrud, Ancient Scepticism, pp. 78-81.

54 Thorsrud, Ancient Scepticism, p. 88.
temporary intellectual posture towards competing claims to truth. The suspension of assent, traditionally hailed as the supreme form of wisdom, turns for Cicero into a mere “tool” in the handbag of the philosopher, enabling him to sift out the probable and truth-like. Thorsrud puts it thus: “Rather than merely revealing larger portions of our ignorance, Cicero thinks the Academic method allows for progress towards the truth… So Cicero uses the Academic dialectical method to accomplish both positive and negative ends: by revealing the strength of the opposed arguments it eliminates unwarranted confidence while establishing the degree to which one view is more probable than another”.  

In Augustine’s case, the significance assigned to Cicero’s mitigation of epoche lies less with its epistemic impact, though it does lie there, and more with areas relating to the moral and pedagogical—and specifically with respect to the logic of desire. To put it simply, Cicero’s mitigation lends more credence to the objective claim of truth, which in turn energises the soul’s desire to seek and find the truth. Instead of reducing such desire to the mere search for truth, as does Licentius in book I, Cicero in fact promotes desire as an essential aspect of the life of philosophy, even confessing its significance in his speech in the Academica. “I am burning with the desire to discover the truth and my arguments express what I really think. How could I not desire to find the truth when I rejoice if I find something truth-like?”.

By this admission, Cicero also admits that in the life of philosophy, one is always and inescapably claiming knowledge in one form or another. According to Brian Harding, Cicero even draws close to a religious account of philosophy through his emphasis on the situatedness of all quests for wisdom.

Whence, at the time the initial choice for a philosophical life—and with it, adherence to a philosophical school—is made one is not in the position to know the truth, but only seeking the truth. The philosopher, therefore, does

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56 Thorsrud, Ancient Scepticism, pp. 88, 93-4.
57 For the moral implications of Cicero’s teaching see Topping, Happiness and Wisdom, p. 73f.
not begin with the purity of reason but rather begins immersed in the heteronomous cave of received opinions, not yet fully understood. Philosophy, as the search for *rerum humanarum divinarumque scientiam* [Cicero’s definition of wisdom] insofar as it begins with opinions, including partially understood philosophical doctrines, is always already *fides quaerens intellectum*.\(^{59}\)

To be precise, Cicero’s starting point or is not “faith seeking understanding”, but desire seeking truth through adherence to the truth-like. For this reason, Cicero stands apart from the vision of Licentius in which adherence to any truth-claim is avoidable risk. Instead, Cicero treats risk as inherent to philosophy,\(^{60}\) and avoidance of risk as not only impossible, but equally irresponsible.

Despite these views, Cicero falls under the same objection as Licentius: since he still denies the possibility that the truth can be found, he has no way to offer support for the intellectual life. In other words, Cicero extends a compelling invitation to *ask, seek knock*; but he fails to offer any *hope* of obtaining that which we seek. As we shall see in the rest of this chapter, Cicero’s failure in this area sets the stage for Augustine to introduce us to the invitation and promise of Christ (Matt. 7:7).

### The Mechanics of Awakening: the Cogito

The logic of desire demands we *seek in order to find*. Any attempt to scale down or mitigate this logic renders invalid or inauthentic the desire one expresses. The looming threat to any system like that of the Academics is that desire falls victim to despair or pride. Despair comes as a result of failure to find the truth; pride comes as a result of failure to properly seek it. Having both threats in view in *De Academicis*, Augustine turns the tables on pride in *De beata vita*. This dialogue gives a window

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\(^{59}\) Harding, *Augustine and Roman Virtue*, p. 9.

\(^{60}\) “The fundamental claim of mitigated scepticism is that we should adopt the most rationally convincing, probable view because it is most likely to be true, and because it is worth risking error in order to believe what is true. Without this condition, it will still be reasonable to suspend judgement as long as conclusive justification is lacking”, Thorsrud, *Ancient Scepticism*, p. 95.
into the mechanics of awakening, and sheds light on Augustine’s main disagreement with the Academic method.

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In this section, we step back from our account of *De Academicis* in order to reflect on what we call the “mechanics” of awakening. Our departure point for this section is the early dialogue *De beata vita*, a text written at the same time as *De Academicis*. In this text, we draw attention to the affective foundations on which Augustine bases his argument against the Academic sceptics. To begin with, we focus again on the Academic method, *epoche*, as the main obstacle standing between the soul and the harbour of philosophy. After showing how Augustine responds to *epoche* both here and in *De Academicis*, we provide a brief survey of key moments in *De beata vita* in which readers begin to wake up to the truth of their location, acknowledging the divine source from which truth and wisdom flows.

As we argued last chapter, although Cicero effectively mitigated the Academic method, allowing that the wise man can give his assent, for Licentius, the method still retains its original association as a means to avoiding error to achieve the heights of wisdom. Not just a turn of phrase, “heights of wisdom” has concrete purchase on Augustine’s moral imagination. In *De beata vita*, Augustine opens with a tale of three seafarers whose voyage brings them to face-to-face with “one huge mountain”. The mountain emits a glittering image and is shrouded in deceptive light; and the wearied seafarers, naturally drawn to its inviting elevated peak, receive the goading of other seafarers looking down upon their lot (*despicere*). Their attempt to join them seems inevitable and advisable at this point, yet Augustine warns them against the dangers of high elevation. He insists the mountain is a fraud offering a false promise of happiness, and that its real design is to placate the soul’s desire for true happiness.

61 Chronologically speaking, if we follow the traditional ordering (see Kenyon’s account in Chapter 2), *De beata vita* is supposed to be read after *De Academicis* III. Though we accept this ordering in principle, our purposes here are better served by examining *De beata vita* first, then turning back to *De Academicis* in order to finish up the process.

62 *De beata vita* 1.3 (and following). Cf. discussion in Chapter 1.
Those who dwell on the mountain-peak may appear to have it all, but they eventually become swallowed up in the vanity of pretence.

For what other mountain does reason want to be understood as something to be feared by those who are approaching or by those who have already entered philosophy except the proud pursuit of empty glory that has nothing full and solid within, so that it pushes under and swallows up those walking on it who are puffed up with pride, and once it has wrapped them in darkness it snatches away from them the shining home which they had scarcely glimpsed”.

Here, Augustine gives a sense of his contempt for any philosophy that boasts in its own wisdom and leads other astray. In view here particularly is the Academic philosophy which he regards as a major threat to the nurturing of desire. To him, Academic *epoche* works against the love of wisdom by promoting a false sense of security and self-control. As an intellectual posture that obscures the soul’s location, it encourages intellectual sophistry, and impedes the quest for wisdom. Having given a charitable ear to the Academics so far, Augustine now wants to set them aside with a dialogue on the happy life. Yet again, he wishes to do so not with direct arguments alone, but with subtle subversive tactics that unleash the weight of desire.

In this vein, we draw attention to one more feature in this story that we suggest holds an insight into the mechanics of awakening. Just before he launches on his critique of human pride, Augustine indicates that there are among those dwelling on the mountaintop, seafarers shouting out warnings to their companions down below. These seafarers, whom Augustine lauds as men of “good will” [*benevolentissime*], counsel other seafarers to reject the mountain as a viable path to happiness, and instead point them to what Augustine calls “the nearness of the land” [*illius terrae vicinitatem*] and “place of security” [*locum securitatis*]. These two metaphors, set in contrast to the ascendant pride of the glittering mountain, conjure up images of a

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63 *De beata vita* 1.3, trans. Roland Teske.

humble dwelling-place situated at ground level, or perhaps an area in which wearied seafarers can find protection from the storm. The implication, it seems, is that the only way we can overcome the mountain of pride is to travel beneath it in the spirit of humility.

Desire, Assent, and Descent: *De Beata Vita*

How does humility inform both the critique of scepticism, and the mechanics of awakening? To answer this, we draw on the work of Simon Harrison to situate and sharpen our approach to Augustine’s argument. The argument in question, which scholars call “the cogito” after Descartes, bears the following characteristic. Taking its cue from the self-evident “fact” that I exist, it invites me to affirm this fact as an aspect of my self-knowledge. The first appearance of the cogito comes at the start of *De beata vita*. Having asked his students whether they agree that human nature is a composite of body and soul, Augustine receives a single vote of uncertainty from his brother Navigius. Since Navigius is unsure whether he knows this about human nature, Augustine decides to ask him a much simpler question: “Do you at least know that you are alive?”. In response, Navigius quickly affirms that he knows he is alive. It is a good thing he does: to Augustine, such knowledge ought to be self-evident to the soul, such that any soul that denies it must be either stubborn or irrational (or both). It is no trivial task that this “cogito” question discharges. It is, in one sense, a key turning point in the text; for instance, had Navigius answered differently, denying the cogito, he would have signalled his unwillingness to acknowledge the

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67 For the “fact” of the cogito, i.e. its psychological component (as opposed to its historical or narrative component), see Stock, Brian, *Augustine’s Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 108 and passim.

68 *De beata vita* 2.7.
self-evident, and thereby dissolved any potential of participating in further debate. For indeed, though it may be “self-evident” that I exist in the world, that does not mean that I must assent to it as self-evidently true. My denial of its truth, though irrational by any standard, still constitutes my denial of knowing the self-evident. In this way, I preserve at least the illusion of my ignorance, whereas others perceive my unwillingness to participate in discussion.

If Navigius truly desires truth, he will not hesitate to affirm what he cannot deny. Yet by the very fact that he can deny it, which is an aspect of his freedom, means that the cogito is the perfect “test” of one’s motives in philosophy. For on this view, Augustine’s cogito is not argument per se, but an invitation to step forward and acknowledge the truth. It is a “way in” to a form of self-knowledge, to use Harrison’s phrase, and thus serves as a valuable starting point for initiating enquiry. Though in some sense this applies to every question Augustine issues to his students, not every question takes the self-evident as its point of departure. To invite me to know myself as a living human being, animus, is to usher forth the very depths of my pre-reflexive knowledge. It is to transform self-knowledge from its pre-reflexive state, implicit consciousness, into a reflexive self-conscious statement that I utter to myself: “I am alive”. And indeed, when this implicit knowledge is brought home to my self-aware being, I am well placed to further investigate the nature of my existence. For I know now in that particular sense what I had already known before, but which had yet to occupy my conscious awareness due to a lack of proper attention.

And what is more, the way in which I come to enter this reflexive self-knowledge—as in any knowledge I wish to claim for myself in this way—is through my desire to know myself as a living human soul. Unless I desire to know myself in this particular way, there is no way to know myself in this particular way. Of course I continue to know myself in a pre-reflexive way, as do animals and other creatures who lack self-

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69 Harrison, Augustine’s Way into the Will, pp. 113-14.

awareness, but I do not come to claim this knowledge as knowledge for me. And in this way, Augustine’s cogito constitutes a powerful mechanism by which to awaken desire to establish self-knowledge. It not only ushers us forth from our pre-reflexive state. It also teaches us to imitate the humility of Christ.

Poised against *epoche*, the cogito provides an opportunity both to *assent* to (self-) knowledge, and to *descend* from that pride which denies knowledge altogether. On the one hand, it invites us to take our stand on the self-evident truth, “I am alive”, and to allow knowledge of our existence to initiate discussion. On the other hand, the cogito persuades us to step down from the mountain of *epoche*, and to embrace our status as lovers on the way to eternal life. For indeed, genuine knowledge of the “fact” of my existence leads inexorably to other questions that pertain to existence. The further reflection that I give to the nature of my existence—and in particular to my *desire* to know that I exist—the deeper grows my curiosity to know my origin and my destiny, that from which I came, and that to which I am going. This is summed up in pithy way in book III of *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine declaring: “The more you love to be, the more you will desire eternal life”.72 As an inroad for desire to place its claim on the soul, the cogito furnishes the soul with the perfect conditions by which to awaken to its investment in the spiritual life.

To acknowledge the self-evident truth that “I am alive”, I must be willing to view myself as a beginning-point, not as an endpoint.73 This is the opposite view to that of the Academics, however, in that the Academics identify human beings as the end of their own journey. In suspending their assent to truth-claims both in principle and

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71 Cf. *De libero arbitrio* I.7.16.52f. See Chapter 7.

72 *De libero arbitrio* III.7.21.72, trans. King. For a more elaborate statement to this effect see the *Soliloquia* II.1.1. There, Augustine begins with the claim “I am alive”, but soon orientates this knowledge to the desire for immortality. “Therefore you want to exist, to live, and to understand; but you want to exist so that you may live, and to live so that you may understand. Therefore you know that you exist, that you live, and that you understand. But you want to know whether these will always exist…”, trans. Kim Paffenroth. Emphasis added.

73 Arendt’s concept of “natality”, human beings as a new beginning, shares some overlap with this claim. Cf. Arendt, Hannah, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 51-2 and *passim*. At the same time, Arendt’s claim that the “springs of desire” are fear of death and inadequacy of life is construed too negatively to concur with Augustine. Desire also springs from knowledge that I am alive—the delight which I take in my being, knowing, willing.
in practise, Academics stand at the ready but with nowhere to go; their journey has already ended before it even begins. In De Academicis, Augustine mocks this as the epitome of folly by way of a story about two travellers on their way to one place.\textsuperscript{74} When these travellers happen upon a crossroads that splits in opposite directions, they turn to consult a local shepherd who happens to be nearby. After the shepherd points the travellers in the right direction—the shepherd stands for Christ, scholars suggest—one traveller accepts the shepherd as a trustworthy guide; the other traveller rejects him with suspicion and ridicule. “The careful traveller laughs and ridicules the other for having assented so rapidly. While the other departs, he stands still at the fork in the road”. Yet as time passes by, the careful traveller starts to feel foolish for standing around. Then along comes another man, “a well-dressed townsman riding on a horse”, whom the careful traveller confides in for direction on the way. It just so happens that this townsman is also a “trickster”, however, and he deceives the careful traveller by pointing in the wrong direction.\textsuperscript{75} According to Augustine, the lesson to be drawn from such an example is the same lesson one should derive from an encounter with the cogito. “I think a man is in error not only when he follows the false path, but also when he’s not following the true one”.

In others words, human beings may aspire to a position of self-transcendence, but they are never fully able to escape their dislocation. A decision to head in one direction is basically forced upon us, for to decide not to decide is itself a decision.

\textbf{Trygetius Awakens: Nurturing Desire}

For this reason, the cogito paves the way to participation in the dialogue, and then leads on to a process of nurturing the soul’s desire. The transition from pre-reflexive to reflexive self-knowledge opens the pathway to an analogous transition from self-knowledge to self-care: for indeed it is not enough simply to know “I am alive”. I also

\textsuperscript{74} De Academicis III.15.34 (and following).

\textsuperscript{75} Indeed, the careful traveller is led over “out-of-the-way mountains, not finding the region he was searching for…”. This confirms that the mountain is indeed Academic \textit{epoche}. 
want to know how long it will last. In *De beata vita*, this desire targets the concept of the happy life, and starts to unfold immediately following Augustine’s distinction between body and soul.

Enquiring after forms of nourishment to which body and soul pertain, Augustine identifies corporeal food as the obvious one for bodies, but leaves it open as to which “food” is proper to the soul. In her first of many responses in *De beata vita*, Monnica offers that in order to nourish the state of the soul, “nothing but the understanding and knowledge of things [*intellectus rerum atque scientia*]” will do. Affirming this to be correct, Augustine proceeds to distinguish the people who possess knowledge and understanding, from people who are in want of them in one way or another. With his distinction between the *philosophus* and the *sapiens* in place, he ties off this brief segment with the following statement: “Believe me...this condition itself is a sort of emptiness and starvation of the mind. For, as a body without food is generally full of diseases and sores, and these defects in it indicate starvation, so too the minds of such men are filled with diseases that reveal their lack of food”.

From here, Augustine further distinguishes between “wickedness” [*nequitia*] and “fruitfulness” [*frugalitas*], and correlates them to sterility and fecundity of the mind, respectively. In the case of souls full of wickedness and starving for food, he says, their existence is wasting away to the point of spiritual nothingness; but in the case of souls full of understanding or on the way to understanding, their existence is built on a diet of true nourishment for the soul, namely that which “remains, stands firm, [and] is always the same, as virtue.”

Rather than pause to elaborate on this enticing meal, however, Augustine stipulates that consuming it will one day take place when his students work up the appetites to seek it wholeheartedly.

For, if I try to feed you against your will [*invitos*] or when you aren’t hungry, I will be undertaking a futile task and would do better to pray [*vota*] for you

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77 *De beata vita* 2.8, trans. Teske.

78 *De beata vita* 2.9, trans. Teske.
that you desire [desideretis] such meals rather than those of the body. And you will desire them if your minds are healthy.\textsuperscript{79}

Health of the soul, the primary aim of \textit{De beata vita}, is the precondition for taking a seat at the table of the happy life. For this reason, Licentius’ request to know the contents of this meal is dismissed as out of order and set to one side. Augustine will not be rushed into an account of the happy life: and certainly not for a troublesome student such as the sceptic Licentius.

Instead, Augustine opens a new line of enquiry by repeating a familiar statement from \textit{De Academicis}: “We want to be happy”.\textsuperscript{80} From this ensues a short exchange on what makes a person happy, whereupon Monnica once again seizes on the answer to the question: “If [the person] wants and has good things, he is happy, but if he wants bad things, even if he has them, he is unhappy”.\textsuperscript{81} Here reaching what Augustine calls “the summit of philosophy”, Monnica astonishes her gentlemanly cohort by grasping insight like a wise man, and causing even her son to blush in praise of the “divine source” within. But all this is building up to a key point in the dialogue in which Augustine steps forward with an argument against the sceptics.

This argument, which one scholar labels “the argument from beatitude”,\textsuperscript{82} turns on the assumption that Trygetius circled around in book I of \textit{De Academicis}: that desire to \textit{seek} the truth equals desire to \textit{find} the truth, and anything less than finding truth is no state for true happiness. To buttress this insight, Augustine lays out its premises and conclusion as follows:

\begin{quote}
If it is clear that someone is not happy who does not possess what he wants— a point reason proved earlier—and no one searches for something without desiring to find it, and they [Academics] are always searching for the truth, then it follows that they desire to find it: therefore they desire to possess the discovery of truth. But by not finding it, it follows that they do not possess
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{De beata vita} 2.9, trans. Teske.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{De beata vita} 2.10, trans. Teske.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{De beata vita} 2.10, trans. Teske.

what they desire; and from this it follows also that they are not happy. But no one is wise who is not happy; therefore the Academics are not wise.\textsuperscript{83}

Commenting on this argument, Christopher Kirwan points out that it relies upon a key premise: in order to be happy, one has to realise one’s greatest desires first.\textsuperscript{84} As the Academics claim to be “always searching for the truth”, this means that in their failure to find what they seek, they likewise fail to find what they claim to possess: happiness and wisdom. However, Kirwan contests that in order for this premise to be accepted, it must also be true that no one is happy whose greatest desires are unfulfilled. But since it is possible to scale down or even settle with such desires, it is not clear that no one is happy in the way Augustine claims.

In response to Kirwan, Augustine would argue that the premise continues to stand, and that Kirwan has overlooked or misunderstood the logic of true desire. Though Kirwan is right to point out that one can “settle” with a desire for lesser things, he is wrong to think this invalidates the fundamental premise. To the contrary, Augustine readily agrees that desire can be settled with, but only at the expense of laying claim to true desire. If desire is fully shaped by the object that it seeks—in this case the truth itself—then the corresponding “weight” that this desire inherits forces a lover not only to yearn for fulfilment, but to restlessly demand it. In plain terms, Kirwan’s oversight is not to allow for the possibility that by desiring something like the truth, human nature can be transformed.\textsuperscript{85}

The weight of love, understood as a subjective response to objective reality, disposes the soul to seek the truth in order to possess it. Levelled against the folly of the Academic method, this argument comes to be rejected by the likes of Licentius (not surprisingly), but is eagerly embraced by the likes of his counterpart Trygetius.

\textsuperscript{83} De beata vita 2.14, my translation.

\textsuperscript{84} Kirwan, Augustine, pp. 18f.

\textsuperscript{85} A similar argument to Kirwan’s is made by Gerard O’Daly, “The Response to Skepticism and the Mechanisms of Cognition”, The Cambridge Companion to Augustine, trans. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 160f. For criticism of Kirwan see Harding, “Epistemology and Eudaimonism”, pp. 249-50, n. 7. For criticism of O’Daly see Topping, Happiness and Wisdom, pp. 119-20. For Kirwan, the question boils down to this: if one settles for less than he desires, does he really desire the thing that he seeks?
Enthusiastically, Trygetius awakens to the reality of his (dis)position to give thanks to the One who has carried him hence: “I am glad that for so long I have remained hostile to those [Academics]. For I do not know [nescio] by what nature impelling [impellente natura]—or, to speak more truly, by God [Deo]—that I, not knowing [nesciens] in what way that they may be refuted, nevertheless greatly resisted them”. Here *nescire* once again underscores an important event, and this time it is Trygetius who perceives the deeper structure. Though his breakthrough lacks the specific verbs *evigilare* and *excitare*, it anticipates a later awakening to take place in *De beata vita* which orientates the dialogue in a Christian direction: Monnica’s.

**Monnica Awakens: Faith, Hope, Love**

As made clear above, Monnica’s role in *De beata vita* proves of vital significance. Not only does she seize hold of deep philosophical insights, surpassing the stuttering responses of her “gentlemanly” counterparts. She also embodies an intellectual contradiction to philosophy by steadfastly relying upon faith in divine authority. Whether standing for the Church or the true Christian philosopher, Monnica’s example is the one Augustine wants us to imitate. This becomes apparent when, at the end of *De beata vita*, Monnica steps forward with another insight that shows us the way to go.

Having thus far played by the rules of so-called philosophical debate, she breaks free from their constraints to grasp a moment of true vision. In response to her son’s Trinitarian account of the happy life—highly philosophical in content, as Conybeare

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86 *De beata vita* 2.14, my translation.

87 See Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine*, pp. 87-8 and passim.

observes—Monnica declares that the happy life can only be possessed if we convert ourselves to the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

My mother recognized these words, which were fixed deep in her memory, and, as though awakening [evigilans] into her faith, uttered joyously that verse of our priest: “Cherish us as we pray, O Trinity,” and added, “This is without doubt the happy life, and that life is perfect toward which we can, we must presume, be quickly brought through solid faith [solida fide], lively hope [alacri spe], and burning love [flagrante caritate].”

By deploying the evigilare to describe this experience, Augustine presents Monnica to his students as an exemplum to imitate. Her embodiment of the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love, defines a posture to the happy life that gives form to desire, and sets the soul on the right path to receiving divine light.

What is more, Augustine re-emphasises this posture by invoking the Pauline triad in book I of the Soliloquia. Examining the soul’s desire to enjoy and contemplate truth, he gains the insight from no less than “Ratio” herself (either his ratio or Christ Himself) that to contemplate God, one must have “faith, by which one believes that the thing looked at will make one blessed when it is seen; hope, by which one expects to see, once one has looked well; love, by which one desires to see and to enjoy”. In the interim before discovering that which one seeks, the Pauline triad offers us the necessary stabilising mechanism that sustains the soul’s search against the abyss of despair. In a similar vein, Augustine brings his dialogue on the happy life to an end not by revealing all there is to know about the nature of happiness, but by presenting the means to know it through faith, hope, and love.

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89 Conybeare, The Irrational Augustine, pp. 90f.
90 De beata vita 4.35, trans. Teske.
91 We discuss “Ratio” in Chapter 5.
92 Soliloquia I.6.13, trans. Paffenroth. Cf. De ordine II.8.15, where faith, hope, and love are invoked as the means to support [subnixi] the quest for contemplation.
93 As recent scholars rightly point out, De beata vita leaves open certain questions for a purpose. It is not yet time to reveal the answers, but to prepare for the journey. See Conybeare, The Irrational Augustine, p. 91; and Stock, Augustine’s Inner Dialogue, p. 100.
The Voice and Visage of Philosophy: Christ

If awakening begins with assent to the truth of existence, the cogito, it ends with a deep awakening to one’s longing for the happy life. Not only this, but it then leads to a prayer for divine guidance and assistance: an awakening to the truth of Christ, the “voice and visage of philosophy”.

In this final section, we draw together the different threads of this discussion to examine Augustine’s argument against the Academics. From our brief account of De beata vita, we have a clearer notion that the major pitfall to beset the Academics is their failure to ground philosophy in the virtue of faith, hope, love. Not believing humanity has access to knowledge of the truth, and failing offer any hope that the truth can be revealed, Academics surrender humanity’s love for truth to the vagaries of philosophy, and in particular to the vain exercise of seeking truth without finding it. In De beata vita, Augustine exposed the inherent folly of this exercise by showing how it disagrees with the weight of true love. He argued that this is not the way that true desire works. At least for souls for which truth is an object of true delight, the objective truth creates in them a weight of desire that either falls to desperatio veri in the absence of support, or ceases to stay true to the object of its quest. Either that, or true desire comes into contact with the truth in a way that secures its surrender to the promise of Christ. How does the latter process work?

According to Augustine, true desire is attentive to the “voice of philosophy” [vox philosophiae], hearing the faint echoes of its call to wisdom and truth. It also longs to look upon the “visage of philosophy” [facies philosophiae],94 and believes that this visage also looks favourably upon it.95 And as for who stands behind this voice and visage of philosophy, Augustine appeals to the invitation and promise of Christ.

94 De Academicis II.3.7, trans. King.
95 For discussion of divine favour see De beata vita 3.19-21.
exhorts Romanianus: “Believe me—or rather, believe Him, for He says Search and you shall find—knowledge is not to be despised of, and it will be clearer than those numbers are”.\textsuperscript{96} And again, when admonishing Romanianus to pray for his journey, Augustine indicates to whom his prayers should be directed, paraphrasing the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians. “I pray to the power and wisdom itself of God the Highest. What else is He whom the mysteries reveal to us as the Son of God?”.\textsuperscript{97} Even before this, Augustine intimates that Philosophy has taken it upon Herself to reveal the most hidden God. “Philosophy promises that it will display the true and hidden God, and now and again deigns to show us [ostentare dignatur] a glimpse of Him through the bright clouds [per lucidas nubes], as it were”.\textsuperscript{98} His reference to “bright clouds”, by the way, is a metaphor for Christ,\textsuperscript{99} as is his appeal to the descent of philosophy, dignere.\textsuperscript{100} All these subtle references serve to alert the soul, indeed to persuade it, that love of wisdom is not just an invitation to step forward. It is an invitation matched with a promise to meet us on the way. Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you.

Licentius Awakens: \textit{De Academicis} II

Along the way in \textit{De Academicis}, Augustine continues to invite the soul forward with the hope of re-directing it to its true location. His goal is to prepare the soul for an encounter with the truth, then turn to draw out implications for the Academic thesis. As we suggested already, the decisive turning point is not an argument against the Academics, but an insight into desire that funds the ensuing argument. Yet before he attempts to elicit this insight into desire, Augustine continues to explore the parameters of the Academic thesis.

\textsuperscript{96} \textit{De Academicis} II.3.9, trans. King.
\textsuperscript{97} \textit{De Academicis} II.1.1, trans. King. Cf. \textit{De beata vita} 4.34.
\textsuperscript{99} Cf. \textit{De Genesi contra Manichaeos} II.4.5 for similar terms. O’Connell notes that this imagery is reminiscent of the Transfiguration; see O’Connell, “The Visage of Philosophy”, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{100} Cf. \textit{De Academicis} III.14.31; \textit{De ordine} II.5.16.
Though it does not reach a conclusion about the Academic thesis, book II marks an important turning point for the student Licentius. Much of book II is occupied with reviewing the New Academy. Augustine rehashes the basic outline of Cicero’s history of the Academics (see above), and fixes on one feature that interests him the most: Cicero’s translation of *to pithanon* as *probabile* and *veri simile*. Indeed, though Augustine is likely unaware of the original meaning of *to pithanon* (if not the word itself), he does not miss the significance of what Cicero has done with it. The basic problem he puts to Licentius comes straight from Plato’s *Meno*: how can we recognise the “truthlike” without knowing the truth?

More precisely, Augustine frames this problem with a view to human likeness: “If a man unacquainted with your father were to see your brother and assert that he is *like* your father, won’t he seem to you crazy or simple-minded?”[^101] In directing this question to Licentius, Augustine plays off the father-son relation of Romanianus to Licentius. He plants a seed of doubt in Licentius’ head: how does anyone arrive at the truthlike without knowing what the truth is like? Initially attempting to answer this challenge, Licentius eventually fails to come up with a convincing reply. The whole dialogue appears to have left him exhausted; he seems ready to give up on trying to think for himself. In response, Augustine reminds Licentius that this dialogue aims to “train you and to incite you to cultivate your mind”,[^102] and that he ought not to shy away from making a mistake. He cites the example of his father Romanianus: “Yet surely no one will drink of philosophy more eagerly than your father, after so long a thirst. What if you saw him investigating and arguing these matters with us?”[^103] But rather than assuage Licentius of his stammering uncertainty, these words only accentuate his pending desperation. “When, O God, shall I see this? Yet there is nothing we need despair of obtaining from You! [*desperandum*]”[^104]

[^103]: *De Academicis* II.7.18, trans. King.
[^104]: *De Academicis* II.7.18, trans. King.
As everyone reels with emotional sympathy for Licentius, it is the one-time opponent of Licentius, Trygetius, who intercedes on his behalf: “Why shouldn’t such an upstanding man want God to grant his prayer before he offers it? Have faith now, Licentius! You who cannot find anything to say in reply and still want to win seem to me to have little faith!”\textsuperscript{105} The problem with Licentius, says Trygetius, is that he does not have trust in the true philosophy. His desire to seek the truth notwithstanding, he is unable to sustain the philosophical life out of the resources provided him by the Academic sceptics. Trygetius’ reply may be meant to lighten the mood a bit, yet in it lies a key point about the nature of human seeking. It is the same point Trygetius circled around in \textit{De Academicis} book I; and which Monnica made absolutely clear at the end of \textit{De beata vita}: true philosophy begins with desire for happiness, but it can only be properly sustained through faith, hope, and love.

At this point, Alypius steps forward to enter the fray. Setting aside his temporary role as the referee from book I, he declares his intention to engage Augustine in debate on the Academics so as to model how philosophy ought to be done to the students. Indeed, he says that doing so helps to keep the sin of pride at bay,\textsuperscript{106} a vice both he and Augustine condemn in the strongest terms. In response, Augustine also pledges to step forward in debate and to get serious about matters that are affecting his students. “[L]et childish tales be put beyond our reach! The matter at hand concerns our life, morality, and spirit”\textsuperscript{107} As we argued in Chapter 2, Augustine approaches the Academics as their imitator, not their adversary, but only for the purpose of undermining their sceptical method. Hence at this point, Augustine has had enough of beating around the topic: he wishes to “come down” from his referee position along with the Alypius, and to risk error in order to determine whether the truth can be found. It is here that he tells students that thanks to the Academics, he

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\textsuperscript{105} \textit{De Academicis} II.7.18. trans. King.

\textsuperscript{106} In reply to Trygetius’ request to step in, Alypius declares: “Let me not refuse...so that in wanting to avoid negligence and effrontery I not fall into the snares of pride—which is the most heinous of all vices – should I hold on to an honor you’ve granted to me longer than you allow”. In its own way, this too constitutes an imitation of Christ. \textit{De Academicis} II.8.21, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{De Academicis} II.9.22, trans. King.
had nearly given up on the quest for truth altogether. But we know that what he is doing is subverting the Academics by calling them to account for their philosophical claims. His basic charge at this stage revolves around the certainty of moral claims: how could the Academics teach that truth cannot be found, when ignorance of truth leaves the door open to licentious behaviour?

With Alypius taking the side of the Academics, Augustine defines their primary disagreement in epistemological terms:

The only difference between my viewpoint and the viewpoint of the Academicians is that to them it seems plausible that the truth can’t be found \( [\text{non posse}] \) whereas to me it seems plausible that the truth can be found \( [\text{posse}] \). If they are only pretending, then ignorance of the truth is peculiar to me alone; otherwise, it is common to both.\(^{109}\)

On this contrast in possibilities, \( \text{posse} \text{ or } \text{non posse} \), hangs the weight of Augustine’s argument against the Academics. Although phrased in Ciceronian terms as a matter of calculation, the distinction is intended to anticipate the conclusion that whereas Academics lack faith in the promise of true philosophy, Augustine has a firm conviction that truth can be found. Note as well that in drawing this contrast between \( \text{posse} \) and \( \text{non posse} \), Augustine is less concerned with the objective state of what is possible, and more concerned with his subjective sense of what seems to him to be possible or plausible. This becomes relevant later on in book III, we suggest, when Augustine invites Alypius to put forward his own opinion.

As all this occurs, a new development takes place with Licentius. In response to Augustine’s earlier analogy with father and son, he seizes hold of what it was that Augustine wanted to him to see, awakening—or almost awakening—to a new notion of dependence. “Wait a moment, please. I’m catching a glimpse of something—a glimmer by which I see that so great an argument shouldn’t be snatched away from [Augustine] so easily!”.\(^{110}\) Eager to explain his sudden breakthrough, Licentius trots

\(^{110}\) \textit{De Academicis} II.12.27, trans. King (and following).
out the standard Platonic claim, which one can derive from the *Meno*,\(^{111}\) that perception of the truth-like requires knowledge of the truth. “Well, nothing seems more absurd than for someone who doesn’t know the truth to say that he’s following something truth-like… But you, Carneades… since you say that you don’t know any truth, on what grounds do you follow something truth-like?”. Not to deny that what Licentius sees is significant to himself, his experience is but the beginning of a deeper re-assessment. For now, he is on the right track by calling Carneades into question; and that questioning is set to continue with the debate in book III.

Alypius Awakens: *De Academicis* III

At the end of book II, Augustine re-states the disagreement to be carried over to book III: “Therefore, the question between us is whether their arguments make it plausible [*probabile*] that nothing can [*posse*] be perceived and that one should not assent to anything. Now if you prevail [Alypius], I’ll gladly yield. Yet if I can demonstrate that it’s much more plausible [*probabilius*] that the wise man be able [*posse*] to attain the truth and that assent need not always be withheld, then you’ll have no reason, I think, for refusing to come over to my view”.\(^{112}\) As already hinted, the terms to keep track of are *probabilis* and *posse*: they define the disagreement between Augustine and Alypius, and will play an important role in overturning the Academics. In book III, Augustine will seek to defeat the Academics by initiating a twofold process of awakening responsibility. First, he calls on Alypius to give an account of his own opinion, inviting him to “stand up” and make a judgement on the truth. Second, he commands Academics to give an account of their philosophy, but only to show the complete foolishness of their intellectual approach. As we develop this twofold process in the following section, keep in mind the biblical substructure explored in Genesis 3: Adam called out by God to give an account of his location. In a similar

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\(^{111}\) Kirwan calls it the “argument from verisimilitude”. For background see King’s introduction to *Against the Academicians and the Teacher* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1995), pp. vi-xiii.

\(^{112}\) *De Academicis* II.13.30, trans. King.
way, Augustine calls upon his readers and students to take responsibility for their journey, and to acknowledge their dependency.

In book III, Alypius and Augustine are serious about their quest. They agree their task is “neither trivial nor superfluous, but necessary and of supreme importance: to search wholeheartedly for the truth”.\(^{113}\) This was the claim that sat at the heart of debate in books I and II. Apart from one’s desire to seek the truth, one is destitute of motivation. Apart from the desire to seek anything, in fact, no dialogue, friendship, or progress takes place.\(^{114}\) For this reason, Augustine sought to remind his students as often as he could that they have committed to seek the truth with everything they have.\(^{115}\) It is no different here as he settles in with his opponent Alypius; but he will raise a new set of questions regarding their status as seekers.

Towards the beginning of book II, Augustine draws a distinction between the wise man [sapiens] and the philosopher [philosophus]. He asks Alypius to explain on what basis the distinction holds. What is it that makes the wise man wise, the philosopher not wise?\(^{116}\) In response, Alypius suggests that virtually nothing distinguishes them, except that the wise man “definitely has the possession [habitus] of some things that the devotee [of wisdom] is only eager to have”. If that is the case, Augustine wonders what this “possession” consists in, particularly in light of the claims espoused by the Academics. For do not Academics hold that the wise man knows nothing, but that wisdom is achieved by suspension of assent (or consent)?\(^{117}\) Since this is so, Alypius finds himself in a difficult spot. He wants to maintain the distinction between wise man and philosopher, but he does not want to give content to the possession of the wise man. His initial solution is to shift the focus to the wise man himself, speaking in terms of what seems to the wise man rather than what seems to him to be the case. To make that clearer, Alypius is saying that his opinion doesn’t matter. What

\(^{113}\) *De Academicis* III.1.1, trans. King.

\(^{114}\) Cf. Harrison, *Augustine’s Way into the Will*, pp. 113-114.

\(^{115}\) Cf. *De Academicis* II.2.5, II.9.25.

\(^{116}\) *De Academicis* III.3.5f.

\(^{117}\) *De Academicis* III.3.5.
matters is the wise man’s perception of his own wisdom: whether his wisdom seems to him to qualify as “something” or not.

In response, Augustine implores Alypius not to hide behind the wise man, but to step forward with his opinion on the question at hand. “I’m not asking what it seems to you that seems to the wise man, but instead whether it seems to you that the wise man knows wisdom. You can, I take it, either affirm or deny it here and now”. In other words, the moment is calling Alypius to make a decision. Either he “deign[s] [digneris] to answer the question I put to you, rather than the one you put to yourself”. Or he decides not to participate in the conversation at all. There again, Augustine commands attention by deploying the verb dignere. We see that Alypius, now wavering, poses a threat to the dialogue itself. Unless he decides to step forward and make judgements for himself, the basis for their exchange will be lost to the Academics. The exchange itself, then, contains within itself its own “argument” against the Academics. Just by contributing to conversation, “deigning” to answer a question put to him, Alypius embodies an anti-sceptical posture before he realises what is happening. His answer to the sceptics lies in his desire to know the truth: that is, in his willingness to take responsibility for his own opinions and judgements. As long as he avoids responsibility by hiding behind the wise man, then, Augustine has no way of helping him to hear and see the truth.

Augustine issues the question again: “Does it seem to you that the wise man knows wisdom, or doesn’t it?”. This time, Alypius stops wavering and allows himself to be guided. Hesitantly, convolutedly, he comes around to affirming that yes indeed, it does “seem to me that [the wise man] can [potest] know wisdom”. In quick reply, Augustine issues yet another, more pressing question that builds upon the posse in

118 The background to this may well be Cicero’s claim in the Academica: “But just as I judge this, seeing truths, to be the best thing, so approving falsehoods in the place of truth is the worst. Not that I am someone who never approves anything false, never assents, and never holds an opinion; but we are investigating the wise person”, Cicero, Academica, II.20.66, trans. Brittain.

119 De Academicis III.4.9, trans. King.

120 De Academicis III.4.9, trans. King.

121 De Academicis III.4.9, trans. King (and following). Emphasis added.
Alypius’ response. “Therefore, I now ask you whether the wise man can be found [possit inveniri]. If he can, then he can know wisdom, and every question between us has been settled”. In other words, the entire argument boils down to one simple question: does Alypius share the hope that the wise man can be found, or despair at the prospect like the Academics encourage? Indeed, that is how Augustine wants us to re-read posse and probabilis. Though technical terms in the service of Ciceronian scepticism, they are here channelled into the Christian virtue of hopeful engagement, and grounded in the Christian promise of divine illumination. This becomes clearer when Alypius, in response to Augustine’s question, reveals that he is worried about the Academic response. However virtuous or penetrating Augustine’s question may be, he says, “I foresee that there is a strong defensive position reserved for [the Academics]: the suspension of assent”.122 But whereas Licentius took solace in this last bastion of protection, Alypius conveys his utter frustration with the Academic method. The whole thing now appears to him like a total waste of time. All the constant shifting about, the protean-style “argumentation”, leaves Alypius not only exhausted by this tireless suspension, but nearing despair at the prospect of finding absolutely nothing.

Thus in order to indicate his state of mind at this critical juncture, Alypius decides to stand down from the Academics’ mountain, and to make his own prayer for their defeat at the hands of Augustine. Here is what he prays:

The likeness and “image” (so to speak) [imaginem et quasi speculum] of the Academicians should be seen in Proteus. It’s said that Proteus was typically captured by some means that barely captured him, and his pursuers never were sure they really had him except by the indication of some divine spirit [numine]. May that divine spirit be present, and may he deign to show us [demonstrare dignetur] the truth that is of such importance to us! Then I’ll also admit that the Academicians have been overcome even if they don’t agree, although I think they will.123

As anticipated, there is much to say about this “prayer” from Alypius, the first being

122 De Academicis III.5.11, trans. King.
123 De Academicis III.5.11, trans. King.
that Alypius utters it almost accidentally or inadvertently. Whatever the degree to which he feels it as a prayer for himself, Augustine seizes it as the decisive turning point to end their discussion. His reasons are several. First, the Academics admit that it seems the wise man knows wisdom, and that alone suffices to bring down their argument. For whereas they add to this that one ought not to assent to anything whatsoever, Augustine happily disagrees with them that one ought to assent to the truth. Augustine’s response is worth repeating in full:

Yet I think we ought to give approval to something, namely to the truth. I ask the Academicicians whether they deny this, that is, whether they hold that one should not assent to the truth. They’ll never say this, maintain instead that the truth hasn’t been found. Therefore, they keep me as an ally on this score too, namely that we don’t disagree (and so necessarily agree) that one ought to consent to the truth. “Who will show us the truth?” [Sed quis eam demonstrabit] they ask. I shall decline to get into a fight with them. It’s enough for me that it is no longer plausible that the wise man knows nothing.¹²⁴

Though he leaves matters hanging on the question “Who will show us the truth?”, our reading of De beata vita leads us to recognise this question as an anticipation of the soul’s awakening to faith, hope, and love. For having come to acknowledge, at least in Augustine’s mind, that one ought to assent to the truth, the Academics are left with nothing but the desire for truth, and are forced by this to seek out other means of apprehending their object. If epoche amounts to nothing but a temporary stand-still, an intellectual posturing, the only options the Academics face are to give up the search, or despair of discovery.

Moreover, Augustine indicates that more important than the Academics, Alypius has finally joined him on the journey of desire. His words again bear repeating:

Furthermore, you yourself, Alypius, have said who can show the truth to us [Quis autem verum possit ostendere], I should make an effort to disagree with you as little as possible! You remarked briefly as well as piously that only some [divine] spirit can show man what the truth is. For this reason, there

¹²⁴ De Academicis III.5.12, trans. King.
has been nothing I’ve head with more pleasure, nothing more important, nothing more plausible—and, if that spirit, as I firmly believe, be present to us, nothing is more true.  

Here Augustine, though once again proving elusive in his reply, throws some light upon the great discovery that Alypius has made. His words are obviously laden with theological significance: for example, his reference to “some [divine] spirit” may be a reference to the Holy Spirit, or it may function as a general reference to providence or the Trinity. But more important for our purposes is his restatement of Alypius’ question, “who can show the truth to us”. As we indicated in Chapter 4, this type of question traces its origin to the prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 4, and can be usefully compared to Augustine’s reading of this verse in book IX of the Confessiones. While there it functions in relation to Manichean interests in the good, “Who will show us good?” [Quis ostendet nobis bona], here it evidently has been modified to reflect the Academic struggle, asking God to reveal truth to those who are ignorant. And with this prayer, Augustine affirms that Alypius has joined him in a pious demonstration of dependence upon God. “Therefore, this is the third benefit that has come to me, and I find it invaluable. My closest friend agrees with me not only about the issue of plausibility of human life, but also about religion itself. This agreement has been correctly and properly defined as agreement on human and divine matters combined with charity and good will [benevolentia et caritate]”. 

Thus as far as book III is concerned at this point, Augustine believes his argument is over and done with. The rest of the books he spends teasing out the implications of this conclusion, interrogating the two claims of traditional Academic teaching. In critiquing the first claim that no truth can be found, he cites Carneades as an example of how to wake up to reality. No doubt familiar with Carneades’ legacy through his reading of Cicero, Augustine suggests that it was Carneades’ genius to call into question the Academics, and even applies the familiar verb evigilare to describe his

126 Augustine has many such covert references to providence, and the Trinity.
breakthrough. “Have all of you [Academics] said that nothing whatsoever can be apprehended? At this point, Carneades woke up [evigilavit]—for none of the Academicians slept more lightly than he did—and looked about at the evidentness of things. So while talking to himself, as sometimes happens, I believe he said: ‘Well then, Carneades, are you going to say that you don’t know whether you’re a man or a bug?’ 128 There is a possible parallel here to the cogito-claim that “I am alive”, only this time, it is his humanness that Carneades acknowledges. Even so, the main point of this, which Augustine goes on to develop, is that Carneades realised the poverty of the Academic approach, and sought a way to overcome it through reformation of its ideals. The only problem is that he did not acknowledge, or rather could not have acknowledged, the name of Christ; but thanks to Christ, and thanks to Augustine, Alypius can and will acknowledge Christ at the end of De Academicis. 129


129 De Academicis III.20.43-45. Strictly speaking it is Augustine who acknowledges the name of Christ, but Alypius wholeheartedly endorses his conclusion. On Alypius’ hesitation to affirm the name of Christ, see Confessions IX.4.7.
ITINERARY #2

DE VERA RELIGIONE
Chapter 4

INTERIOR KNOWING

As we argued in the first itinerary mapped last chapter, not by argumentation alone did Augustine “defeat” the Academic sceptics, but by unleashing the weight of love upon his students and readers. “Who can show us truth?” may not seem like a potent prayer, yet when prayed with the urgency of awakened desire, it reaches the ears of heaven. One thing is clear: the soul that makes this prayer, that genuinely “feels” it in its heart, has abandoned its prideful (dis)position in Academic *epoche* to entertain a new awareness of creaturely dependence.

To suspend one’s assent absolutely is not only irresponsible, as Cicero argued. It also violates the weight of desire to find the truth, as Augustine insisted. For those reasons, Augustine’s journey “from Cicero to Christ” invited students to confront themselves as lovers on the way. By showing them the negative affects of *epoche* in *De Academicis*, Augustine hoped to usher his friend Romanianus into the fold of the Catholic Church, by persuading Romanianus to bow the knee to the “authority of Christ”. When Romanianus fails to do this, however, and returns to the Manichean religion, Augustine faces a new challenge that requires a different response. In a treatise he also dedicates to Romanianus, *De vera religione* (AD 390-1), he sets his sights on counteracting Manichean “rationalism” with the aid of a new process called “interior knowing”. In interior knowing, the soul embarks on an intellectual

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1 *De Academicis* III.5.11-6.13.
2 As Augustine had feared and anticipated, cf. *De Academicis* II.3.8.
4 By “rationalism”, we mean reason in absence of authority; see below.
ascent whose purpose is to re-configure the image of God. Building on the foundation laid by the concept of awakening, interior knowing creates the conditions for the soul’s re-location by illumining the soul’s “midway” status between God and creation. By nurturing a powerful counter-force to the pride that weighs down the soul, interior knowing thus serves the purposes of creaturely re-formation in response to the perverse formation of Manichean teaching. Hence to prepare for examining this new mode of enquiry, we outline below the terms of our second itinerary in De vera religione.

**Approaching De Vera Religione**

Having had occasion to invoke Psalm 4 at several points, we turn to it once again to lay the foundation for this period. As pointed out in Chapter 3, Augustine modifies the Psalmist’s prayer for knowledge of the good to reflect the Academic struggle to know and embrace the truth. In his comment on Psalm 4:6 in book IX of the *Confessiones*, Augustine reads the prayer as speaking to the Manichean failure to achieve satisfaction in the temporal realm:

> In desiring to find their [Manicheans’] delight in externals, they easily become empty and expend their energies on “things which are seen and temporal” (2 Cor. 4:18). With starving minds they can only lick the images of these things. Would that they were wearied by hunger and would say “Who will show us good?” (Ps. 4:6f.).

Tracing this prayer to the humbled soul that knows itself as lover, Augustine points to the soul’s awakening to the weight of its desire as a crucial component to its spiritual transformation. However, Augustine elsewhere offers another account of Psalm 4:6 that brings to light a different side of the Manichean condition. In his

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8 *Confessiones* IX.4.10, trans. Henry Chadwick.
Enarrationes in Psalmos, the Manicheans are no longer praying for assistance, but convey a perverse disrespect for God’s providence in creation:

Many say, "Who has anything good to show us?" [Ps. 4:6]. This is the chatter, the daily questioning of all foolish and unjust people. Some of them crave peace and tranquillity in this earthly life, yet do not find it because people are so tiresome. So blind are they to what is really happening that they have the cheek to find fault with the way things are [ordinem rerum]; wrapped up in their sense of their own goodness [involuti meritis suis], they think present times worst than the past. Or again, there are those who entertain doubts or despair of that future life which is promised to us. They often say, “Who knows if it’s true? Who has ever come back from the dead to tell us about these things?”

Exhibiting his flexible hermeneutic with regard to the Psalter, Augustine flips his reading of the Psalmist’s question, Who has anything good to show us?, to target the intellectual blindness of Manichean religion. This blindness he then traces to a perverse self-understanding whereby the Manicheans are “wrapped up in their sense of their own goodness”. Though noting that the Manicheans still desire “peace and tranquillity in this earthly life”, Augustine charges them with de-forming this genuine desire to accord with their own assumptions about “the way things are”. The irony, of course, is that the Manicheans are the ones out of order, not creation; not to mention they have no right to cast judgement on the Creator.

The underlying motivation of the Manicheans, therefore, is where Augustine lays the emphasis of his intellectual critique. Intimately familiar with how his former co-religionists deride the Catholic faith, he traces their contemptuous attitude not to any error in metaphysics, per se, but to a disordered conception of their place in God’s creation. Indeed, he will even single out Manichean pride as a peculiarly apt example of the Fall of Adam and Eve, making such connection explicit in De Genesi contra Manichaeos (see below). As we know now from our reading and application of De Genesi, Augustine’s task is to help Manicheans overcome pride by teaching them to

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identify as sinners “in Adam”. For although Manichean pride shares substantial overlap with Academic *epoche*, it operates on a different conceptual level than scepticism, and thus places a unique burden on our author’s methodology. To understand this burden, we focus attention on the condition of Romanianus after *De Academicis*.

**Audience: Romanianus, Manichaeism, Rationalism**

When he first called Romanianus to account in *De Academicis*, Augustine spoke candidly to his own anti-Manichaeism. Drawing a distinction between two obstacles based in two different sects, Academics and Manicheans, he announced his plan to one day write a “treatise on religion” [*disputationem de religione*]\(^{10}\) by which he hoped to disabuse Romanianus of Manichean folly. As he argued in that section, Manichaeism inclines its adherents towards intellectual arrogance through its proud declaration to have “found some truth”. It is not so much their alleged discovery that worries Augustine here, but the way in which their presumption of discovery affects souls that believe them; as he puts it, Manichaeism partakes of “the common error that men, having found a false opinion, do not search diligently for the truth if they search at all [*si qui quærunt*], and even turn away from the desire for searching [*a quaerendi voluntate*]”.\(^{11}\) Quite apart from the Academics who place a premium on searching, Manicheans shape the intellect to seek not the truth, but to rest on its laurels and invites others to do the same. In this we sense a parallel with that first seafaring group that scarcely begins its voyage before honouring its achievement.\(^{12}\) Augustine’s main concern is that Romanianus might fall for such a spectacle, and begin to lose touch with his desire for the happy life.

In this vein, Augustine distinguishes between the deceptive tactics of Manichean “Elites”, and Manichean “Hearers” [*auditores*] taken in by the Manichean promise.

\(^{10}\) *De Academicis* II.3.8, trans. Peter King. For association of this statement with *De vera religione* see Van Fleteren, Frederick, “*Vera religione, De*”, *Augustine through the Ages*, p. 864.

\(^{11}\) *De Academicis* II.1.1, trans. King.

\(^{12}\) *De beata vita* 1.2. This assuming, of course, a critical reading of the seafarers; see Chapter 1.
In another early treatise dedicated to a Manichean friend, Honoratus,\(^\text{13}\) he explains why this difference matters to his overall approach:

If I thought, Honoratus, that believing heretics was just the same as being a heretic, I do not think I would need to say anything on this subject [of belief], either in speech or in writing. These two things, however, are not the same at all. As I see it, a heretic is someone who is either the author of false and novel views or upholds them for the sake of some temporal gain, especially fame and power, whereas the person who believes someone like that is seduced by a veneer of truth and devotion. For this reason I felt I should not keep from you my thoughts about finding and holding to the truth.\(^\text{14}\)

The difference between the two groups, pronounced here to be heretics and followers of heretics, is that the former is given over to deceptive tactics already, whereas the latter shows a commitment to truth and devotion. In terms of the former’s fate, moreover, there is a provocative parallel with the fate of the serpent in Genesis 3.\(^\text{15}\) The serpent, or Devil, who is the supreme *author of lies* (John 8:44), receives nothing from God but a curse for his deception, a judgement sealing his fate for all of eternity.\(^\text{16}\) In a similar manner, Augustine decides that the best way to respond to “Elites” is simply to ignore them, and leave them to their fate. His interest is with Hearers who are deceived as he was, for their deception implies a desire to seek out the truth.\(^\text{17}\)

Not surprisingly, Augustine assigns this status to Romanianus as well. Uncertain of how deeply affected by the Manicheans he is, and eager to start again with his friend after *De Academicis*, Augustine declares in *De vera religione* that “now is the time,\(^\text{18}\)

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\(^{13}\) *De utilitate credendi* (AD 391), written after *De vera religione*. Honoratus joined the Manichean sect with Augustine’s help; thus like Romanianus, he is one of the people for whom Augustine feels responsible. See *De utilitate credendi* 1.2, 8.20–9.22.

\(^{14}\) *De utilitate credendi* 1.1, trans. Ray Kearney.

\(^{15}\) *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.25.38.

\(^{16}\) Cf. *De libero arbitrio* III.10.29.104–106.

\(^{17}\) At one point, Augustine says it was love of truth that saved him from the Manicheans; “At the same time the desire for truth continued to drive my mind on without respite”, *De utilitate credendi* 8.20, trans. Kearney; “I was so injured by this fall, and so buried under such vast heaps of empty tales, that had the love of finding out the truth not succeeded in requesting and receiving divine succor for me, I would not have been able to dig my way out…”, *De libero arbitrio* I.2.4.10, trans. Peter King.
because I have reached the stage where, bound to you as I am by the bonds of charity, I cannot allow the flood of your acute and persistent questions to continue unanswered”.  Charity draws Augustine to re-engage with Romanianus, and to do so on the basis of his new location as a Manichean. The new location comes replete with dangers all around: with his “acute and persistent” questioning, Romanianus may be infected with the pride of Psalm 4:6, or more specifically with the “rationalism” that defines Manichaeism. Regarding this rationalism, Augustine is adamant that it fails as an approach. With utter neglect for the condition that the human mind inherits, rationalism elevates the gift of reason above the scope of its present powers, applying it to objects that exceed human capacity. When isolated in this way apart from authority as its guide, reason falls to incoherence and darkness of intellect; and this in turn fosters blindness to “the way things are”, and a blasphemous ignorance about God’s providential care. In point of fact, though, reason always operates together with authority, and to think differently is to entertain the highest delusion. “There is no right way of entering into the true religion without believing things that all who live rightly and become worthy of it will understand and see for themselves later on, and without some submission to a certain weight of authority”.

“Reason”, writes Ryan Topping, “is a muscle that needs to be exercised in relation to concrete authorities”. For Augustine, these authorities include any object that commands attention—not just objects that self-designate as “authoritative”, but

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18 De vera religione 7.12, trans. Edmund Hill. For the ordo caritatis see Chapter 1.


20 “The human spirit is naturally delighted by that promise [to be shown the truth by reason], and without considering its own strength and state of health, but hungering after the food of the strong, harmful though it is for anyone unhealthy, it rushes on to the deceivers’ poison”. De utilitate credendi 9.21, trans. Kearney.

21 Cf. De moribus ecclesiae 1.2.3.


objects that draws us by their beauty or persuasion. In De vera religione, Augustine argues that even exercised in its purest form, reason goes no further than authority of Truth. As he puts it: “Authority demands faith and paves the way to use reason. Reason leads on to understanding and knowledge, although reason is not entirely wanting in authority, when one considers who precisely has to be believed, and certainly the Truth itself, once perspicuously known, has supreme authority”. On this basis, he condemns rationalism is both flawed in its approach, and guilty of fostering ignorance about the nature of reason. For indeed, there is more going on when one applies the gift of reason than one’s assumptions about reason enable one to see. In this vein, one of the main goals Augustine sets for Romanianus is to alter his opinion on the nature of reason. As at Cassiciacum the best way to achieve this is to use reason in debate, and to allow reason to illuminate its dependence on authority.

Method: Reason, Authority, Attention

If Manicheans are “wrapped up in their sense of their own goodness”, then the challenge is to unwrap them through pursuing the true good. The roots of this challenge lie deep in Genesis 3. In De Genesi contra Manichaeos, Augustine describes the Fall as part deception, part self-deception. With regard to deception, he draws an analogy between the serpent’s guile and the wily Manicheans, writing: “[the] serpent signifies the various heretical poisons, and above all the one of these Manichees… I am convinced, you see, that nothing is more manifestly foreshadowed in that serpent than this crew—or rather that it is he who is to be shunned in them”. Not only does the serpent represent the poison of Manichaeism, he says, but so does the motive behind Adam’s self-deception. “[I]t was through pride that the sin was put across”; and this pride consisted in being “too fond of their own power…wishing to be God’s

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26 De Genesi contra Manichaeos II.25.38, trans. Hill.
equals…and so forfeit[ing] what they had received, while they had wanted to grab what they had not received”.27 Indeed, just as Adam and Eve were enticed by the serpent’s promise, *You shall be like Gods* (Gen. 3:5), so too Manicheans entice Catholics to do the same: to place their soul on equal footing with God, and thus to ignore the great chasm that separates the two. “[W]ho else says it more than these people, striving with their proud nonsense to lead others into the same kind of pride, and affirming that the soul is by nature what God is?” 28

Furthermore, Augustine comments that in turning away from God, Adam turned inward to take pleasure in the powers he received. In reference to the tree of knowledge of good and evil he explains: “if the soul turns to itself [*ad seipsam*] with its back to God and wants to enjoy its own power without any reference to God, it swells up with pride, which is the starting point of all sin (Sir. 10:13)” 29 In other words, Adam’s decision to turn from God began with glorying in his own inwardness, exchanging the truth of God for the lie of the serpent. As punishment, Adam not only fails to maintain this perverse inwardness; he is cast forth into external things by the weight of his desire.30 His punishment entails expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and thus abandonment of the “inner spring” that “speaks directly to the understanding”. Hence it follows, says Augustine, that the soul must be taught by “human words” what it could have been taught by the truth itself. Yet even this proves problematic. The fallen soul, continuing to suffer from pride and its affects, remains unwilling to accept the offer of divine healing and assistance, rejecting even God’s appeal through the Incarnation of His Son. “But only if [the soul] were willing and happy to catch the rain of truth, at least from these very clouds! It was on its account, after all, that our Lord agreed to assume our cloudy flesh and shed upon us that most abundant of all showers, the gospel itself…” 31

27 *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.15.22, trans. Hill.

28 *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.25.38, trans. Hill.

29 *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.9.12, trans. Hill.

30 Cf. *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.22.34.

31 *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.5.6, trans Hill.
From this account, Augustine reaches the conclusion that “divine teaching is essential from human words, like rain from the clouds”.\(^{32}\) Because the inward pride that casts the soul outward leaves it “toiling away” in temporal things, it must receive divine teaching through intermediate authorities that are established for its benefit in light of the Fall. The relevant point here is twofold with respect to Manicheans. First, Augustine identifies the need for authority as part of humanity’s punishment inherited from Adam. This does not render authority into a “necessary evil”, though, since divine teaching still applied in the Garden of Eden. Second, Augustine does contrast the “inner spring” to the exterior world, but he also points to another inwardness, a perverse inwardness, that altered the soul’s condition. In his view, then, the Fall was not strictly an inner-to-outer process. It was an inner-to-inner process that cast the soul outward, corrupting the soul’s relationship to God and creation.

In the same way the Manicheans, by turning inward to their own goodness, slip more deeply into involvement with the external world at the expense of giving thanks to God, or acknowledging God’s goodness. As punishment for this indulgence in external things, Manicheans become blind to God’s governance of creation (“the way things are”) as well as confused over their place in relation to their Creator.\(^{33}\) Their confusion extends right up to the their application of reason, rendering them incapable of executing proper judgement. In light of this, Augustine recognises that in order to reach Romanianus, he must rehabilitate the inward discourse that Adam overturned. If Adam turned inward and fell away into multiplicity,\(^{34}\) Romanianus

\(^{32}\) *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.5.6, trans Hill.

\(^{33}\) Cf. *De vera religione* 10.19.

\(^{34}\) “So multitudinous are time-bound species and their looks, you see, that they have whipped fallen man away in all directions from the unity of God and have multiplied their emotional responses with their chopping and changing in their variety. Thus has been produced a toilsome abundance and, if one may say so, a plentiful poverty, while one thing follows another and nothing remains with him”, *De vera religione* 21.41, trans. Hill. Cf. *De vera religione* 12.23 for reference to Adam.
must turn inward and establish himself in unity. To do this requires attending to his placement in the order of reality.

“Pay pious and diligent attention, therefore, to what follows, as best you can. People like that, after all, are the ones to whom God gives a helping hand”. As we develop in Chapter 5, the cornerstone of interior knowing is the practise of attention (attentio). The moral dimensions of this practise carry its profound implications; for it is in attending to that which is other than us, or rather in “othering” that which we fail to properly notice, that we enter into a deeper awareness of our relational status, and so uncover our dependency on objects of delight. To put otherwise, attention is the linchpin of interior dialogue, for it places us in relation to the things we desire. That we desire these things already, and therefore relate to them already, means that attention brings this knowledge of our implicit relation to bear, and thus unleashes the weight of love upon our ignorant self-awareness. In respect to Manicheans, the unleashing of love’s weight on self-awareness means the subversion of at least one account of the soul’s rational nature: namely that reason bears no dependency on authority and desire, but rather proceeds on its own strength to discover the truth. Though this subversion occupies a better part of our analysis in Chapter 5, to prepare for it, we turn briefly to an early anti-Manichean text that anticipates the method of De vera religione.

In De moribus ecclesiae (AD 387-8), Augustine responds to the intellectual habits of Manichaeism by setting out the conditions of true religious knowledge. First

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35 Cf. Psalm 4:10, Because you, Lord, through hope have established me in unity, on which Augustine comments: “Single, therefore, and simple, withdrawn from the multitude and crowd of things which are born and die, we ought to be lovers of eternity and unity if we desire to become one with our God and Lord”, Enarrationes in Psalmos 4.10, trans. Boulding.

36 De vera religione 10.20, trans. Hill.

37 Cf. De vera religione 29.52. Weil writes: “Extreme attention is what constitutes the creative faculty in man and the only extreme attention is religious. The amount of creative genius in any period is strictly in proportion to the amount of extreme attention and thus of authentic religion at that period”, Weil, Simone, Gravity an Grace, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr (London: Routledge Publishing, 2002), p. 117.
defining these conditions in terms of piety and diligence, he explains his purpose in this treatise is to meet the Manicheans where they are, so that they “at last wake up [evigilare] and, setting aside their stubborn dreams, aspire to the light of Christian faith”. In the next section, he outlines his mode of operation by which he hopes to awaken them to the Christian religion. Dividing this mode into two terms, reason and authority, he affirms the “order of nature” according to which authority precedes reason, and justifies this on the basis of the human condition. But since the Manicheans refuse to accept arguments on the basis of authority, his commitment to the order of nature faces a serious obstacle. Thus in order to surmount this obstacle on behalf of Manicheans, he decides the situation calls on him to make an exception. He agrees to follow reason instead of authority, in order to appeal to the very presumptions he desires to overturn. In this, he says, he is only doing what true charity demands of him: “For I would like to imitate, as far as I am able, the gentleness of my Lord Jesus Christ who took upon Himself the evil of that very death from which He wished to deliver us”. In other words, Augustine justifies his inversion of order on the basis of Christian charity on behalf of the neighbour. His decision models the imitation he performed at Cassiciacum, and provides us a glimpse into his design for thinkers like Romanianus who holds too high of view of the powers of reason.

For indeed, as we go on to explore more fully in Chapter 5, the real purpose behind this exception to the order of nature is to deliver the Manicheans into the hands of authority. In response to the rationalism that inhibits their search, Augustine decides that the best way to start up a conversation is to appeal to the very error he intends to subvert. Once again, his goal here is to command the soul’s attention as a means to reinforcing its location as a lover. Not only this, but such a goal lies at the centre of the process that he develops more fully in *De vera religione*. We turn now to give a brief sketch of the objective in this period: interior knowing.

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38 “For not all to whom inquiries are addressed are able to teach, nor are all who seek to learn worthy. Both diligence and piety are required: the one helps us to acquire knowledge, the other makes us worthy to know”, *De moribus ecclesiae* I.1.1, trans. D.A. and I.J. Gallagher.

Objective: *Imago Dei, Interior Homo*

In *De vera religione*, Augustine develops a three-step process called interior knowing whose aim is to re-establish the soul’s dependency on Truth. Starting out at the lowest level of the soul’s fallen condition, that of *cupiditas*, he proceeds to work his way up the ladder of *esse-vivere-intellegere* (or body-soul-spirit) in order to re-position the soul to acknowledge its relation to authority. More positively, he seeks to re-position the soul to receive divine light, and thus enable it to “stand up” [erigere] as a divine-image bearing creature. To understand how this process works in relation to Romanianus, we turn back briefly to Augustine’s other reading of the question in Psalm 4.

As we stated above, Augustine re-interprets the Psalmist’s question “*Who can show us anything good?”* as a missive aimed at ridiculing God’s rule over creation. On this reading, the people questioning are not seeking out an answer, but are too “wrapped up in their sense of their own goodness” to recognise “the way things are”. Linking the spirit of this questioning to the Manichean disposition, Augustine laments the great waste of energy expelled by such grumblings, while drawing a contrast between such darkness and the light of true faith. Commenting on the next verse of Psalm 4, *The light of your countenance is stamped upon us, O Lord*, he writes:

> This light is the complete and true good of humankind; it is not seen with the eyes but with the mind. The psalmist’s phrase, *stamped upon us*, suggests a coin stamped with the king’s picture. For the human individual has been made in God’s image and likeness, something which each has corrupted by sinning. Therefore true and eternal goodness is ours if we are minted afresh by being born again.\(^{40}\)

To explain more fully what he means by the image and likeness, he links the interior life of the soul that bears the divine image with the message in verse 8, *You have given joy in my heart.*

> Joy, therefore, is not to be sought outside oneself, by those who, still heavy in

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\(^{40}\) *Enarrationes in Psalmos 4.8*, trans. Boulding.
heart, love emptiness and chase falsehood [v. 3]. Rather, it is to be sought within [intus], where the light of God’s face is stamped. For Christ dwells in the inner person [interiore homoine], as the apostle says [Eph. 3:17]; and to Christ belongs the capacity to see the truth, for he said, *I am the truth* [Jn. 14:6].

In these remarks, Augustine reveals that the interior life of the soul, *interior homo*, bears a relation to the *imago Dei* God stamps on the soul. He also reveals that Christ dwells “in” the *interior homo*, and that the soul’s capacity to “see the truth” also pertains to Christ. With regard to Manicheans, then, he draws a contrast between souls “heavy in heart”, loving emptiness and chasing falsehood, with souls enjoying truth through a proper form of inwardness, the *interior homo*. Thus in apparent contrast to “wrapped up in their sense of their goodness”, Augustine identifies an improved inwardness that enlightens the soul’s darkness. Yet this raises a question. If the source of Manichean ignorance is a perverse form of inwardness, why does he admonish souls to seek truth “within” rather than “without”?

For indeed, the call to turn inward is not obviously Christian; nor is it unproblematic in philosophical terms. According to certain prominent scholars, notably Phillip Cary, the inward orientation that we find in the pages of Augustine actually bears very little relation to biblical revelation. Just to take the above quotation for instance, Augustine attempts to ground inwardness in the Pauline corpus, but ends up corrupting Paul’s original meaning with his Platonic assumptions. Whereas Paul makes two distinct claims regarding the *interior homo* and Christ (Eph. 3:16-7), Augustine elides the two claims with little justification in order to locate Christ “inside” rather than outside the soul. Writes Cary:

> It is important to notice what kind of inwardness is not present in this Pauline language [in Eph. 3:17]: it contains no hint of an inward turn, no suggestion that we should try to find Christ inside ourselves by looking within

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our hearts. On the contrary, Christ is in our hearts “by faith” and—as Paul elsewhere says—faith comes by hearing the Gospel of Christ preached, that is, by perceiving a word of good news that comes to us from outside ourselves.43

According to Cary, Augustine reads into Paul the admonition to an “inward turn” so that he can fund his Neoplatonic programme of finding God “in” the soul. Christian spirituality, on this view, becomes a matter of intense introspection whereby the soul finds God in its very self, rather than “out there” in the world in which Christ deigned to dwell. Indeed, Cary finds this notion the most problematic in its undermining of the flesh of Christ as the site of salvation.44 Instead of calling us outside ourselves to the truth of God incarnate, he says, Augustine urges us to head the opposite way, in defiance of outer things, and to hole ourselves up in our private “inner self”. By the term inner self, Cary presumably means Augustine’s account of interior homo. Defining the inner self as “private inner space”,45 he argues that Augustine misleads us when he calls us to turn inward, and that an inner self has little value for authentic spirituality. One wonders, though, if Cary is not on shaky ground with his claims given the absence of any Latin equivalent for his term inner self.46 For indeed, Cary is committed to say that Augustine’s inner self is a self hermetically sealed off from outside reality. There is nothing intrinsic to this inner self beyond the fact of its existence, and anything “in” it is simply there as an occupant of space. In contrast to this, Augustine defines the content of interior homo with reference to the theological concept of the “image of God”. Whatever he may mean by this notoriously opaque term (though Augustine says quite a lot about it), it

43 Cary, Augustine’s Invention, p. 48.
44 “To turn inward is, for a Platonist, necessarily to turn away from bodily things. Consequently, Augustine’s inward turn is necessarily a turn away from the flesh of Christ as well as a turn toward his divinity”. Cary, Augustine’s Invention, p. 50.
45 “My concern here is with the concept of self as private inner space or inner world—a whole dimension of being that is our very own, and roomy enough that we can in some sense turn into it and enter it, or look within and find things there”, Cary, Augustine’s Invention, p. 3.
46 “So firmly is [the English term self] entrenched in our contemporary understanding of Augustine that one of his most characteristic accomplishments was his pioneering exploration of something called the ‘self,’ so easily does this idea find an agreeable and inconspicuous familiarity in our own expectations of Augustine, that we may actually forget that Augustine does not treat this topic at all, and that the English phrase ‘the self’ has no equivalent in Latin”. Cavadini, John C., “The Darkest Enigma: Reconsidering the Self in Augustine’s Thought”, Augustinian Studies 38:1 (2007), p. 119.
is difficult to deny that it bears on the meaning of *interior homo*, or that it fails to establish a relationship between the soul’s interior life, and the God who created it.

In this respect, we are attracted to another vision of Augustinian inwardness that acknowledges both its introspective quality, and its self-subverting tendency. For example, John C. Cavadini argues that to comprehend the inward turn, one ought to replace our language of a reified “self” (here he is thinking of Cary’s use of the term) with a far wider notion, that of “self-awareness”. As he explains his point,

> The content of [Augustinian] self-awareness, for those truly self-aware, is much more mysterious more disturbing and mysterious, more exciting and hopeful, more treacherous and full of risk [than its modern variant]. Someone who is self-aware is aware not of “a self” but of a struggle, a brokenness, a gift, a process of healing, a resistance to healing, an emptiness, a reference that impels one not to concentrate on oneself, in the end, but on that to which one’s self-awareness propels one, to God. Someone who is properly self-aware is aware of a transformation, a re-configuring, a re-creation of an identity from nothing, of a becoming better, and not of a stable entity that endures as a private inner space or object.

What it means to turn inward, on this reading of the process, is not to establish oneself in a secure niche or private inner space—the citadel of Manichean rationalism—but to unwrap oneself from a self-deception, a false sense of identity, that limits one’s receptivity to the grace of re-creation. As we hope to show in Chapter 5 when we examine this process, this is precisely what Augustine wants Romanianus to experience through reason.

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Chapter 5

FROM AVERSIOΝ TO TRANSCENDENCE

Itinerary #2

In his second itinerary developed in *De vera religione*, Augustine takes on the pride of Manichean “rationalists” through developing a counter-process to Adam’s Fall from grace. As hinted in Chapter 4, the Fall of Adam breaks down into three steps: first a turn from God, then a turn to the soul, then expulsion of the soul from the Garden of Eden by means of the weight of inordinate love. Citing this threefold process in *De libero arbitrio* book III, Augustine sets it in contrast to true interior knowing that defeats the pride of Adam by embracing the humility of Christ.

To begin with, he distinguishes the highest unchangeable good, wisdom, from the changeable lower soul that tries to participate in wisdom:

In contemplating wisdom—which is surely not the mind, for the highest wisdom is unchangeable—the mind looks upon itself, which is changeable, and in some ways enters into its own mind. This happens only in virtue of the difference by which the mind is not what God is, and yet it is something that can please, next to God. However, it is better if it forgets itself before the love of the unchangeable God, or sets itself completely at naught in comparison with Him.

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1 As in Chapter 3, we develop this itinerary in relation to other works; these include *De ordine* (AD 386-7), *Soliloquia* (AD 387), *De quantitate animae* (AD 387), *De moribus ecclesiae* (AD 387-8), *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (AD 388-9), *De magistro* (AD 389), and *De utilitate credendi* (AD 391). For chronology see Alexander, David F., *Augustine’s Early Theology of the Church: Emergence and Implications, AD 386-91* (New York: Peter Laing Publishing, 2008), pp. 339-349.

2 This process is the outworking of an original pride, indeed the legacy of pride in its multiplying “affects” (see Chapter 1). Note, however, that this account is distinct from Augustine’s threefold account of temptation, also based on Adam’s Fall. For that account see *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.14.21; and *De sermone Domnini in monte* I.12.34.

3 For Christ’s exemplum see *De libero arbitrio* III.25.76.264, III.10.30.108-10.

4 *De libero arbitrio* III.25.76.261-2, trans. Peter King.
After making these recommendations regarding the soul’s interior life, Augustine then spells out the implications of a fallen inwardness “in Adam” by emphasising the role of pride in initiating the process:

If instead [the mind] gets in its own way, so to speak, and it pleases it to imitate God perversely so that it wills to enjoy its own power, it becomes lesser to precisely the extent that it desire itself to be greater. And this is: “Pride is the beginning of all sin” (Sir. 10:15 (10: 13 RSV)) and “The beginning of pride is when one departs from God” (Sir. 10:14 (10:12 RSV)).

Based on these remarks, we sum up Augustine’s counter-process to the Fall in terms of three steps: first, the fallen turns away from external things (aversion); second, the soul turns inward to examine itself (introversion); third, the soul turns upward to contemplate God, while at the same time re-inhabiting its true creaturely location (transcendence).

Needless to say, this tidy framework has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, it helps to clarify different aspects or movements of sin, but at the expense of creating somewhat arbitrary distinctions among the three basic steps of interior knowing. Though to be less precise than this might avoid reifying interiority, the schematic helps us to correlate interiority with the drama in Genesis 3. Not only this, but it also invites us to deploy two other triads that run in rough parallel to the three-step process. The first is the classical triad body-soul-spirit (or esse-vivere-intellegere); and the second is the triad of sins in 1 John 2:16—cupiditas, superbia, curiositas. Again, without insisting on their rigid application, these triads cast further light on the interior process by illuminating the triadic structure of the soul’s ascent on the one hand, and the threefold opposition it faces on the other hand.

5 De libero arbitrio III.76.262-3, trans. King.

6 These three terms, aversion, introversion, and transcendence, have been adapted from Phillip Cary’s account of interiority. It is worth noting, though, that Cary does not develop this process in relation to Adam’s Fall. Cary, Phillip, “Interiority”, Augustine through the Ages, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), pp. 454-56.

7 1 John 2:16 features prominently in De vera religione (3.4, 38.70, 55.107).
With triad 1 John 2:16 in particular, Augustine draws a clear parallel between the soul’s interior struggle, and the moral example of Christ in Matt. 4:3-10.

Accordingly, those who feed inwardly on the word of God do not seek pleasure in this desert [cupiditas]; those who submit to the one God alone do not seek things to boast about on the mountain, that is on earthly achievement [superbia]; while those who cleave to the eternal spectacle of unchanging Truth do not hurl themselves down by means of the summit of this body, that is of these eyes, to acquire knowledge of the lower things of time [curiositas].

As we argue in this chapter, the soul pursues interior knowing in obedience to Christ, in order to counteract the “affects” of its condition in Adam. By recovering a new awareness of its (fallen) creaturely location, it seeks to step forward as a lover on the way, and to call upon God to assist its journey.

**Examining Creation: Aversion**

The first step in interior knowing is aversion. In aversion, the soul learns to stand up as a rational creature, and to stand out from the created order of which it forms the highest part. The process of standing up and standing out in the creation involves exercise of reason in obedience to authority. By examining creation, the soul gains awareness of its affective displacement, and begins to seek out the true source of its rational judgements: the Truth itself.

In his account of Adam’s Fall in Genesis 3, Augustine traces the effect of pride to the soul’s displacement within the created order. Wracked by both fear and shame, burdened by the sin of pride, Adam is “sent away” from the Garden of Eden to endure a mortal life of hard labour and vitiating circumstance. In *De vera religione* Augustine explains how, in failing to transcend his creatureliness, Adam fell to a

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8 *De vera religione* 38.71, trans. Edmund Hill (based on Matt. 4:3-10).

9 *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.20.30 and passim.
lower status than where originally began. “He ignored [God’s] command, you see, his telling: ‘Eat this, don’t eat that’. So then [Adam] is dragged off to punishment, because by loving low things he is assigned his place among the lowest, lacking all his pleasures, enduring all his pains”.

What is more, this displacement extends to implicate Adam’s descendants. Having to begin from a position of hardship and toil, the fallen soul must wrestle with desires of the flesh in order to recover its original place in the order of reality.

If the [fallen] soul, however, while engaged in the stadium of human life, beats those greedy desires [*cupiditates fruendo*] it has been cherishing by itself by mortal enjoyments and believes with mind and good will that it has been assisted in beating them by the grace of God, then without a shadow of a doubt it will be restored to health and will turn back from the many things that change to the one unchanging good...

According to Augustine, this engagement “in the stadium of human life” has to begin at the level of desire for external things. It is there that the soul labours under the weight of carnal indulgence, and must learn to put up resistance to the vagaries of wayward desire. Yet there is a problem. It is one thing to wage war with desires of the flesh, and another thing to acknowledge that such a war is even necessary. In the absence of such awareness that I am a sinner, I am less liable to oppose my “greedy desires”, and thus more prone to sink into them without even realising it.

What is more, this type of problem is endemic to Manichean religion. As outlined in Chapter 4, Manicheans foster ignorance toward the human condition by elevating reason to divine-like status. Well before they communicate their metaphysical teachings, they entice adherents through inflated promises of finding truth through reason, and so feed the egos of bright young students who relish the opportunity. The worst thing about this is not their emphasis on reason, though, but the effect their emphasis has on the desire to seek the truth. For without desire to seek the truth, embodied in the life of philosophy, the fallen soul lacks the resources to

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10 *De vera religione* 12.23, trans. Hill.

11 *De vera religione* 12.24, trans. Hill.
counteract other desires, namely those in the way of its possession of wisdom. For Augustine, then, the great challenge to forging a path to the true religion is how to awaken love of wisdom to ask, seek, knock.

To develop how Augustine responds to this Manichean challenge, we turn back to his earlier treatise *De moribus ecclesiae* to outline his argument “from reason to authority”. As we seek to show in this treatise, Augustine’s design is to show the Manicheans both the limits of reason, and the need to submit to authority for the nurturing of desire.

**Reason, Authority, and Love: *De Moribus Ecclesiae***

In *De moribus ecclesiae*, Augustine engages with his Manichean counterparts in order to awaken their desire for truth, wisdom, and happiness. Correspondingly, he casts light on their location in reality by directing them to the authority of Christ and the Church, and by appealing to the role of love as the basis for understanding.

In Chapter 4, we called attention to Augustine’s distinction between reason and authority, and then to his decision to reverse the “order of nature”, authority before reason, in order to satisfy the demands of Manichean rationalists. In his argument from reason, then, Augustine proceeds to make a case on behalf of the true religion by scaling up the ladder from body to soul to spirit. To do so he covers familiar terrain from his Cassiciacum period: for example, he cites the universal desire for happiness, immutability of wisdom, and need to achieve wisdom by intellectual pursuit. Besides rehearsing these familiar claims, he also hones the moral aspect of true religious conduct by introducing Cicero’s concept of the *summum bonum*,

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12 *De moribus ecclesiae* I.2.3.

13 This scale is implicit in the argument: in search for the supreme good, Augustine begins with evaluation of the body, then moves to examine the soul, and finally points to a reality that transcends body and soul (i.e. wisdom and, possibly, virtue) that he then identifies as God.

14 *De moribus ecclesiae* I.4.6f.
“supreme good”. In answer to the question of how one ought to live, he contends that true happiness is not the result of arbitrary choice; nor is it conducive to things that cause us harm; nor can it lack the thing we desire to possess; but that it must consist in an object “both loved and possessed”, and in particular the object that is “supremely good for man”.

From here, Augustine proceeds up the threefold ladder of being in order to locate the supreme good at one level or the other. In Neoplatonic fashion, he argues that since the good of the body is the soul, the body cannot be the source or location we seek; and that since the soul seeks happiness as an object of delight, it betrays itself as both unstable and bound to something else. For if the supreme good must be something one can depend upon absolutely, an object both inviolable and unchangeable in substance, then by the very fact the soul seeks it in order to be happy, it cannot itself constitutes the object that it seeks. While specific details of this argument will occupy us later, one thing to highlight here is its anti-Manichean form. Apparently, Augustine holds that by its very use of reason, the soul betrays itself as an inherently unstable seeker. This has ramifications, he believes, for any attempt to define the soul as the supreme good, since it means the soul depends in some way on an object outside of it.

To reinforce this claim, Augustine draws his readers to the third level of being, the spirit level, in order to establish the radical distance between the soul and the supreme good. In doing so he makes the claim that God Himself is the supreme

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15 Augustine derives the sumnum bonum from Cicero’s De officiis (1.5), and in fact derives much of his argument from there as well. For extensive analysis see Coyle, J. Kevin, De Moribus Ecclesiae: A Study of the Work, Its Composition and Its Sources (Fribourg-en-Suisse, University Press, 1978).

16 Here Augustine deploys his famous term fruitio, enjoyment; thus in order to be truly happy, one must enjoy (i.e. delight in) the supreme good. See De moribus ecclesiae I.3.4.

17 De moribus ecclesiae I.6.9.

18 Here Augustine draws on Neoplatonism and Stoicism: the object must be inviolable, that is, not able to taken against the will (Stoic thesis); and the object must be stable, not changing from day to day (Neoplatonic thesis). This is brought out in another context by Wetzel, James, Augustine and the Limits of Virtue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 75.
good, and that no person who calls himself religious would dare to deny it.\textsuperscript{19} But once reason tries to ascend up to the level where God is, he says, it begins to falter in its ability to complete the journey. Indeed, Augustine insists that it cannot complete it, and that it falls away from the divine light exhausted by the vision. It is at this point that the soul learns how weak it actually is, and how benevolent God is to provide the way of authority. Indeed, Augustine appeals to Cicero’s term \textit{probabilis} in order to validate the conclusion—reason’s conclusion—that authority precedes reason. “We must have recourse, then, to the teachings of those who were in all probability \textit{probabile} wise. This is as far as reason can take us”.\textsuperscript{20}

From this conclusion, it appears Augustine undertakes the course of reason in order to usher in fresh insight on the need for authority. Initially deferent to the rationalism of Manichean religion, he resolves the dilemma that is endemic to this disordered approach not by dismissing it \textit{tout court}, but by exhausting its resources. The purpose of his little exercise “from reason to authority” was to undermine belief that reason is self-sufficient. But once reason has reached its limit and exposed its weakness, Augustine’s next task is to demonstrate its dependency on love. For indeed, he says, the main purpose behind the gift of authority is to teach us how to live in accordance with the Truth. It is to teach us, that is, that in order to find the truth, the soul must be made fit and worthy to seek it.

Thus for the rest of \textit{De moribus ecclesiae}, as the title suggests, Augustine devotes himself to re-configuring the Manichean approach. His basic claim is that Manichaeism fosters intellectual blindness by short-circuiting the process of purifying desire. Not only does it foster blindness to the need for purification; it ignores the explicit commandments of its ostensible leader, Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{21} For

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} I.6.10.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} I.7.11, trans. D.A. and I.J. Gallagher (and following).

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} I.8.13f. Though as Samuel Lieu notes, Manichaeism was not as Christocentric as Augustine sometimes presents it. Lieu, Samuel N.C., \textit{Manichaeism} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 136.
indeed, Christ commands the soul to love God and neighbour (Matt. 22:37).

This twofold command does not apply after knowledge, but intercedes before knowledge as its necessary precursor. Consequently, Manicheans fail to employ a hermeneutic of charity that would illuminate the congruence between Old and New Testaments. For had they actually paid attention to what the Testaments teach, they would have encountered there a continuous exhortation to ask, seek, knock.

Arouse yourselves a little, I implore you, and observe how both Testaments agree, setting down quick clearly and teaching what our moral conduct ought to be and the end to which all things should be referred. The Gospel incites us to the love of God when it says: ‘Ask, seek, knock.’ [Matt. 7:7]. St. Paul incites us to it when he says: ‘That being rooted and grounded in love, may you be able to comprehend,’ [Eph. 3:17, 18] and the prophet does so when he tell us that wisdom can be known without difficulty by those who love it, seek after it, desire it, watch for it meditate upon it, and cherish it [Wisd. 6:13-20].

And to top it off, Augustine makes a plea to his former co-religionists to honour their commitment to Matthew 7:7—the verse that roped him in to the Manichean sect. “This is but to say what you yourselves have ever on your lips: ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed.’ It is love that asks, love that seeks, love that knocks, love that discloses, and love, too, that abides in that which has been disclosed.”

As an opening intervention in his anti-Manichean phase, De moribus ecclesiae provides an insight into Augustine’s early theology that reinforces our earlier emphasis on the role of desire. Its exhortations to love are not secondary features of true philosophy, but serve to pave the way for Manicheans to use reason effectively.

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22 De moribus ecclesiae I.8.13.

23 “What, then, must we do, what I ask, if we wish to know Him, if not to love Him first with complete devotion?”, De moribus ecclesiae I.25.47, trans. Gallagher.


25 See Chapter 3.

In this respect, its appeal to the authority of Christ is an appeal to the foundations of philosophy itself. For in view of Manichean stubbornness and blindness to reality, these foundations require reaffirming under the aegis of authority just to begin a conversation on the true religion. Hence when he turns to discuss the true religion a few years later with Romanianus, Augustine makes sure to draw out the implications of their status as lovers.

**Imitation of Christ: *De Vera Religione***

In *De moribus ecclesiae*, the attempt by Manicheans to proceed “from reason” ultimately exposed the weakness of reason, and handed reason over to authority. In *De vera religione*, Augustine tries to achieve a similar objective by unfolding the path of reason through the imitation of Christ. As we shall see in a moment, Augustine’s attempt to “wean” Romanianus off of Manichean rationalism involves facilitating the right use of reason in submission to Truth.27 His procedure has its foundation in the example of Christ, in that Christ showed us how to “stand up” against desires of the flesh. To begin with, we give a brief account of Christ’s role in *De vera religione*.

To introduce this treatise to Romanianus, Augustine begins by invoking the role of authority in shaping moral conduct:

> The source of this [true] religion for its followers is the history and prophecy of what divine providence has arranged to be enacted in the course of time for the salvation of the human race, that is, for its refashioning and preparation once more for eternal life. When this is believed, a way of life [*modus vitae*] accommodated to the divine commandments will purge the mind and make it capable of grasping spiritual realities... 28

As we now know, this builds on the thesis of *De moribus ecclesiae* by emphasising moral conduct as the entry point to religion. But in a move that was anticipated but

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28 *De vera religione* 7.13, trans. Hill.
never developed in *De moribus ecclesiae*, Augustine defines the heart of true religious
closest as comprehending the distinction between Creator and creature, adjusting
oneself to the reality of one’s dependency on God. As he puts it in another place: “Let
us then but avoid serving the creature rather than the creator, and becoming vain in
our thoughts *(Rom 1:25.21)*, and religion is all it should be. If we cling to the eternal
creator, we too are bound to be affected with eternity”.*29*

The basis for this distinction is not just infinite ontological disparity, he explains, but
a distance the soul generates by the sin of *cupiditas*. Thus in save us from the sin of
*cupiditas*, God offers us the *exemplum* of His Son, Jesus Christ, who calls us back to
the primal natures we abandoned through pride.

But the soul, being overwhelmed and bundled up in its sins, would be quite
unable to see this and hold onto it by itself; and there is no intermediate step,
what’s more, in the human situation fro grasping divine things, by which
human beings could stride up to a likeness of God from their earthly life.
Accordingly, God’s inexpressible mercy comes to the rescue both of
individuals and of the whole human race by means of a creature subject to
change and yet obedient to divine laws, to remind the soul of its primal and
perfect nature. That, in our times, is the Christian religion; it is in knowing
and following this that salvation is most surely and certainly to be found.*30*

Whereas in *De moribus ecclesiae* Augustine had appealed to the general category of
authority, here he bases his appeal on the authority of Christ as the “means” by which
God rescues souls from their fallen condition. But rather than associate their rescue
with the purifying work of Christ, that is His death and atonement, Augustine
chooses to focus on Christ as exemplar, and to emphasise our need to imitate His life.
In this sense, the role of Christ is that of placeholder for human nature, an invitation
to re-inhabit our true creaturely location. Were this all that Christ did, of course, on
behalf of the soul, it would amount to an impoverished Christology and Pelagian
righteousness.*31* But the way to frame this presentation of Christ, or at least one way

*29* *De vera religione* 10.19, trans. Hill.

*30* *De vera religione* 10.19, trans. Hill.

*31* Or Photinian Christology, as one scholar alleges: Dobell, Brian, *Augustine’s Intellectual Conversion:*
to understand it, is that it is preparation for deeper insight into the truth of our condition: a first step on the way to our true location in Adam.

For instance, Augustine argues that the soul’s restoration to the nature it abandoned involves coming to terms with and acknowledging its condition as fallen. The process runs something like this. At the simplest level of recognition, that is knowing its feeble nature (esse), the soul awakens to the poverty of its lowly position, and sets out in search for happiness and wisdom. And as it proceeds on this journey, invariably encountering obstacles along the way, the soul is brought to reflect upon its location in reality, and to re-assess its relation to the goal that it seeks. Thanks to the aid of divine providence, says Augustine, which permits the soul to “tend towards justice even in this perishable body”, the soul eventually realises that the only way to make its way to God is by “putting down our load of pride” and “submit[ting] our necks to the one true God”. Its journey climaxes, in other words, to a point of self-recognition in which the soul finally realises its need for God, and thereby returns to itself as a creature “in Adam”.

Framed in these terms, then, Christ’s role as placeholder to the soul’s primal nature is an invitation to step forward in the humility of confession. The example of Christ is not a foundation for Pelagian self-assertion, but a mechanism for rendering docile the soul’s prideful demeanour. Of course at the same time, it is a mechanism for restoring the soul to itself, and in particular restoring the image of God to its proper primal state. On the status of the image of God we shall say more later on. Here we wish only to emphasise that in the re-formation of the soul, Christ’s role as exemplum fulfils a preliminary step. It is a “lesson in morals”, says Augustine, that opposes

32 De vera religione 15.29, trans. Hill.
33 At this point, Augustine holds that the sufferings of Christ serve to remind us of our poverty and need for purification. See De vera religione 16.31-2.
34 Compare Athanasius: “When, then, the minds of men had fallen finally to the level of sensible things, the Word submitted to appear in a body, in order that He, as Man, might centre their senses on Himself, and convince them through His human acts that He Himself is not many only but also God, the Word and Wisdom of the true God”, Athanasius, De Incarnatione 3.16.
35 De vera religione 16.32, trans. Hill.
the sins of the proud, but which initiates the humble soul in a search for transcendence.

**Beauty and Affective Distance**

Having established the role of Christ as an *exemplum* to imitate, we turn to analyse the first attempt to put it into practise. In aversion, Augustine draws Romanianus into conversation about the Truth through inviting him to “put a question” to the order of creation.\(^{36}\) Seeking to generate affective distance between Romanianus and creation, he hopes to help Romanianus stand up and stand out in the created order. If all goes well, this examination will lead to awareness of his location both as a being who takes delight in the external world, and as a being who shares a calling to delight in higher things.

In urging Romanianus to examine the created order,\(^{37}\) Augustine explains that the aim is to re-direct the affections. “This, you see, is the way to convince us how right it is to turn our love away from the pleasures of the body and to the eternal reality of Truth”.\(^{38}\) The ascetic basis of this examination, “to turn our love away from the pleasures of the body”, is not meant to denigrate the body’s significance, but to restore its significance to its proper place. For indeed, one *should* admire the body for its beauty, but only as a *stepping-stone* to further illumination. “Accordingly, even with these pleasures of the body we find that the reason for disdaining them is not that the nature of the body is something bad but that it is shameful to wallow in the love of this last and lowest of good things when you have been granted the privilege of cleaving to and enjoying the first and highest”.\(^{39}\) Conveying an invitation

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\(^{36}\) *De vera religione* 29.52-3 and *passim*.

\(^{37}\) As Cary notes, Augustine’s emphasis on examining creation is distinct from Plotinus’ emphasis on turning away from it. See Cary, “Interiority”, p. 465.

\(^{38}\) *De vera religione* 15.29, trans. Hill.

\(^{39}\) *De vera religione* 45.83, trans. Hill.
or “hint” of the blessed life, creation implies a truth about our location in reality. We are on the way to possessing the things that we love. But the things that we love are not the things that bring happiness or fulfilment. To the contrary, these created things are signs of a greater reality, a reality endowing the creation with its beauty and splendour. The created soul often forgets this by forgetting itself; and thus to determine what it is that it seeks and desires, the soul ought to start a conversation in its own inner mind. “What else, after all, is man seeking in all this but to be the one and only, if that were possible, to whom all things are subject, in perverse imitation, that is to say, of almighty of God?”.

Indeed, the chief mechanism by which aversion proceeds is an interior dialogue between the soul and itself. As one of Augustine’s great innovations on the classical tradition, this interior dialogue, or “soliloquy” [soliloquium], provides ideal conditions whereby the soul generates affective distance between itself and creation. Through such distancing, the soul is freed to stand out from creation, and to begin to stand up against desires of the flesh. On the other hand, interior dialogue is not a once-for-all achievement. When it succeeds it enables the soul to make progress on the way, but not the kind of progress that leaves behind desires of the flesh. To the contrary, interior dialogue provides a forum for self-reflection, a place in which to confront oneself as a wayward wayfarer. As a process of self-awareness, not the end of self-awareness, it opens up new pathways to knowledge of the truth. And indeed, among the truths that it reveals to the soul is the soul’s implication as a sinner in Adam. “And to think that [Adam] would only have submissively to imitate God by living according to his commandments, and he would have all the other things made

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40 De vera religione 45.84.

41 As Carol Harrison points out, Augustine’s conception of beauty at this point in his development is marked by a tendency towards (Platonic) abstraction. “Beauty, defined as a mathematical, rational, abstract proposition, concretized in a fragmentary way in created reality, which finds its true home in the mind, intellect, and reason, above which dwells its eternal archetype—such is Augustine’s portrait of it in the early works”, Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 31. See especially his dialogue with the “architect” at De vera religione 32.59-60.

42 De vera religione 45.84, trans. Hill.

subject to him and would not sink to such baseness as to be afraid of that beastie [the serpent] who wants to have humanity at his beck and call!”.  

Though aversion, the soul comes to terms with its affective (dis)position. In this process, it learns to see itself as a lover on the way, and more importantly as a recipient of all kinds of invitations. Discovering itself in a reality that is full of such invitations, the soul recognises it needs to be careful as to which one it accepts. For example, Adam received an invitation to partake of the tree of knowledge; but Adam also received an invitation to step forward and confess. The first conferred a burden of fear, shame, guilt; the second offered a chance to shed that burden, and to receive the gift of forgiveness. Rather than accept the second invitation, the obviously better choice, Adam decided to conceal his burden by hiding the truth from God and himself. Though unable to fool God, he did manage to fool himself—and this delivered him and his descendants into a state of self-deception. But if Adam failed at the opportunity to accept God’s invitation, the aim of aversion is to re-position the soul to accept it again. For indeed, Augustine suggests that by practising aversion, Romanianus begins to open his ears to the invitation of Christ.

[The soul] is being summoned... to stillness, that is, not to set its heart on things which you cannot set your heart on without hard labor. In this way, you see, it will master them, in this way it will not be held by them but will hold them down. My yoke, he says, is light (Matt. 11:30). Those then who are subjected to this yoke have everything else subjected to them.  

Far from breaking all ties with its relationship to reality, the soul that undertakes aversion starts to acknowledge this relationship, and to connect it up with the example, claims, and teachings of Christ. In this way, we observe how Augustine once again folds an argument “from reason” towards acknowledgement of the soul’s need for the gift of authority.

The cornerstone of aversion, then, is an interior conversation that renders the soul alert to its creaturely location. The ideal practitioner of aversion, spelled out by

44 De vera religione 45.84, trans. Hill.
45 De vera religione 35.65, trans. Hill.
Augustine below, begins to generate affective distance between himself and creation by calling his relation to reality into question. In doing so, this practitioner learns to stand out from creation, and to stand up in resistance to desires that entice him.

O obstinate souls, give me someone who can see, without imagining any flesh-bound things seen… Give me not someone who argues, not someone who wishes to seem to see what he does not see. Give me someone who will stand up against [resistat] the senses of the flesh and the blows with which the soul has been beaten by means of them, who will stand up against [resistat] human custom, withstand [resistat] human praise, who will be sorry on his bed (Ps. 4:4), who will rectify his spirit (Ps. 77:6), who will not love vanities and go in search of lies (Ps. 4:2).

Locating the Soul: Introversion

If aversion generates affective distance between the soul and creation, introversion attempts to locate the soul in relation to God. As Augustine develops this inward turn in response to Manichaeism, he puts an emphasis on the soul’s creation to the image of God, and tries to articulate the proper relationship between the soul and the Truth. His final vision of the interior life consists of the properly ordered soul that both judges in accord with “the way things are”, and acknowledges illumination from the Wisdom of God.

If the twofold aim of aversion is to resist desire in order to unleash desire, the next step to follow it, which really takes place in conjunction with it, is the act of both judging the creation, and reflecting upon one’s capacity to judge.

In “introversion”, the soul attempts to re-enter its location as a creature made by God to the divine image and likeness. The difficulty, indeed the danger, implicit in this process is well exemplified by the unique position inherited by the soul: not simply

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46 *De vera religione* 34.64, trans. Hill.
one instantiation of a creaturely kind,\textsuperscript{47} but not equal in substance to the Creator God either. Thus in introversion, the soul’s challenge is to honour each truth by resisting the lure of pride that elevates the soul, and resisting the lure of carnal things that wrap the soul in darkness. Having performed the latter resistance already in aversion, the focus turns to a battle over the soul’s self-knowledge, and over the objects that seek to (de-)form it to their own image and likeness.

The main goal of introversion is re-formation of the soul’s image. To make sense of this claim, we turn again to the story of Genesis 3. In \textit{De Genesi contra Manichaeos}, Augustine says that God planted the tree of life in order to signify “the wisdom by which the soul is made to understand that it has been set at a kind of mid-point in the whole order of things [\textit{in meditullio quodam rerum se esse ordinatam}]”. Following up with this, he also says that God planted the tree of knowledge to show that “if the soul turns to itself [\textit{ad seipsam}] with its back to God and wants to enjoy its own power without any reference to God, it swells up with pride, which is the starting point of all sin (Sir. 10:13)”.\textsuperscript{48} Moreover, he explains that the wisdom in which the soul participates forms the soul to the divine image,\textsuperscript{49} whereas the soul that turns from wisdom starts to take the form of lower things.\textsuperscript{50} Whichever direction it turns, therefore, the soul is being con-formed to the object that it desires. Thus the question to arise is \textit{which} object is doing the forming: outer realities that are created and passing away, or inner realities that abide and give form to existence.

In \textit{De vera religione}, Augustine opens up the topic of formation by reflecting on the soul’s capacity to judge the creation. Working within the affective space carved out by the imitation of Christ, he calls Romanianus to give attention to the soul’s act of judgement, and to trace the source of judgement to the foundations of human knowledge and understanding. As he develops and hones this process in \textit{De vera religione}, Augustine articulates an epistemology based in divine illumination, as well

\textsuperscript{47} That is, the soul is distinct individual; it has an identity, a story, a journey of its own.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{De Genesi contra Manichaeos} II.9.12, trans. Hill.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{De Genesi contra Manichaeos} I.7.10.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{De Genesi contra Manichaeos} II.20.30.
as an anthropology based in conversion and formation of the soul. However, this articulation has a complicated pre-history that induces some scholars, notably Phillip Cary,\(^{51}\) to criticise interior knowing. For Cary, the main problem with interior knowing is that undermines the efficacy of Christ’s Incarnation. Taken a strong stance against the call to turn inward in Augustine, Cary accuses Augustine of giving short shrift to material creation, and of overly Platonising Christian spirituality to the point of contradiction. Cary’s specific critique of early works such as *De ordine* and the *Soliloquia* provides the basis on which he builds his case against interior knowing. Since these are works that fall within our purview for this study, they provide a starting point for thinking about the aim of introversion, as well as the tensions implicit to Augustine’s early thought.

**Truth “in” the Soul: *De Ordine* and *Soliloquia***

According to Cary, Augustine’s early attempt to “know God and the soul”\(^{52}\) leads to an argument that essentially undermines the Creator-creature distinction. While trying to demonstrate in the *Soliloquia* that the soul is immortal, Augustine manages to render the human soul ontologically superior to God, and thereby contradicts one of the central tenets of Christian religion. What is more, this error goes unnoticed for at least two years: not until he sit down to write *De moribus ecclesiae*, says Cary, does Augustine finally overturn his belief in the soul’s divinity.\(^{53}\) Despite this awakening, Cary still detects problems in his account. His main problem is with the whole project of turning inward to find God, an orientation that no Christian ought to teach or endorse. Setting aside the much larger question about the place of inwardness in Christianity, we set out to give a brief overview of Cary’s reading of the *Soliloquia*, and to offer a gentle criticism of the conclusions Cary draws.


\(^{52}\) *Soliloquia* 1.2.7.

\(^{53}\) Cary, *Augustine’s Invention*, pp. 111–114. According to Cary, Augustine’s belief that the soul was divine was absorbed through classical philosophy—particularly Cicero.
To set up Cary’s reading, we (i) give a brief overview of the *Soliloquia*; (ii) outline Cary’s argument and basic conclusion; and (iii) conclude by offering an alternative account to Cary’s that locates the *imago Dei* at the centre of confusion.

(i) In book II of the *Soliloquia*, Augustine sets out to prove the soul immortal. In order to do this, he begins by focussing on the nature of Truth: conversing with personified “Reason”, whom Cary will suggest is Christ, Augustine tries to prove that any entity we identify as “Truth” must by nature be immortal, or cease to be true. All things called “true” are true through Truth; but Truth itself is true through its own subsistent being. That much established, Augustine next reflects on the nature of deception. In an extended discussion on objects that deceive through the senses, he concludes with Ratio that although “a thing is called false if it tries to be something and fails”, there is a distinction between things false, and things unable to be true. For example, a portrait of a man is not strictly speaking “false”, for such things “do not wish to be false, nor are they false because they try to be so, but by necessity they conform as much as possible to the artist’s design”. On the other hand, with an actor playing the role of Hecuba on the stage, he is false not by necessity or by nature, like the portrait, but “by his own will” *,voluntate*]. That is, he wishes to be seen as what he is not, and this renders him “false” through his very pursuit. Of course an actor who did not wish to be seen as Hecuba would not be a true actor, much less a good one. In this regard, Ratio intimates that even for things called false, it curiously remains the case that they are also somehow true.

But to this and other examples, Augustine retorts that he sees “nothing… worthy of imitation” *[nihil imitatione dignum]*. His present search, he says, is not for true

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54 Cary, *Augustine’s Invention*, p. 87.
55 Cf. *Soliloquia* II.2.2.
56 *Soliloquia* II.10.18, trans. Paffenroth.
57 *Soliloquia* II.10.18, trans. Paffenroth (and following).
58 Cf. *Soliloquia* II.10.18. In suggesting this, Ratio does not pass judgement on the morality of the theatre, as Augustine later does (e.g. *Confessiones* III.2.4).
59 *Soliloquia* II.10.18, trans. Paffenroth (and following).
things that are false, for “we need not become false in order to be true to our own character”. Instead, we ought to “seek that which is true” at all times “rather than something with two contradictory faces, true on the one side, false on the other”. In response, Ratio affirms that this seeks after “great and divine things”. Their focus has successfully shifted from sense objects and images (“aversion”) to rest upon the true object that ought to command imitation. It is at this point that Ratio, evidently believing Augustine is ready, introduces to discussion the concept of a “discipline”. Singling out in particular the “discipline of disputation” [disciplina disputandi],\(^{60}\) or dialectic, she explores the relationship between dialectic and truth. Eventually, the two conclude that all the disciplines are true by Truth, and that the Truth through which they are true is the discipline of disputation.\(^{61}\) Hence it follows that dialectic is also immortal; and now the focus turns to locating dialectic in the soul.

(ii) The problematic section in Augustine’s argument begins here with dialectic. Having established the immortality of dialectic by identifying it with the Truth, Augustine now attempts to locate dialectic within the soul’s interior being. The attempt begins when Ratio appeals to a premise borrowed from (of all people) Aristotle. The premise is summed up by Ratio as follows: “If everything which is in a subject endures forever, then the subject itself must necessarily endure forever”.\(^{62}\) Applied to the relationship between the soul and dialectic, this means that because dialectic is immortal, and because it exists “in” the soul as that which is in a subject,\(^{63}\) the soul must by necessity also be immortal, in order to ensure that dialectic never ceases to be true. As Cary reveals about this argument, the premise which allows Augustine to locate dialectic “inseparably in” the soul “comes in fact from the one text of classical Greek philosophy that Augustine ever mastered firsthand (even if in

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\(^{60}\) *Soliloquia* II.11.19.


translation), Aristotle’s *Categories*.” But as Cary goes on to point out about his use of Aristotle here, it leads Augustine to an astonishing and vexing conclusion that the soul does not depend on Truth to exist, but Truth depends on the soul to exist. As Cary explains: “the philosophical concept Augustine uses to articulate the sense in which Truth is “in” the soul makes Truth ontologically dependent on the soul rather than the other way around. This is simply inept.” Indeed, Cary suggests that “what Augustine obviously wants to do in his proof for the immortality of the soul is to show how the inherent imperishability of Truth ‘rubs off’ on the soul in which it is present”. Yet instead of this, Augustine relies on a garbled Aristotelian proof that manages to offend not only Christianity, but Neoplatonism as well. “It is important to appreciate that this conclusion was as repugnant to pagan Neoplatonists as it was to orthodox Christians. Neither tradition could stomach a line of reasoning that makes ontologically higher things dependent on lower things—in this case, the intelligible world dependent on the soul.”

What is more, says Cary, though he abandons this faulty proof as soon as he realises what it means (but not until *De moribus ecclesiae*, Cary insists), Augustine continues to invoke the image and process of interiority in a way that renders his spirituality theologically problematic. Its most serious implication, in Cary’s view, is that it encourages the soul to give priority to the inner world of the “inner self”, and thus diminishes if not also denigrates the importance of outer things. According to Cary, this extends to implicate Augustine’s account of the Incarnation: that is, by rendering the role of Christ as no better than that of Cicero or Plotinus, it devalues

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64 Cary, *Augustine’s Invention*, p. 102. Cf. *Confessiones* IV.16.29, where Augustine cites this premise explicitly: “I thought [magnitude and beauty] to be in you as if in a subject, as in the case of a physical body, whereas you yourself are your own magnitude and your own beauty”, trans. Chadwick.


the salvific importance of clinging to Christ’s flesh.\textsuperscript{69} On this basis, Cary concludes that the entire project of turning inward not only starts off on the wrong foot, but continues to head in the wrong direction.

(iii) Given how carefully and comprehensively Cary proceeds with his argument, it is surprising to note his total oversight of a key concept in Augustine’s thought: the image of God. As Chapter 4 explained, Cary appears to replace the image of God with the language of “inner self”, even though the term inner self is non-existent in Latin. This would not be a problem, perhaps, if not for the fact that Cary equates the inner self with private inner space, defining this as “a whole dimension of being that is our very own, and roomy enough that we can in some sense turn into it and enter it, or look within and find things there”.\textsuperscript{70} By rendering the inner self into a private arena independent of God, Cary fails to deal with a complicated topic at the heart of Augustine’s thought, which is how properly to relate God to the soul that bears His image. As we suggest in relation to Cassiciacum first, it is not at all clear that this topic remains absent from the Soliloquia as our author tries to articulate the soul’s relation to Truth.

To begin with, we look back at the earlier dialogue De ordine. In De ordine, Augustine outlines a programme in the seven liberal disciplines that climaxes with discussion of the soul’s immortality. To re-capitulate this programme here would take too long to complete, but a brief summary can be offered with respect to its account of the soul. To do so, we place this account within an implicit framework in the text, one based on the three sins of cupiditas, curiositas, superbia (1 John 2:16). First with the disciplines that pertain to hearing, namely grammar, rhetoric, and music (leaving dialectic aside for now—see below), the soul has the opportunity either to direct its gaze to higher things, or to remain in bondage as a “slave of desires” \[\textit{servus cupiditatum}\].\textsuperscript{71} Then in geometry and astronomy (or astrology),

\textsuperscript{69} To be fair, Cary acknowledges Christ’s pre-eminence as a “sign”, but he regards this as a faint gesture toward Christ’s incarnate significance. See Cary, \textit{Augustine’s Invention}, pp. 142-3.

\textsuperscript{70} Cary, \textit{Augustine’s Invention}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{De ordine} II.16.44.
which pertain to sight, the soul catches a glimpse of creation’s numerical pattern in such a way that brings delight “to the religiously minded [or] mental torture for the merely curious [curiosi]”.\textsuperscript{72} Finally with number itself, or arithmetic, the soul turns to examine itself in relation to the highest reality. The verdict it reaches is unclear: speaking of the soul in terms of reason, Augustine ambiguously declares that “a wonderful suspicion now began to prod [reason], that itself might be that very number principle of all things. If not, number was the end and aim of its journey”.\textsuperscript{73} He follows this with an even more ambiguous claim that soul “became proud and presumptuous [multum erexit multumque praesumpsit]: it dared [to] prove that the soul is immortal”.\textsuperscript{74} And with similar ambiguity in a later passage, he offers two views on the soul’s relation to reason without offering his opinion on which one is right. “If reason is then immortal, and I, who distinguish and connect, am reason, what causes my belief, which is called mortal, is not mine. But if the soul is not what reason is [si anima non id est quod ratio] and yet I use reason and through reason I become superior, I ought to flee [by reason] from lesser to greater, from the mortal to the immortal”.\textsuperscript{75}

Since Augustine never resolves this ambiguity in \textit{De ordine}, it is up for one to interpret what he intends to convey by it. Cary, for his part, makes very little of the hesitation.\textsuperscript{76} He sees this as merely setting up the proof of the \textit{Soliloquias}, anticipating Augustine’s grand discovery of Truth “in” the soul. Yet by the way Augustine hedges around the nature of ratio, and the way he raises the spectre of pride with the verbs praesumere and erigere, makes it difficult to accept Cary’s claim that Augustine was unaware of the doctrine of creation, and that he eagerly subscribed at this time to a

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{De ordine} II.15.42, trans. Silvano Borruso.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{De ordine} II.15.42, trans. Borruso. \textit{Cf. De ordine} II.5.17.

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{De ordine} II.15.43, trans. Borruso.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{De ordine} II.19.50, my translation. Borruso translates \textit{si anima non id est quod ratio} as “if the soul is none other than reason”, thus missing the distinction Augustine is drawing entirely. Rather it seems he is repeating the same two possibilities he did earlier with number: either reason is number, or reason seeks number as its final end. \textit{Cf. Gerber, Chad Tyler, The Spirit of Augustine’s Early Theology: Contextualizing Augustine’s Pneumatology} (London: Ashgate, 2012), p. 91, n. 151.

\textsuperscript{76} Cary, \textit{Augustine’s Invention}, p. 93.
doctrine of the soul’s divinity.\textsuperscript{77} Both claims, in fact, have been recently challenged: according Chad Tyler Gerber, Augustine’s few references at Cassiciacum to the soul as “divine” may amount to no more than it does for Ambrose and Victorinus;\textsuperscript{78} while his view on creation, while not explicitly stated in the way it is later, can be gleaned from not a few passages in \textit{De ordine} and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{79} But since the weight of Cary’s critique rests on the proof in the \textit{Soliloquia}, our main disagreement centres upon his selective reading of the \textit{Soliloquia} which screens out another possibility relating to the doctrine of the \textit{imago Dei}.

To begin with, Augustine cites the doctrine explicitly in his opening prayer to book I: “God, who has made humanity in your \textit{image and likeness} (Gn. 1:26), which anyone who has come to know himself recognizes”.\textsuperscript{80} Though hardly able to sustain an interpretation on its own, this citation at least shows Augustine was aware of the doctrine,\textsuperscript{81} and that it presented itself as a matter for prayer in relation to the dialogue. It is also worth pointing out that at the start and end of book II, Augustine identifies their focus with the second term of the triad \textit{esse-vivere-intellegere},\textsuperscript{82} only to indicate there is more to say about the soul’s nature at a later point.\textsuperscript{83} Cary thinks this later argument takes place in \textit{De immortalitate animae}, but there is no consensus on what this unfinished work actually shows about Augustine.\textsuperscript{84} Even so, the end of book II opens up a new possibility on how the soul might “relate to” immortal Truth.

In response to Augustine’s query about images in the mind (\textit{phantasia}), namely those

\textsuperscript{77} See Cary, \textit{Augustine’s Invention}, p. 86.

\textsuperscript{78} Gerber, \textit{The Spirit of Augustine's Early Theology}, pp. 82-3, 92-100.

\textsuperscript{79} Gerber, \textit{The Spirit of Augustine's Early Theology}, pp. 72-9. See also Harrison, \textit{Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology}, p. 92 and passim.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Soliloquia} I.1.4, trans. Paffenroth.

\textsuperscript{81} He would have known it from the Manicheans, and later from Ambrose. Cf. \textit{Confessiones} VI.4.5.

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Soliloquia} II.1.1.

\textsuperscript{83} Ratio declares at the end of book II: “We have gone through these wanderings for no other reason than for your training, so that you might be fit to see [truth]” (II.20.34), and later: “These things will be discussed with more care and precision when we begin to examine the understanding, which is the next part of our exposition. There we will explain and discuss, as best we can, any concerns about the life of the soul” (II.20.36), trans. Paffenroth. We explore this passage briefly below.

\textsuperscript{84} On this point see Van Fleteren’s review of Cary in \textit{Augustinian Studies} 33:2 (2002),p. 284.
that are derived or manipulated from corporeal objects, Ratio proposes that in order to discover incorporeal Truth, the soul must turn its gaze “fully and completely at the face of truth [faciem veritatis], whose splendour shines faintly in those [liberal] arts”. And as for avoiding corporeal images or images taken from corporeal objects, Ratio also explains how “the inner mind [mens interior], which wishes to see what is true, turns [convertat] rather, if it can, toward that according to which it judges that all these squares are true”. In other words, the soul does not merely possess the truth in itself. It must also turn toward or be converted to truth by gazing on the “face of truth” for inner enlightenment. Here already at the end of book II of the Soliloquia, Augustine is gesturing toward his mature insight into the illumination (formation) of the soul. His reference to the face of truth echoes his reference to the “visage of philosophy” [facies philosophiae], discussed in Chapter 3; whilst his emphasis on image and imitation at the beginning of book II lends support to a different account of the soul’s relation to Christ—who is the “discipline of disciplines”. For if Christ is the One to whom the soul turns for illumination, this raises the distinct possibility, which we can only hint at here, that Augustine’s source for this failed “proof” is not Aristotle after all, but rather Aristotle mediated to him through the Christian Platonist Marius Victorinus. In his treatise Adversus Arium, for example, Victorinus will argue that Christ dwells “in” the soul so as never to depart from it:

“I,” he says, “I dwell in you.” [Jn. 14.25-6]. For life has been given, and now Christ does not depart from them. They are therefore animated also with a

87 De Academicis II.3.7.
88 Cf. Epistula 11.4; Augustine writes: “That form is properly ascribed to the Son also pertains to a certain discipline and skill, if we are correct to use this term in these areas, and to the understanding by which the mind itself is informed by thought”; and again, “Hence, human beings needed a discipline by which they might be suitably taught and formed”, trans. Edmund Hill.
spiritual movement: this is the dwelling of Christ in them; and these are the souls in which the Spirit dwells and from which he never withdraws himself.\textsuperscript{90}

Identifying Christ or the Logos as the image of God,\textsuperscript{91} and the soul as an image of the image of Logos (though with some worrisome aspects which we set aside for now),\textsuperscript{92} Victorinus may well have contributed to Augustine’s early approach to the soul, and may well have misled Augustine into the proof that Cary critiques.

Tentative as this counter-proposal is—and we do not advance it further here—the indisputable fact is that immediately following his failed proof in the \textit{Soliloquia}, Augustine will make explicit reference to the image of God,\textsuperscript{93} and will begin to build a new approach to the soul’s illumination.

\textbf{Virtue and Love: \textit{De Moribus Ecclesiae}}

Since he overlooks the \textit{imago Dei} in the \textit{Soliloquia}, Cary falters in his account of virtue in \textit{De moribus ecclesiae}. Drawing a line from Cassiciacum to Augustine’s first (or second)\textsuperscript{94} anti-Manichean treatise, Cary there observes Augustine’s struggle to relate virtue to the soul, and explains this is a by-product of his earlier belief in the soul’s divinity.\textsuperscript{95} Over against this reading, we propose Augustine’s struggle turns on his account of the \textit{imago Dei}, as it did at Cassiciacum, and that \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} marks the first instance of his mature theological outlook. To put it briefly: Augustine teaches that the virtuous soul is the soul obedient to or formed by Christ.

\textsuperscript{90} Victorinus, \textit{Adversus Arium} III.2.14, trans. Mary T. Clark.

\textsuperscript{91} Cf. \textit{Adversus Arium} I.20.

\textsuperscript{92} In particular, Victorinus appears to blur the line between Creator and creature. For discussion and comparison see Gioia, Luigi, \textit{The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 269-275.

\textsuperscript{93} Cf. \textit{De quantitate animae} 36.80. And let us not forget his phrase \textit{factus erectior} in \textit{De beata vita}, possibly invoking the original creation of Adam. See Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{94} Augustine alludes to another anti-Manichean work at the beginning of \textit{De moribus ecclesiae}; this is usually identified as \textit{De Genesi contra Manichaeos}.

\textsuperscript{95} Cary, \textit{Augustine’s Invention}, pp. 111-2.
(“the Virtue of God”); and that through obeying Christ, the soul is re-fashioned according to the divine image and likeness (“the Wisdom of God”).

In his argument “from reason” that we outlined earlier, Augustine rehearses the Stoic claim that virtue “perfects” the soul, and then proceeds almost to say that virtue is the *summum bonum*. He hesitates, though, over where precisely he ought to locate virtue. Is it “outside” the soul, as in an object to be sought? Or is virtue that which arises “in” the soul as it pursues another object, namely God? Though he does not come down here one way or the other, his subsequent statements seem to indicate that virtue is not the object of our search. Virtue, rather, is that which “arises from” our pursuit of God, the fruit of our obedience to the double love command of Christ (Matt. 22:37-40). As he develops the concept later on, virtue derives from or is based in *caritas*, which he represents as the “form of the virtues,” and corresponds to the pluriform reality of temporal created goods. Insofar, then, as virtue is identified with Christ in Holy Scripture (in 1 Cor. 1:24), it refers to His human nature as an example to imitate. Hence virtue corresponds with “action” of the soul, wisdom with the soul’s “contemplation” of truth.

To illustrate Augustine’s argument, we examine a section of text that develops an inter-Testamental account of the soul’s renovation. The account is also based on an implicit Trinitarian structure: beginning with God the Father, to whom we “ought to be united” (16.26), it transitions to God the Son who shapes us and teaches us (16.27-

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96 De moribus ecclesiae I.6.9.

97 *a quo existit*, De moribus ecclesiae I.25.46.


99 For Augustine, writes O’Donovan, “True virtue is love for God, and the four cardinal virtues are manifestations of this life in certain typical relations into which human existence leads us...Augustine has described virtue as such and its differentiation into the cardinal virtues in terms of the relation of an undifferentiated soul to a differentiated external reality that it encounters in its history, to God, to adversity, and to the lower creation”, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, p. 223. This stands to contradict James Wetzel’s account of virtue in De moribus ecclesiae; see Augustine and the Limits of Virtue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 72-3.

100 Cary makes a similar suggestion *en passant*, *Augustine’s Invention*, p. 87.

101 De moribus ecclesiae I.16.28; see below.
80), and to the Holy Spirit who guides us and forms us “in Christ” (16.29). With the Father, the emphasis is on adherence through love (Ps. 72:28): God is the end for which the soul longs and strives. With the Son, the focus shifts to “working” and “teaching”, to the “virtue and wisdom” that Christ embodies and conveys. At this stage, Augustine lingers over the role played by Christ in preparing us to love God with sobriety and justice. He states: “What these two things can be compared to, that is, efficacy in action and sobriety of contemplation, which the virtue and wisdom of God (in other words, the Son of God) gives to those that love Him, I do not know”.102

In other words, Christ re-positions us to love God as we should, but only as we will to by way of imitation. With the Spirit, however, our “will” to imitate the Son becomes wrapped up in the gift and inspiration of love. Thus here for the first time, Augustine quotes his soon-to-be favourite verse, Romans 5:5, together with other verses that confirm Paul’s message. “St. Paul says: ‘The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’ [Rom. 5:5]. And the prophet says: ‘The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful’ [Wisd. 1:5]. For where there is deceit, there is no charity. St. Paul says: ‘We have become confirmed to the image of the Son of God’ [Rom. 8:29]. And the prophet says: ‘The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us’ [Ps. 4:7]”.103

With the conjoining of Psalm 4:7 and Romans 8:29,104 Augustine gestures to his “new” view of the soul’s renovation: formation in Christ through the Spirit’s gift of love.105 His emphasis on the Spirit’s function is one of the striking features of this pivotal text; indeed it marks a turning point in his conception of the spiritual life. A few quotations will suffice: “It is through love, then, that we are conformed to God, and being so conformed and made like to Him and set apart from the world, we are no longer confounded with those things which should be subject to us. But this is the

104 For Psalm 4:7 see Chapter 4.
105 It is “new” in that it makes explicit ideas implicit at Cassiciacum. For an account of Augustine’s early “love pneumatology” see Gerber, The Spirit of Augustine’s Early Theology, pp. 140-5.
work of the Holy Spirit”.\textsuperscript{106} “It is not I, but St. Paul who exclaims: ‘For creation was made subject to vanity’ [Rom. 8:19]. Now, what is subject to vanity cannot separate us from vanity and unite us to truth. But this the Holy Spirit does”.\textsuperscript{107} “Only the pure and sincere love of God which manifests itself especially in one’s way of life, and of which we have already said so much, can bring [understanding] about. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, this love leads to the Son, that is, to the wisdom of God through whom the Father Himself is known”.\textsuperscript{108}

In this way, though we affirm that a change takes place between the \textit{Soliloquia} and \textit{De moribus ecclesiae}, we locate this change within a different question than Cary presumes: how to know God and the soul based on a concept of divine image. For it is in trying to balance two different aspects of the soul, both its dependence on God and its unique relation to God, that Augustine stumbles at first to render correctly the relation of God to the soul, but maintains throughout a clear-sightedness about the soul’s image-status. In \textit{De moribus ecclesiae}, he sums up this difficult balance with reference to the “likeness” that the soul aims to achieve:

Now, since God can be known by deserving souls only through the intelligence, although He is far superior to the mind as its Creator and Author, there was reason to fear that the human mind, inasmuch as it, too, is counted among invisible and immaterial beings, might consider itself to be of the same nature as its Creator, thus cutting itself off by pride from Him to whom it ought to be united by love. The mind becomes like God, to the extent this is given to it, when it humbly submits itself to Him for enlightenment. And while it achieves the greatest closeness by the submission which produces likeness \textit{[subiectio… qua similis fit]}, of necessity it is driven far from Him by the presumptuous desire for an ever greater likeness \textit{[qua vult esse similior]}. It is this presumption that turns the mind from obedience to the laws of God, by making it desire to be its own master, as He is.\textsuperscript{109}

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\textsuperscript{106} \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} I.13.23, trans. Gallagher.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} I.13.23, trans. Gallagher.
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} I.17.31, trans. Gallagher.
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{De moribus ecclesiae} I.12.20, trans. Gallagher.
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On our reading, the soul’s “presumption” refers to Adam’s attempt to seize divine likeness. And the soul’s “submission” refers to the imitation of Christ, humility, that brings likeness into being. With this established, we turn now to De vera religione to examine Augustine’s later account of the soul’s introversion.

Illumination and Formation: De Vera Religione

The above quotation provides a nice segue into De vera religione. In this text, Augustine draws attention to the subject of the soul’s nature by inviting Romanianus to turn inward and question his capacity for judgement. Having enabled the soul to “stand out” from the rest of creation, summoning it to “stand up” against desires of the flesh (cupiditas), he shifts the focus to the soul’s status as a creaturely being by interrogating the pride (superbia) that blocks the soul’s formation. His objective, remember, remains that of the true religion: to distinguish Creator from creature, and so enable the creature to flourish. And to do this, Augustine has but two things to prove: that the soul remains changeable and error-prone by nature; and that it cannot serve as the source of its own illumination. In point of fact, he argues, the only basis on which the soul can execute judgement is to be found in adherence to unchangeable Truth: the divine light that enables the soul to be the image of God by fulfilling the preconditions for cognitive function. He thus commands Romanianus: “Let us walk while we have the light of day, that is, while we can make use of reason, so that being converted and turned towards God by his Word, which is the true light, we may deserve to be enlightened, lest the dark overtake us”.

Through the proper exercise of reason, our “turning inward” to the image of God, we are re-disposed by the objects we examine and judge (in this case the soul) to question our place in the order of creation. To illustrate this, Augustine turns again to the concept of discipline. Although the rational soul sits as judge over sensible

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110 De vera religione 42.79, trans. Hill
impressions, the senses merely “reporting” impressions they receive, the rational soul is unable to make true judgements “of its own accord”, but only in accordance with “some art or discipline or wisdom”. For indeed, the rational soul proves itself unstable “when it is found to be now skilful, now wanting in skill”. It becomes more reliable, conversely, the more fully it “participates” in wisdom, when it allows the true discipline to form it and shape it. Participation in wisdom thus entails formation and illumination. Instead of turning inward to oneself as the source of illumination, taking a perverse delight in the powers one has received, not earned, as did Adam, one becomes more fully capable of discharging these powers to the extent that one turns inward in surrender to the Truth. Augustine explains: “And so the soul, being well aware that it does not judge the looks and motions of bodies by the standard of itself, must at the same time acknowledge that, just as its own nature excels the nature it makes judgements on, so too is it excelled itself by the nature according to which it makes such judgements and on which it is in no way competent to make judgements itself”. On the other hand, Augustine suggests that in adhering to Truth “with total charity”, the soul actually becomes “the very law by which [God] judges all things and on which nobody can pass judgement”. The law he has in view here is the “eternal law” of God, a law he associates in De ordine with discipline itself.

In suggesting that by turning inward the soul becomes a law unto itself, Augustine is affirming that the soul’s formation to the image of God entails con-formation to that Wisdom and Law by which all things are formed, namely Christ. “He came forth, you see, as the form and shape of all things, supremely achieving the One, from

111 Augustine cites the example of an oar “bent” in water, an analogy he (or Ratio) also uses in the Soliloquia (II.9.16). See De vera religione 29.53.

112 Harrison, Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology, pp. 105-6, n. 98. For development of this connection see Schumacher, Lydia, Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), pp. 25-65.


114 De vera religione 31.58, trans. Hill.

115 “Acquiring knowledge of the eternal law, therefore, is the sacred right of unspotted minds, while for passing judgments on it there is no such right”, De vera religione 31.58, trans. Hill.


117 Cf. De vera religione 44.82.
whom he is, so that all other things that are, insofar as they are like the One, become so through that form or shape.\textsuperscript{118} And since humanity shares a special relation to that “form or shape” of things, it is rightly said to be “through this form in such a way as also to be to it, such as all rational and intelligence creatures, among which man is so rightly said to have made to the image and likeness of God”.\textsuperscript{119}

For Augustine, the point of introversion is not creation of an “inner self”, nor does an “inner self” result from introversion. Instead through introversion, the soul turns attention to the “spot” where Adam fell, the sin of pride, in order to re-assess its own relation to its capacity for rational judgement. Here, then, we must disagree with Cary’s claim about introversion that it structures self-knowledge around a sphere of private interiority. This privacy Cary demurs he rightly identifies with the Fall of humanity,\textsuperscript{120} but he fails to consider how such private inward fallenness is precisely the desire that introversion inverts. In other words, not “third term” slips out from introversion, providing a “neutral” space for private inward delight. Rather Augustine structures introversion according to a restless desire for God, the weight of love, that bears the soul from the Fall of Adam (\textit{exterior homo}) to its flourishing in the second Adam, Christ (\textit{interior homo}).\textsuperscript{121} Accordingly, Augustine admonishes Romanianus to press ahead with his quest, and to continue doing battle with the sins of 1 John 2:16. “All that being said, I urge you, my dearest friends and neighbors, and along with you I urge myself, to run with all the speed we can manage towards the goal to which God is urging us through his Wisdom. Let us not set our hearts on the world, since everything that is in the world is the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and worldly ambition”.\textsuperscript{122}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[118] \textit{De vera religione} 43.80, trans. Hill.
\item[119] \textit{De vera religione} 44.82.
\item[120] Cary, Augustine’s Invention, p. 122f.
\item[121] In response to Cary’s allegation of a private inner self, Augustine would insist on the fluidity of the process from the “old self” to the “new self”. In \textit{Enarrationes in Psalmos} 2.25, he argues that between these two selves there is no third self “in the middle who discards the old self and picks up the new one”. Instead, there is just one self (or creature) in relation to the thing it loves. Trans. Boulding.
\item[122] \textit{De vera religione} 55.107, trans. Hill.
\end{footnotes}
Acknowledging the Creator: Transcendence

Introversion leads the soul to acknowledge its transience, and to turn its attention to unchangeable Truth. In its attempt to “go into” Truth by ascending with reason, the soul discovers the great chasm separating itself from the Truth, and thus learns to receive itself as a lover on the way: “Confess that you are not what Truth is”.

In aversion, we carve out space for the soul to step forward. In introversion, we turn inward to interrogate the soul. And in transcendence, we are drawn upward by the weight of true love to contemplate the Truth on whom we depend. To frame this process or journey once again with Genesis 3, transcendence represents the soul’s attempt to return to its location by offering up a new response to God’s question Where are you?. Whereas Adam turned this question on its head, rejecting God’s invitation to step forward and confess, the fallen soul overturns Adam’s prideful response by acknowledging its dependence on divine illumination. In this respect, transcendence is not a distinct phase of interior knowing, a process set in isolation from the object of desire. Rather it continues and intensifies the soul’s re-formation by putting it in contact with the object of supreme worth: Truth itself.

In De vera religione, there are early hints of this final discovery of Truth, but Augustine reaches the climax towards the middle of the treatise. In a passage that also usefully sums up the three-step process of interior knowing, Augustine declares victory over his Manichean opponents by delivering them into a confession of divine transcendence. Not unlike his victory over the sceptics in Chapter 3, his declaration is presented here as an encounter with the Truth, but also an encounter with the great chasm separating God from the soul.

\[123\] E.g. De vera religione 34.64.
To begin with, Augustine invites Romanianus to “[a]sk bodily pleasure what there is to it; you will find it is nothing else but concord”. Following this with a command to recognise “what the last word in concord might be”, he presses Romanianus not to hide from the clarity he gains from it. “Do not go outside, come back into yourself. It is in the inner self [interiore homine] that Truth dwells”. (introversion). Here it is important to note that by locating Truth “in the inner self”, Augustine could either be speaking metabolically about the image of God in the soul, or he could mean that Truth dwells “in” the soul as private inner space. Both readings apply metaphors to state their conclusions; but the latter reading relies upon a foreign concept, “the inner self”, where the traditional terms imago Dei and interior homo do fine. Indeed, the point of this passage is not to establish the soul as private inner space. It is to re-direct the soul to an “irreducible otherness” at the heart of its identity as the image of God.

Coming to terms with this otherness involves coming to terms with one’s pride, particularly the pride that elevates reason above the journey of desire. For that reason, Augustine continues to urge Romanianus to higher feats of vision, but also attests to the fact of his wayfaring status. “And if you find your own nature to be subject to change, transcend even yourself. But remember, when you are transcending yourself, that it is your reasoning soul transcending yourself”. We transcend not as equals to the God that we (think we) are, but as souls seeking enjoyment in the God we desire. And so, drawing to a close this three-step process, Augustine presents the soul as a lover on the way.

So then, direct your course to what the light of reason itself gets its light from. Where, after all, does every good reasoner arrive at but the truth? Since Truth herself, of course, does not reach herself by a process of reasoning but is herself what reasoners are aiming at, see there the concord that cannot be surpassed, and put yourself in accord with her. Confess that you are not what

124 De vera religione 39.72, trans. Hill (and following).

125 Cary, Augustine's Invention, p. 3.


127 For the contrast between (Adam’s) pride and the inner life see Enarrationes in Psalmos 1.4.
she is—if in fact she does not seek herself, while you have sought her, and come to her, not by walking from one place to another but by the desire of your mind, so that the inner self might find in accord with its lodger not a carnal pleasure of the lowest sort but a spiritual pleasure of the highest.\textsuperscript{128}

As it strains forward, squints harder, and strives higher and higher, the rational soul comes into itself as a lover on the way, learning how to put itself “in accord with its lodger”. This accord involves con-forming to the Wisdom of God, or Concord; it proceeds, that is, by converting carnal pleasure into “spiritual pleasure of the highest”. The life of the \textit{interior homo}, then, is marked above all by self-awareness, knowing oneself in relation to God as lover. This is the fruit of the soul’s attempt at transcendence. It is also the process that inverts the pride of Adam.

Transcendence, so understood, is not an attempt to escape this world. It is an exercise in self-divestment that arouses the weight of love. Through transcendence, the soul re-embodies its spiritual status by acknowledging its location as a lover on the way. In this sense, the soul achieves what David Dawson describes as a reversal of pride and re-capitulation of the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{129} Stepping forward from its hiding place “outside” of truth, the soul returns to the “inside” of its humble location. There it starts to perceive itself as a lover of this world, rather than God, and takes into account the heavy burden of its toil upon the land. Genesis 3 provides the backdrop to this self-realisation as the soul renders itself available to divine transcendence. But if it struggles to maintain its vision with so brilliant a divine light—an inevitable experience for Manicheans, as we saw already—it still retains not only a memory of this all-too-temporary vision, but also a sense of its condition as a fallen rational


\textsuperscript{129} Dawson writes: “Augustine understands human self-transcendence precisely as a process of becoming ‘more embodied’ as an appropriation of an original ‘becoming embodied’ by the deity. With this understanding of transcendence, Augustine resists the assumptions of his idealist Neoplatonic culture, even while insisting in the face of Manichean materialists that God has no body. To say that a divine being transcends itself by becoming embodied as an appropriation of original divine self-embodiment is to restate Augustine’s view of the incarnation. And to say that an embodied human being transcends herself by becoming more embodied is to describe the human benefit of that incarnation. Augustine combines the two ideas by saying that divine \textit{kenosis} or self-emptying (divine self-transcendence) displaces human pride by divine humility (human self-transcendence)”. See Dawson, David, “Transcendence as Embodiment: Augustine’s Domestication of \textit{Gnosis}”, \textit{Modern Theology} 10:1 (1994), pp. 3-4.
creature. “But if the mind’s eye blinks and trembles at the prospect of gazing upon these things, set it at rest. Don’t contend with anything but the habits of your bodies [aversion]. Conquer those, and you will have conquered everything. We are certainly seeking the one, than which there is nothing more simple. So then, let us seek in simplicity of heart [introversion]. Be still, he says, and acknowledge that I am the Lord (Ps. 46:10)—not with the stillness of sloth but with the stillness of reflection, so that you may be free of time and places [transcendence].”

The freedom the soul seeks, then, is freedom from the weight of perverse desire, enabling it to love God with all that it has. And since such freedom is made available through divine invitation, all it requires is a willing soul to step forward and accept it. With a phrase we shall meet again in Chapter 7, then, Augustine bases conversion on the condition of willingness:

So friends of this world [Jas. 4:4], of which they will be masters if they are willing [si...voluerint] to be sons of God, seeing that he gave them the right to become sons of God [Jn. 1:12]—so the friends of this world, then, are so afraid of being torn from its embrace that they find nothing more laborious than not toiling away at hard labor”.

Through its attempted transcendence, the soul discovers that true knowledge of God demands true willingness to know Him. And yet the more the soul labours to rise to God under the strain of its earthly affection, the more it realises the inner conflict between contrary weights of love.

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130 De vera religione 35.65, trans. Hill.
131 De vera religione 12.24, trans. Hill.
ITINERARY #3

DE LIBERO ARBITRIO
Chapter 6

ENTERING THE WILL

To prepare for our third and final itinerary in this study, we pause to look back on our previous travels. Through an analysis of two itineraries, we covered two major phases in Augustine’s early career. First we addressed his turn to scepticism in AD 386 by mapping out a journey “from Cicero to Christ”. Then we focussed on his critique of Manichaeism in AD 390-1 by charting a convoluted course from “aversion to transcendence”. In each itinerary, we further specified a process of re-locating the soul, positioning it to “wake up” and receive the gift of God. In De Academicis, we traced this process to a prayer for illumination: “Who can show us the truth?”. In De vera religione, we traced it to acknowledgement of transcendence and restoration of the divine image: “Confess that you are not what Truth is”.

Although each itinerary entailed both moral and intellectual dimensions, the predominant focus for Augustine, owing in part to his audience, centred upon the soul’s intellectual formation, not its moral formation. Moral formation becomes the predominant theme in his third itinerary, then, as the context shifts in focus to liberum arbitrium voluntatis: “free choice of the will”.¹ In this initial chapter, devoted to a study of the early dialogue De libero arbitrio (AD 388-95), we seek to examine Augustine’s early reflections on moral freedom and responsibility through the lens of his commentary on Genesis 3. Building on our account of “inverting” the Fall of Adam, we establish the parameters within which Augustine explores freedom of the will as a concept that identifies not just a “theory” of agency, but a reality we must “re-enter” in order to surrender to God.

¹ Following Peter King’s translation of this phrase, though remembering our reservations about translating voluntas as “the will” (see Introduction).
**Approaching *De Libero Arbitrio***

Before we set out to plan this itinerary, a few words about the dialogue *De libero arbitrio* are in order. Written across the span of nearly eight years (AD 388-95), *De libero arbitrio* has lived at the centre of controversy in Augustine’s own lifetime, and into the present day. For modern scholars, the dialogue remains unquestionably central to understanding Augustine’s development as a teacher of “the will”. Though scholars may approach this work from different angles—historical, philosophical, theological, literary—all tend to reach a similar judgement concerning its content, a judgement Carol Harrison presents as discontinuity thesis.

According to Harrison, the discontinuity thesis posits two distinct phases in our author’s development, “two Augustines”, and maintains that the point of transition turns on a conception of the will. Conveniently enough, this transition can be seen to take place across the three books of *De libero arbitrio*. For example, scholars allege that in book I of *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine provides a more positive account (facilitas) of the soul’s agent-capacity. Beholden to a classical optimism with regard

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2 As with virtually all aspects of this work, chronology is a disputed matter. The general view is that Augustine finished book I in AD 388, then set aside books II and III until later points in his career (AD 392 and AD 395, for example). The claim that book I was finished first has been challenged: Augustine could well have revisited it at a later point, and may not have developed it independently of books II and III. For a good overview and compelling argument that they were written together, see Harrison, Simon, *Augustine's Way into the Will: The Theological and Philosophical Significance of De libero arbitrio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 17-27.

3 Pelagius famously weighed in on its significance; see *Retractationes* I.9.3f.


to human nature—one scholar calls him “on paper, more Pelagian than Pelagius”!

Augustine is said to have changed his mind after completion of book I, and to have actually contradicted himself in book III of the same work. In book III, he no longer views the soul as the cause of its own salvation, but as an agent largely constricted in movement by the effect of Adam’s Fall (difficultas). Yet not until he re-reads Paul in the mid-to-late 390s (AD 396 is the conventional date) does Augustine finally overturn his embarrassing optimism, exchanging it with a more biblical account of the soul’s dependence on prevenient divine grace.

As Harrison also points out, this attempt to document a radical change within the corpus has generated many sensational accounts of Augustine’s early development. Yet in response to this near-consensus on the nature of such development, Harrison and others have voiced their disagreement. Indeed, it is safe to say that more recent studies of *De libero arbitrio* have complicated the picture in a number of ways. The “two Augustines” viewpoint, long foisted upon books I and III, has started to give way to a more continuous narrative in which Augustine’s prowess as a gifted teacher is accorded its due. Thus for C. Harrison, *De libero arbitrio* features Augustine “the consummate teacher” drawing his readers into knowledge of the will through a step-by-step process. So too for Simon Harrison, publishing in the same year as Carol Harrison (and out of the same press, with the same surname!), *De libero arbitrio* marks the achievement of a crafty interlocutor-teacher who capably and carefully navigates the complex terrain of agency. On the implicit structure and creative

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9 Cf. *De libero arbitrio* III.18.51.172 and *passim*.

10 *Ad Simplicianum* is the benchmark text.


12 Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology*, p. 223.
purpose to books I-III of *De libero arbitrio*, S. Harrison offers the following insight that will guide our interpretation:

My claim is that each book forms a further stage in an ascending ladder of difficulty. Book 1 is “beginner’s level”. In this book no (philosophical) knowledge is presupposed. The argument begins from consideration of ordinary everyday examples (murder and adultery) and simple concepts (law and order). The second book is intermediate. Only what has gone before is presupposed, but we are already in the heady area of “wisdom” and number. The third is “advanced”. Only at this stage are we able to tackle such difficult and distressing questions as the kind of “necessity” entailed by God’s foreknowledge, and the suffering of animals and of children. Even the increase in the use of biblical quotation is part of the increase in the complexity of the terms of reference of the discussion. They are not required to get from one step to another, but the steps taken lead us into the difficult territory where we must seriously consider the biblical terminology.¹³

According to Harrison, the alleged contradictions among the three cited books are telling us a different story than we often presuppose. In these books, Augustine is not ignorant of where he is or where he is going. Instead he is fully aware of and fully committed to a long process of surrender. He is not wondering about what to say next, or “experimenting” with novel ideas, as O’Connell portrays him.¹⁴ Instead he sets out on familiar terrain from his Cassiciacum period, but takes a turn towards the moral dimension of human experience. For S. Harrison, this turn to the moral shares an analogous structure to Augustine’s reflections on human existence through use of the cogito.¹⁵ It extends earlier enquiries into the condition of the soul by opening up new horizons implicit throughout the corpus—horizons Augustine intended to open up the moment that he converted (hence his early start on book I *De libero arbitrio*). Thus where scholars attempt to partition Augustine’s account of the will, both Harrisons seek to allow it to unfold in its own way.

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¹³ Harrison, S., *Augustine’s Way into the Will*, p. 31.

¹⁴ O’Connell, “Stoicism Revisited”, p. 50 and *passim*.

¹⁵ Indeed, this is one of the great insights of Harrison’s work, as we have already had occasion to demonstrate. See Harrison, S., *Augustine’s Way into the Will*, pp. 131-150.
And as we argued earlier and wish to argue here, the justification for us allowing Augustine’s account of the will to unfold stems from the *ordo caritatis* that governs his craft.\textsuperscript{16} Meandering though its argument may be, circuitous and full of tensions at points, *De libero arbitrio* intends its readers to struggle through its content for the purpose of illuminating their inhabitancy of the moral sphere. Taking our cue from these new approaches to the will in Augustine, we propose that *De libero arbitrio* is not an effort in abstract theory, an exercise by an analytic philosopher to “define” human agency and freedom,\textsuperscript{17} but seeks to awaken self-awareness of where we are in relation to God, our moral location as agents “in Adam”.

**Audience: Evodius, Dualism, Impietas**

How does Augustine approach the concept of agency in *De libero arbitrio*? The answer to that is linked to the answer to another question: who is his readership in *De libero arbitrio*? As pointed out by Simon Harrison,\textsuperscript{18} a crucial assumption to this work is that any reader can take part in it, so long as she is willing (*si volet*).\textsuperscript{19} *De libero arbitrio*, that is, extends an open invitation to take part in its discussion. To join scholarship in labelling it “anti-Manichee”\textsuperscript{20} is insufficient to its purpose. The only stipulation in this work, the precondition so to speak, is that the reader wants to learn about the topic at hand: that she wills to know *that* she wills, and (eventually) *what* she wills. In this vein, Harrison points out that the earliest manuscripts of this work never refer to its interlocutor by name. The name “Evodius”, says Harrison, represents a late addition, an “intrusion of renaissance scholarship” into the form of

\textsuperscript{16} See Chapter 1.


\textsuperscript{19} For discussion of this phrase see Chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{20} E.g. O’Connell, “Stoicism Revisited”, p. 50.
the dialogue.\textsuperscript{21} This form is meant to convey an important point. By leaving the name anonymous, Augustine makes reader contribution an essential component. It is our \textit{active participation} that he wants, not our passing consideration. “In this way”, concludes Harrison, “the form of the work instantiates the central thrust of the work as a whole: our \textit{knowledge} of our responsibility”.\textsuperscript{22}

In full agreement with this conclusion, we wish to add to it another dimension that Harrison underplays. Harrison is right to present “willingness” as a precondition to the dialogue, and he is also right to highlight “form” as instantiating purpose. Since \textit{knowledge} of the will entails the \textit{will} to know it, our willingness becomes a crucial test of our ability to advance. In many ways, of course, this re-emphasises a premise from earlier works: desire is the indispensable component in making progress on the way. Thus by focussing on the \textit{will} to know something of the truth, Augustine establishes a stronger connection between desire and responsibility. At the same time, we wish to say something about the role of faith in this dialogue that narrows down its audience in a particular sense. To bring this role into focus, we turn briefly to an opening remark Augustine makes to his reader “Evodius”.\textsuperscript{23}

In response to Evodius’ investigation into the origin of evil, “whence evil?” [\textit{unde malum}?, Augustine offers the following advice towards the beginning of book I: “Take heart! Believe as you do: there is no better belief, even if the reason why it is so is hidden. Holding God in the highest esteem is surely the most authentic beginning of religiousness [\textit{exordium pietatis}]”.\textsuperscript{24} What could it mean that Evodius must cling to pious faith? Is this Augustine adorning dialogue with religious sentiment, or does he believe faith contributes somehow to the content of debate? In appealing to the Christian belief that God is good, just, and the Creator of all good things,\textsuperscript{25} Augustine

\textsuperscript{21} Harrison, \textit{Augustine’s Way into the Will}, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{22} Harrison, \textit{Augustine’s Way into the Will}, pp. 49-50.

\textsuperscript{23} For sake of convenience, we refer to the reader as “Evodius” throughout our analysis.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{De libero arbitrio} I.2.5.12, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{25} The full list of beliefs to which Evodius must subscribe centres (mostly) on the doctrine of creation: omnipotent, unchangeable, \textit{Creator omnium bonorum}, just Ruler, self-sufficient (created all things ex
indicates that faith in God fulfils an important function. It offers Evodius a “most authentic beginning” for what lies ahead; and it preserves Evodius from becoming a victim of lurking temptation. This lurking temptation, to treat the second aspect first, involves the idea that God is implicated in the origin of evil. Augustine speaks to this temptation directly at several points in the dialogue; for example, he dismisses it straightaway in the opening of book I by citing Evodius’ faith in God’s goodness and justice (see below). And as we know from our account of his reading of Genesis 3, this temptation traces its origin back to an ancient condition, Adam’s sin, which in turn informs Augustine’s procedure in De libero arbitrio. Thus by exhorting Evodius to cling fast to his confession of faith, Augustine deigns to protect his reader from the seduction of human pride.

Secondly, faith in God secures the (theological) basis of the dialogue by enabling Evodius to identify evil as a morally relevant problem. In conjunction with the human temptation to blame God for evil, Evodius runs the risk of falling victim to a dualistic metaphysics wherein evil shares a parity with the good ontologically. The main problem with such dualism, infamously espoused by the Manicheans of course, is that it isolates the problem of evil to the realm of metaphysics alone, and thereby undermines the moral dilemma with which evil confronts us.\textsuperscript{26} Whereas faith in God forces us to confront evil as a moral problem, Manichean dualism invites us to accept evil as “the way things are”. In De ordine, Augustine condemns this view of reality as an impious gesture, but not only because it blames God instead of humanity for evil, but because it undermines the intelligibility of the universe itself.\textsuperscript{27} In order to secure the intelligibility of the uni-verse \textit{[unum in diversis]}, Platonically understood, one has to deny evil any foothold in the being of creation. That means rejecting evil as a part of creation, and thereby giving rise to the problem of evil as a moral consideration.

\textsuperscript{26} Evans, then, is right to say that Manicheans do not avoid the problem of evil. Instead they accept it only in the qualified sense of eternal metaphysical conflict. See Evans, G.R., \textit{Augustine on Evil} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 13.

\textsuperscript{27} De ordine I.1.1-4; cf. De libero arbitrio I.1.2.5-3.8.
In this way, faith in God actually *establishes* the problem of evil by representing evil as its contradiction, and thus inviting Evodius to give an account.

**Method: Faith and the First-Person Perspective**

By refusing to ditch the faith that claims God is good and just, Evodius allows the problem of evil to call him into question. If God is not responsible for the origin of evil, this forces him to look elsewhere for a possible cause. On a dualistic account, evil is defined as an eternally existent substance that lacks any origin, end, or purpose. Theological “monism”, by contrast, defines evil as an aberration in the universe, and refuses to give it a foothold in the rational order of things. All the same, monism acknowledges that evil had some kind of beginning, and that its origin raises the stakes for believing in God’s goodness. For the true believer, this poses a problem only in the initial sense of posing a question; indeed, it matters greatly what that first question is, for it may determine the position we adopt in the dialogue.

As we attempt to show in what follows, Augustine directs Evodius through a series of what he considers to be false starts, in order to land upon the right question with which their dialogue can begin. The first question Evodius opens with is simple and direct: “Please tell me whether God is not the author of evil”. The candour to his question quickly captures the reader’s attention, and seems to indicate some prior basis for raising the topic. Augustine, however, is not fazed as he makes his first reply: what kind of evil do you have in mind? For indeed, there is evil one commits on one’s own (a); then there is evil one suffers as a consequence of evil (b). Since Evodius wants to know whether God commits both kinds of evil, Augustine begins by reminding him of what they *already believe*:

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28 *De ordine* I.1.1.
29 *De libero arbitrio* I.1.1.1, trans. King.
30 Compare Evodius’ opening question to Augustine in *De quantitate animae* (AD 387): “Where does the soul come from?” (1.1). Augustine’s response is short and to the point: “I believe that the soul’s proper abode, to put it that way, and its homeland, is God Himself by whom it has been created” (1.2), trans. Joseph M. Colleran.
Well, if you know or believe that God is good (it is blasphemous to think otherwise), then He does not do evil. On the other hand, if we grant that God is just (denying it is irreligious), then He rewards the good; by the same token, He hands out punishments to evildoers, punishments that are doubtless evils to those who suffer them. Accordingly, if no one pays penalties unjustly—which we must believe since we believe that the world is governed by divine providence—then God is indeed the author of evils of type (b), though not in any way the author of evils of type (a).\textsuperscript{31}

To address two types of evil, evil done and evil suffered, Augustine relies upon basic Christian beliefs in defence of God’s nature. Since God is good, He cannot commit evil acts; since God is just, He is right to exact punishment for evil acts. Faith permits no conclusion other than this, he concludes, and that means Evodius ought to find another subject for his question.

The second question repeats the error of the first: Evodius still wants to know what entity stands behind evil. “Then is there some other author of the evil we have found not to come from God?”,\textsuperscript{32} he asks. Not satisfied to stop looking for some author of evil, Evodius wonders whether another Being exists, distinct from God, who serves as the origin or author of evil. Since this question draws him suspiciously close to a dualistic framework, Augustine decides to shift the focus from one author of evil, to many authors. Yes, he affirms, evil does have an author that is not God, but in fact there are many authors who commit many evil acts. To reduce evil to one author is to ignore the agency of individual authors, each of whose evil actions “come about through the will [\textit{voluntate}]”.\textsuperscript{33} Though here invoking for the first time the concept of \textit{voluntas}, Augustine fails to draw any interest in it from the distracted Evodius. Instead Evodius continues his quest for a single author of evil, and consolidates this new information into a third opening question: “Perhaps no one sins unless he has learned how. But if that is true, I ask: \textit{From whom} did we learn how to sin?”.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{De liber arbitrio} I.1.1.1-2, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{De liber arbitrio} I.1.1.2, trans. King. Emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{De liber arbitrio} I.1.1.3, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{De liber arbitrio} I.1.2.5, trans King.
Still hot on the pursuit of a single author of evil, Evodius here incorporates the idea of learning evil into an account of evil’s origin. In response, Augustine launches into a slightly more complicated account of what “learning” actually entails in respect to the good. His basic claim, which is Platonic in nature, is that learning is bound up with a process of understanding, and that both of these are incapable of taking evil on as an object. And since no one learns evil and no one teaches evil, says Augustine, Evodius ought to “stop trying to track down some mysterious evil teacher! If he is evil he is not a teacher, and if he is a teacher he is not evil.

Whatever one may think of this argument, it serves its purpose in pushing Evodius to a fourth and final question. The significance of this fourth question, we suggest, lies in its two main features: first, it ceases to ask about a single author of evil; second, it shifts attention over to the origin of human evil-doing. In response to Augustine’s charge not to seek out a single author of evil, Evodius declares: “Very well. Now that you have pushed me into admitting that we do not learn to do evil, tell me: How is it that we do evil? [unde malum faciamus]”. Peter King puts the accent on the verb in this question, “do”, in order to highlight the change in focus from origin to action. Yet one could also argue that the subject “we” also deserves an accent, since up to this point the main emphasis has been on another author of evil, not the authorship of human beings. In any event, Evodius signals that the real question bothering him has to do with human complicity in the propagation of evil.

To emphasise how important this question is for their debate, Augustine takes this chance to render personal the topic at hand, and to offer a glimpse into how he plans to approach it this time in De libero arbitrio:

You are raising a question that hounded me while I was young; when I was

35 The emphasis here is metaphysical, and it relies on a Platonic account of evil. It recalls the argument in De Academicis III: if wisdom is not nothing, i.e. it exists, then the wise man must possess something not nothing. But if the wise man possesses something—if Evodius learns something—then each must apprehend a positive good. Neither nothing nor evil, which are equivalent to Augustine, qualify in this respect; thus the wise man knows wisdom, and Evodius does not learn evil.

36 De libero arbitrio I.1.3.9, trans. King.

37 De libero arbitrio I.2.4.10, trans. King.
worn out it caused my downfall, landing me in the company of heretics [Manicheans]. I was so injured by this fall, and so buried under such vast heaps of empty tales, that had the love of finding out the truth not succeeded in requesting and receiving divine succor for me, I would not have been able to dig my way out and breathe again, recovering my earlier freedom of enquiry. And since such pains were taken in my case to set me free from that question, I shall guide you on the same route that I used to escape. God will be at hand and make us understand what we have come to believe. Indeed, we are well aware that this is to take the course prescribed by the prophet Isaiah, who says: “Unless you believe you shall not understand” [Is. 7:9].

As to be expected, there is much in this passage that commands attention. First of all, Augustine reveals that the fourth question unde malum faciamus? had a profound impact on him as a young philosopher. Oppressed by the burden that it laid on his soul, he says it caused him to fall in with the erroneous Manicheans, and to become submerged under “such vast heaps of empty tales” regarding evil. He then adds that though this undercut his “earlier freedom of enquiry”, this freedom became restored to him through his “love of finding out the truth” [amor inveniendi veri]. There are two things to say about this. As S. Harrison points out, the story seems to contradict Augustine’s earlier account of how he fell in with Manichaeism after being “made more upright”. In De beata vita, it was the positive influence of Cicero’s Hortensius that led him to seek wisdom among those who promised to teach him. Also in the Confessiones book III, he combines his first conversion with his first encounter with Scripture to outline the steps he took toward Manichean religion. Since at no point does he say anything about the question unde malum faciamus?, it seems as if the story he cites above has no basis in historical fact.

That may be so, but Harrison argues that the story serves another, more important purpose. Instead of filling out information for Augustine’s official biography, the story aims to instantiate a “first-person perspective” that activates a subjective

38 De libero arbitrio I.2.4.10-11, trans. King.


40 Confessiones III.4.7-6.10.
awareness of the problem of evil. If, that is, one goal of book I is to place Evodius in the problem of evil, what better way to facilitate this self-questioning process than to place oneself in the middle of its foreboding challenge. To put it another way, by relating his own experience and struggle with this question, Augustine sets down the proper conditions so that Evodius may enter “the will”. It is this entry into the will, defined as a subjective awareness of our moral agency and responsibility, that book I seeks to guide and bring to fruition in Evodius while on the way to deeper insights in book II and book III.

**Objective: Liberum Arbitrium Voluntatis**

By making evil-doing into a personal matter, an aspect of moral self-awareness, *De libero arbitrio* creates the conditions for the recovery of true freedom. As Augustine pledges to Evodius at the outset of book I, the aim is to assist him in overcoming the question *unde malum faciamus?* through “guid[ing] you on the same route [ordine] that I used to escape”. And to explain what this route entails in relation to true freedom, he cites Isaiah 7:9 as the linchpin of the dialogue: “Unless you believe, you will not understand”. As a variant on the “order of nature” that puts authority ahead of reason, Isaiah 7:9 codifies the fiduciary foundation on which Augustine plans to build his pursuit of understanding. So what is it that he wants Evodius and readers to understand? How does this relate to faith in God, on the one hand, and the freedom we long to possess on the other hand?

The best way to answer this is to return to Genesis 3. If the objective of *De libero arbitrio* is to recover true freedom, the freedom it seeks to recover must be freedom conformed to the truth. In Genesis 3, Adam surrendered his creaturely freedom in truth by attempting to seize freedom on a par with God’s excellence. The freedom he

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41 Harrison, “Autobiographical Identity”, p. 146.

42 Compare RSV: *If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established*. Augustine’s version of the Bible, the *Vetus Latina*, mistranslates Isaiah 7:9.

43 *De moribus ecclesiae* I.2.3. See Chapter 4.
tried to seize was a self-sufficient freedom, void of all constraint; but it landed him not with no constraint, but with greater constraint on his intellect and will. Hence as punishment, Adam’s descendants must overcome these constraints by returning to the “location” that Adam abandoned. “But ignorance and trouble… are the point of departure for the soul to begin to make progress, advancing towards knowledge and peace until the happy life is realized within it”. Part of that location involves an awareness of one’s struggle with sin, whereas the other part involves knowledge of one’s capacity to sin. For indeed, Adam’s failure to take responsibility for his sin is a main roadblock besetting souls in pursuit of true freedom. Not only that, but in his succumbing to the worst temptation of all, accusing God of sin, Adam set forth a perverse example for his descendants to follow—a pattern Augustine plans to avoid through the ordo of De libero arbitrio.

(i) Excusing Self. Upon hearing the Lord walking in the cool of day, Adam and Eve, already ashamed by their newly exposed nakedness, sought to hide from God out of fear of being in His presence. The hiding is representative of awareness of sin, and marks the first moment Adam and Eve became pierced in their conscience. As their exchange with God unfolds, however, it becomes apparent that Adam, at least, does not want to confess, but has sought to abandon conscience in pursuit of a new location. This is now the location that Adam’s descendants must inhabit: they are both ignorant towards their condition, and hampered in their free action. In our account of self-deception developed in Chapter 1, we argued that a desire not to be deceived or mistaken about the truth leads to rejecting the mercy of God extended through Christ. In this case, human desire is hampered by false self-awareness; and the only way to recover from it is by re-entering the will.

(ii) Accusing God. Not only did Adam and Eve hide from God; they also tried to shift the blame from themselves to others. Adam especially in his response to God’s second round of questioning attempts to cast off his own guilt and place it onto God, slyly hinting at God’s responsibility for giving the gift of Eve. The woman whom thou

44 De libero arbitrio III.22.63.216, trans. King.
gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate. Doomed to repeat this failure of judgement, explains Augustine, human beings are easily seduced into either accusing God of sin, finding faults with divine governance and judgement of the creation,45 or holding the gifts of God in contempt for just existing.46 For this reason, Augustine identifies temptation to accuse God as one of the burdens to overcome within the problem of evil. Freedom to acknowledge God as both the good and just Creator—what Augustine refers to here as “understanding”—brings freedom from the question unde malum faciamus?. In order to achieve this freedom, though, one must be committed to pious faith before God. “Let us just have faith, thinking nothing false or unworthy of the substance of the Creator! We are making our way to Him along the path of religiousness”.47

Having outlined the two temptations surrounding De libero arbitrio, our final task is to explore how the soul can overcome them. At the end of book II, Augustine gives us a definition of what true freedom ultimately consists in:

Our freedom is this: to submit to this truth, which is our God Who set us free from death—that is, from the state of sin. Truth itself, speaking to us as a human being among others, said to those believing in Him: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” [Jn. 8:31-2].48

True freedom is freedom in the truth. It is freedom from the burden that a limitless “freedom” places on us, freedom to think, be, and act in accord with the way things are [ordo rerum]. I am free where I am when I know where I am, when I learn to receive myself in the presence of God. It begins with stepping forward as a lover on the way; and it begins again with stepping forward as a sinner in need of grace. The first phase of this movement can be a misleading one, to be sure. It is tempting to think that on my journey, I take the first step. God merely responded to my original

45 De ordine I.1.1-4; De vera religione 31.57-8.
46 De libero arbitrio III.5.16.59f.
act of will. There is ambiguity here, to be sure, that Augustine’s writings often play off of. A clear example of this is found in the following passage. Note the back-and-forth between stepping forward and surrender.

Look at me, I am on the way. I have put one request to you [God], that I may dwell in your house all the days of my life, to contemplate your delight, to be protected in your temple. This has been my one petition, but in order to reach it, I am on my journey. Perhaps you will say to me, “Make an effort! Keep walking! I have given you free will, so it is within your power. Follow the path, seek and pursue it. Do not deviate from the way, do not remain static, do not look back. Keep on walking, for the one who perseveres to the end will be saved”. Yes, you have received free will, but it looks as if you are over-confident in your walking ability. Do not trust yourself. If God abandons you, you will stumble on the road, you will fall, you will wander off, you will get stuck in it. Say to him, then, Be my helper, I beg; do not forsake me or despite me, O God, my salvation. You who have made us, also help us; you who have created us, do not leave us in the lurch.49

In day-to-day affairs, we have the impression of being free to do or say whatever we want. Freedom seems within our grasp and on our doorstep, so to speak; thus we strike out on our next venture whenever we will, and declare ourselves to be “on the way” to our desired destination. Yet freedom that knows nothing of the way things are is no freedom at all, but an abyss of self-deception. We may persist all we want in violation of this order, but the truth will soon catch up with us in one way or another. The more we trust in our own “walking ability”, warns Augustine, the more difficult it is to keep step with the order of reality. “Do not trust yourself… Say to him… Be my helper, I beg; do not forsake me or despise me, O God, my salvation”.

In this sense, the soul finds the freedom it longs to possess by achieving full union with and submission to God’s will. Addressing the Christian pilgrim with 1 John 3:3: every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure, Augustine comments: “You stand fast yourself, for [Christ] is steadfast, and persevere in your journey, so that you may arrive, because he won’t depart from where you are going. And everyone who has this hope in him makes himself pure just as he himself is pure (3:3).

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See how he hasn’t removed your free will [*liberum arbitrium*]. As he said, *he makes himself pure*. Lest he tempt the pilgrim to think too highly of his ability to save himself, though, Augustine goes on to clarify that his role in the purifying process is to surrender to God’s mercy through relinquishment of will:

But God doesn’t make you pure if you are unwilling [*te nolentem*]. Therefore, because you unite your will [*voluntatem tuam*] to God, you make yourself pure. You make yourself pure not of yourself but through him who came to dwell in you. Yet, because you do something there by your will [*voluntate*], something has been bestowed upon you. But it has been bestowed upon you so that you may say, as in the psalm, *Be my helper; do not abandon me* (Ps. 27:9). If you say, *Be my helper*, you are doing something [*agis*]. For, if you are doing nothing, how is he helping you?

In bringing out these later passages from Augustine’s corpus, we wish to show that human freedom is not a static idea, a simple either-or scenario in which we “choose” or don’t choose, but rather a process of willingly surrendering our wills to God, by offering up prayers in acknowledgement of Him. If this is the answer to temptations to pride and vainglory, it is our aim to trace it in *De libero arbitrio*.

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Chapter 7

FROM FAITH TO UNDERSTANDING

Itinerary #3

In this last chapter, we chart a course “from faith to understanding” through which Augustine teaches us to re-inhabit our location “in Adam”. By Adam’s location, first of all, we mean the depths to which Adam fell: the punishment for the weight of sin whose origin is pride.¹ In *De libero arbitrio*, Adam’s location is entered into by faith (book I), and eventually embraced as our location as fallen rational agents (book III). Central to this itinerary, therefore, is renewal of self-awareness, particularly that self-awareness through which we re-claim personal responsibility. The name for such self-awareness is “conscience” [conscientia];² and the presupposition of conscience is “free choice of the will” [liberum arbitrium voluntatis].³

To put it another way: suspended over *De libero arbitrio* is the question of human location, our willingness to respond to God’s question Where are you? (Gen. 3:9). Though not appearing explicitly at any one point in the dialogue, this question captures the spirit of Augustine’s early approach to the will as more than just an attempt to theorise about human agency and freedom, but as an exercise in re-habilitating our awareness of God’s goodness. For that reason, the content which we examine in this dialogue must be framed with a view to God’s invitation to fallen humanity, the call to step forward and acknowledge our location. It begins with re-claiming or re-entering our agency, then moves to celebrating God’s gift of agency, and finally ends with confessing God’s goodness and justice, along with ordering our wills in accordance with Him.

¹ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.22.34. See Chapter 1.
² For the role of conscience see Chapter 1; cf. *De libero arbitrio* III.2.5.19 and III.10.29.107.
The Self-Evident Will: A Starting Point

The objective of *De libero arbitrio* is to re-enter Adam’s location. As a point of entry into this location, Augustine invites Evodius to acknowledge the self-evident will, the inescapable reality of personal moral responsibility. In book I, he pursues this notion of responsibility through (i) examining law and morality, (ii) contrasting the soul’s condition in an ideal and fallen state, and (iii) exhorting Evodius to step forward as a moral agent, a creature who desires and wills his own happiness.

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According to our account of the problem of evil last chapter, faith in God grants greater purchase on the nature of reality. By believing the very best of God, what Augustine calls *pietas*, Evodius adopts an intelligible framework both to analyse the universe with,⁴ and to begin identifying evil as a problem within it. Faith in God, we might say, allows him to place evil on the map. In placing evil on the map, Evodius discovers a question about its origin: in particular, how to reconcile a good universe that God created, with the prevalence of evil which corrupts that universe. Augustine alludes to this problem of evil after a series of exchanges with Evodius:

Now we believe that everything that exists comes from the one God, although God is not the author of sins. But this is the sore point: If sins come from souls that God created, and those souls come from God, how is it that sins are not almost immediately [*parvo intervallo*] traced back to God?.⁵

The phrase “almost immediately” literally means “by a small interval”,⁶ conveying the sense of a rapidly closing chasm between evil and God. Although for Augustine, this problem does indeed pose a serious challenge, the challenge has nothing to do with God’s goodness and justice. Rather the challenge resides in the temptation that this problem of evil conveys, the temptation to place God under the spotlight of our

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⁴ Intelligibility of the cosmos is one of the main topics of *De ordine*, a text that anticipates Augustine’s interest in the problem of evil. Cf. *De ordine* I.1.1-4; II.17.46.

⁵ *De libero arbitrio* I.2.4.11, trans. King.

interrogation (i.e. “playing God”), and to render God responsible for evil rather than humanity. In this way, Augustine has misgivings not with problem of evil, but with the evil in the problem. He wants to make sure that Evodius is on his guard against temptation, that he is fully committed to the pious belief that God is good, just, and cares for the soul. To fail to hold fast to any one of these categories is to threaten the entire journey on which they embark. Hence the admonitio that we examined in Chapter 6: “Take heart! Believe as you do: there is no better belief, even if the reason why it is so is hidden. Holding God in the highest esteem is surely the most authentic beginning of religiousness [exordium pietatis].”

Accordingly, recent commentators on De libero arbitrio are correct to point out that book I is intended to serve as an intellectual propaedeutic. It is not meant to give a complete analysis or “theory” of human agency, that is, but attempts to lay the basis for later analysis to occur. In fact, Augustine announces at the end of book I that Evodius has much to learn through their future discussions. Alluding to that all-important verse, Matthew 7:7, he explains to Evodius:

I would like you to believe that in this discussion we have, so to speak, been knocking at the door of profound and abstruse matters that need to be explored. Once we begin to enter into their inner recesses, with God’s help, you surely will judge how much distance there is between this discussion and those to follow, and how much the latter surpass the former, not only in the sagacity of the investigation but also in the grandeur of the issues and the most resplendent light of the truth. May there be enough religiousness in us that divine providence allows us to hold to and complete the course we have plotted.

In response to this promise, clearly intended to frame the whole of book I, Evodius declares his intention to yield to Augustine’s will, and to “freely join [my will] to it in

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7 De libero arbitrio I.2.5.12, trans. King.


9 De libero arbitrio I.16.35.118, trans King.
judgement and prayer”. His statement evidently reveals something about their achievement in book I; indeed, Evodius appears to know not only that he has a will, but that his exercise of will (that is, his willingness) is indispensable to progress. As for Augustine, he concludes book I with a note of anticipation; he seems to suggest that future books will advance their discussion. Hence we have a willing student, Evodius, paired with a motivated teacher, Augustine. Which provokes the question: in what sense is book I properly judged a failure?

To Do Evil: Law, Fear, Desire

Book I is not a failure if we know what to look for. The task of book I, as scholars like Simon Harrison have shown, is different from the task one might expect from an analytic philosopher. In some ways it is similar; Augustine puts forward arguments, critiques premises and conclusions, and agrees to insights he deems correct or which faith demands that he affirm. In this sense he seems no different from conventional philosophers of the will; except, of course, that the way he frames and develops his account is inherently unstable and constantly open to revision. Indeed, it ought to be remembered that De libero arbitrio is composed as a dialogue intended for people of faith. The various “creaks” in its discussion may not always be accidental, nor should one invest them with the full weight of a conclusion. Rather in keeping with the spirit of the Cassiciacum period (book I, after all, was written near the time), we should expect Augustine to take time laying out the parameters of his debate, while systematically avoiding any injudicious conclusions.

To understand book I, we suggest, one needs to appreciate the location in which Augustine finds his readers, and the goal for which he strives in response to that location. First of all, the location in which his readers are found bears a similarity to the first step in interior knowing. The first step in interior knowing involves turning from external things, and begins with examination of creation’s nature and purpose. The first step is necessary, we recall, on account of pride’s affect; in the case of the

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10 Cf. Harrison, Augustine’s Way into the Will, p. 27, citing O’Connell.
Manicheans, who are puffed up with pride, their position is downstream from the origin of pride, having been implicated in all manner of worldly excess. In the same way, *De libero arbitrio* presupposes an audience whose perception of the way things are remains coloured and skewed. For that reason, Augustine decides that in order to answer the question *unde malum faciamus?*, he has to answer the prior question: “what it is to do evil”.\(^\text{11}\) His reasoning is straightforward: unless we know what it is that we plan to talk about, it seems pointless striving to discover its ultimate source. Historically, though, this proved to be a hard-earned lesson for Augustine.

In his early treatise *De moribus Manichaeorum* (AD 387-8), Augustine charges his former co-religionists with committing the same error that for many years misled him to seek the origin of an unknown thing.

> You Manicheans often, if not always, ask those whom you endeavour to win over to your heresy where evil comes from. Suppose that I had just met you for the first time. And here, if you do not mind I request a favour—that you lay aside for the time being the impression that you already know the answer, and approach this great question as an untrained mind would approach it. You ask me where evil comes from, and I, in turn, ask you what evil is. Who is asking the right question, those who ask where evil comes from although they know not what it is, or he who thinks he must first ask what it is, so as not to perpetrate the greatest of all absurdities—seeking out the origin of an unknown thing?\(^\text{12}\)

As scholars rightly point out, the shift in focus from *unde malum?* to the question *quid malum?* serves the purpose of raising insights of the Platonic variety.\(^\text{13}\) On the other hand, there is nothing magical about the question *quid malum?*; to raise in the right way, one still has to desire to know the truth. For this reason, Augustine advises his former co-religionists to basically forget for a moment that they know the right answer. Insisting they adopt a posture of an “untrained mind”, stepping down from

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\(^{11}\) *De libero arbitrio* I.3.5.14.

\(^{12}\) *De moribus Manichaeorum* II.2.2, trans. D.A. and I.J. Gallagher.

their mountain of pride to embrace intellectual humility,\textsuperscript{14} Augustine indicates that the real problem with a question like \textit{unde malum}? is that it fosters philosophical arrogance and presumptuous certainty. The real problem, that is, has less to do with the question itself, and more to do with what this question brings forth from the soul. Once again, let us call attention to the biblical substructure that renders Augustine’s judgement coherent and well deployed. The question \textit{unde malum}?, understood as a grasping for knowledge of good and evil, plays to the pride that undergirds so much intellectual enquiry, even theological enquiry, and whose origins trace to Adam’s sin and subsequent attempt to excuse his sin. On these grounds, Augustine’s decision to shift the focus to \textit{quid malum}? represents a benevolent attempt to thwart pride and inculcate humility. Just like he did on behalf of Romanianus in \textit{De vera religione}, he invites Evodius to put a question to particular acts of evil (“external” acts) in order to discover the interior source from which evil acts originate.

In moving from the external act to the interior source, Evodius is submitting to the order of nature “from authority to reason”. The first evil act he puts a question to is the act of adultery. In answer to the question “what makes adultery evil?”, he first appeals to the “temporal law”\textsuperscript{15} as a basis for moral judgement, and then avers to the “Golden Rule” to achieve the same end. Both attempts suffer the same setback: neither basis of appeal can provide an unchangeable rule by which to judge the act of adultery as inherently wrong. The most they can do is condemn adultery based on authority, not reason; but since Evodius is on the way from faith to understanding, he needs to find out \textit{why} adultery is rightly condemned as evil.

To help him out, Augustine turns his attention from the external act to its internal dimension. “Then perhaps lust [\textit{libido}] is the evil in adultery, and you will run into

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. \textit{De Genesi contra Manichaeos} II.2.3, where Augustine likewise exhorts the Manicheans to stop being Manicheans. “If the Manicheans were willing to discuss the hidden meaning of these words [in Genesis] in a spirit of reverent inquiry rather than of captious fault-finding, then they could of course not be Manicheans, but as they asked it would be given them, and as they sought they would find, as they knocked it would be opened up to them”, trans. Edmund Hill.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{De libero arbitrio} I.3.6.16f. Augustine cites the phrase “temporal law” later on (I.16.14.48).
difficulties as long as you are looking for evil in the outward visible deed”. Here, Augustine reveals that the cause behind adultery, namely “lust” (disordered desire), is the place to go looking for the reason to condemn it. Possibly echoing Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5:28, commanding us to look inward to the state of the heart, Augustine opens up a new dimension in moral experience that subordinates evil deeds to the movements of desire. And so when Evodius turns to examine a second case of evil, this time the act of murder, Augustine discloses that “desire” [cupiditas] is another word for lust, and that desire is more fundamental to the experience of fear. Desire, that is, regulates human emotions, even emotions as potent as fear, and therefore constitutes the inner source from which spring evil acts.

At this point, Augustine pauses to outline a preliminary conclusion based on the universal desire to be free from fear. He declares that

> [good people pursue [freedom from fear] by turning their love away from things that cannot be possessed without the risk of losing them. Evil people, on the other hand, try to remove hindrances so that they may securely attach themselves to these things to be enjoyed. The end result is that they lead a life full of crime and wickedness, a life which is better called death.]

On the face of it, this distinction between good and evil people turns on a somewhat simplistic notion of human desire. Where is the love that guides the soul to its final endpoint and place of rest? Is freedom from fear simply a matter of turning the soul’s love in the right direction? The answer to the second question is yes and no. Yes, the soul must turn its love in the right direction. No, Augustine has not made clear either how it does so, or whether it can do so. All in all, the distinction is just a

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17 De libero arbitrio 1.4.9.22-24. Babcock writes: “Fear... is a function of love; and it is rooted, Augustine suggests, in a complex emotive syndrome from which it cannot be separated and of which it is the chief symptom”, “Cupiditas and Caritas”, p. 45. This distinguishes Augustine from modern theorists of fear such as Thomas Hobbes: see Hefty, Karl, “Truth and Peace: Theology and the Body Politic in Augustine and Hobbes”, Theology and the Political: The New Debate, eds. Creston Davis, John Milbank, Slavoj Zizek (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 427-438.

18 De libero arbitrio 1.4.10.30, trans. King.

19 An important parallel to this account of “freedom from fear” are Augustine’s four essays in De diversis quaestionibus (qq. 33-36). In the first essay (q. 33), Augustine defines the good of freedom
warm-up drill, a first attempt. There will be more to be said about turning the soul, but not before Evodius has discovered something first.

In the meantime, Augustine returns to the topic of temporal law and moral order. If the dictates of temporal law are inherently unstable, one should hardly base his morality on their instruction and guidance. Temporal law serves the limited purpose of regulating temporal affairs, but the goal of such regulation is maintaining peace, not shaping understanding. By reflecting on temporal law, however, the soul begins to perceive the need for a higher moral authority. This reality, referred to both as “supreme reason” and “eternal law”, not only authorises the authority of temporal law, but also extends moral judgement beyond the limits of temporal law to condemn acts of evil that remain hidden from sight. Hence temporal law may not shape our understanding directly, but it can prompt us to reflect upon our responsibility as moral agents. And where temporal law fails to gives us a reason for morality, we are thus prompted all the more to seek the higher eternal law: to move from the outer reality in order to inhabit the inner truth. “So to explain concisely as far as I can the notion of eternal law that is stamped on us [impressa nobis]: It is the law according to which it is just for all things to be completely in order [ordinatissima].”

By describing eternal law as being “stamped” on the soul, Augustine echoes his description of the impressed imago Dei. He seems to be saying that this eternal law, which inhabits the soul in some sense, provides the key to unlocking the mystery of moral order in the universe, and thus the means to answering the question of what

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21 De libero arbitrio I.5.13.41.
22 De libero arbitrio I.6.15.51, trans. King.
evil is. But in order to access this key to understanding the moral order, Evodius has to become ordered within the very order he seeks.\textsuperscript{24}

**Ordered Humanity: Esse-Vivere-Intellegere**

Thus to start addressing “how a human being may be completely in order within himself”,\textsuperscript{25} Augustine deploys a familiar starting point in the form of the cogito: “Tell me whether you are completely certain that you are alive”. As pointed out in Chapter 3, the purpose of the cogito is to furnish a starting point that opens other questions pertaining to its subject. In this case the subject is once again knowledge of life; and the next question it raises centres on the status of such knowledge—whether there is a distinction between “being alive” and “knowing yourself to be alive”.\textsuperscript{26} According to Augustine, this very distinction contains the answer to the question as to what makes a human being completely in order. The answer is that human beings are unique as creatures for having the capacity not just to be alive, but to know themselves to be alive. Self-awareness, then, understood as a reflexive rational capacity, illustrates the highest level one can ascend in the order of the universe. Because this is so, it follows that in order to be ordered, one has to permit “reason or understanding” \textit{[ratio vel intelligens]} to dominate the soul’s life. To this dominant part, Augustine gives the name of “mind” or “spirit”. “That by which humans are ranked above animals… if it dominates and commands the rest of what a human consists in, then that human being is completely in order”.\textsuperscript{27}

As the highest form of creaturely life far surpassing the brutes, the human mind enjoys superiority as an incorporeal substance, and exercises control over impulses of the irrational soul.\textsuperscript{28} In fact, mind is so superior to these inferior impulses that it can

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24}De libero arbitrio I.7.16.52. Cf. De ordine I.1.4.
  \item \textsuperscript{25}De libero arbitrio I.7.16.52, trans. King.
  \item \textsuperscript{26}De libero arbitrio I.7.16.52, trans. King.
  \item \textsuperscript{27}De libero arbitrio I.8.18.61, trans. King.
  \item \textsuperscript{28}De libero arbitrio I.8.18.65.
\end{itemize}
never lose its position on account of their behaviour. Always standing above the lower parts of the soul, mind easily regulates the behaviour of the soul as it negotiates various impressions it receives through the senses. There is nothing below mind that can depose it from its position. And it cannot lose its position by that which is equal or superior to it. In the case of that which is equal to it, as in other minds, their very attempt to depose the mind from its exalted position renders them morally vicious, and thus inferior in status. And in the case of that which excels mind, namely God the Creator, it violates the divine nature to commit an evil act, and deposing mind most certainly qualifies as an act to be condemned. Thus if that which is higher, lower, or equal to mind cannot depose it, concludes Augustine, there is nothing else remaining that can threaten mind’s existence. But as with all of Augustine’s ascents up the ladder of being, this one contains a new bend in the journey.

If mind can be deposed by nothing outside of it, this raises the obvious question as to why it is deposed. Augustine wastes no time bringing Evodius to the heart of the matter: “Nothing makes the mind a devotee of desire but its own will and free choice” [nulla res alia mentem cupiditatis comitem faciat, quam propria voluntas et liberum arbitrium]. This claim is meant to startle us into an awareness of the facts. Having emerged after concerted effort to order the human being, it calls into question that idealised order in relation to the present reality, and ushers book I into a new phase of moral reflection. To mark this transition, Augustine spells out the penalties that result from the Fall of the soul. It is at this point that certain scholars start to lose track with his argument. Up to now, Augustine has offered an idealised portrait of human nature. It is a portrait that he models on the creation of Adam before the Fall; in drawing on that story, he is able to accentuate both his account of the soul’s Fall, and his account of the penalties which attach to this event. Some scholars misinterpret his account of these penalties, though, by restricting it to the condition of “those who have rejected wisdom”, rather than to “the difficulty faced by

29 De libero arbitrio I.10.20.73.
31 For the role of Adam see Harrison, Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology, p. 204f.
those attempting to regain wisdom”. But as a careful reading of this account shows, Augustine does indeed have the latter group in mind, for the person he describes in this tale of woe is his own very self.

Lust [libido] dominates the mind and drags it back and forth, despoiled of the richness of virtue, poor and needy; at one moment taking falsehoods for truths and even making a practice of defending them [his rhetoric training], at another rejecting what it had previously accepted [his childhood religion] and nonetheless rushing to other falsehoods [his Manichean years]; now withholding its assent and often in dread of clear lines of argument [his tenure as a sceptic]; now despairing of the whole enterprise of finding the truth, lingering deep within the shadows of foolishness [his despair as a sceptic]; now struggling towards the light of understanding but again falling back from it due to exhaustion [his reading of the Platonists].

Just as he did earlier with Evodius in book I, Augustine brings his own experience in the pursuit of wisdom to bear in order to draw out the penalty of Adam’s original sin. The implication is that human mind, though maintaining its status as the highest part of the soul, now struggles to bring coherence and order to its judgements, and thus falters in its capacity to secure true understanding.

Upright Humanity: Bona Voluntas

The mind’s struggle to bring to order its journey of desire stems from disjunction between its intellectual and volitional aspects. If mind has overthrown itself by its own liberum arbitrium voluntatis, perhaps the answer to the mind’s struggle lies in

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33 De libero arbitrio I.11.22.77, trans. King. Augustine continues: “All the while, that reign of desires [cupiditatum] savagely tyrannizes and batters a person’s whole life and mind with storms raging in all directions. On this side fear, on that desire; on this side anxiety, on that empty spurious enjoyment; on this side torment over the loss of something loved, on that ardor to acquire something not possessed; on this side sorrows for an injury received, on that the burning to redress it. Whichever way one turns, greed can pinch, extravagance squander, ambition enslave, pride puff up, envy twist, laziness overcome, stubbornness provoke, submissiveness oppress—these and countless others throng the realm of lust, having the run of it. Can we think that this penalty, which (as you recognize) all who do not hold fast to wisdom must suffer, is in the end trivial?”, trans. King.
the cause of its demise. In book I, Augustine transitions from a concept of ordered humanity to an account of the soul’s status as a responsible moral agent. On our reading of this transition, the goal is not to contradict what went before in book I, but to test the resources that belong to another aspect of human nature, namely will, in order to determine the extent of its role in the pursuit of true happiness.

But in order to test the resources of a reality called the will, one has to acknowledge in the first place that such a reality exists. Since the will lies at the origin of the soul’s Fall from grace, to deny that it exists is to perpetuate a self-delusion equivalent to the self-delusion of Adam’s Fall from grace. For that reason, Augustine decides that it is time to change tacks and to usher Evodius into a new awareness of his moral agency. His aim at this point is to expose Evodius as a willing soul, but only by first inviting Evodius to step forward and confess. Hence just as he began their ascent up the ladder of being, here he deploys a similar logic with respect to the will. “So tell me: We have a will, do we not?”.

Trivial as this question may seem on the surface, its function is absolutely central to the argument in book I. Its significance has been rightly emphasised by Simon Harrison; as he explains, this moment marks the hinge on which the rest of the dialogue turns, the starting-point for future enquiry of the soul’s moral location. “We have here what Augustine might call the beginnings, the starting point, the “inchoatio”, or even the “exordium” of a considered concept of the will. Voluntas has been through some sort of process here”. To be precise, such an “exordium” has already taken place since Evodius stepped forward as a believer in God. But whereas faith in God implicitly relied upon a movement of the will, here the argument and the action place the will at the centre of attention, granting Evodius a chance to ac-knowledge its role and significance. Hence when Evodius denies knowing whether or not he has a will, Augustine returns to him with an even simpler

34 De libero arbitrio I.12.25.82, trans. King. The Latin is more ambiguous than this: sitne aliqua nobis voluntas (“There is something we call our will, isn’t there?”). King’s translation tends toward a faculty psychology, a view we criticise in the Introduction. Thanks to Professor O’Donovan for this insight.

35 Harrison accuses Gilson of trivialising it; see Augustine’s Way into the Will, p. 70, n. 4.

36 Harrison, Augustine’s Way into the Will, p. 71.

37 See De libero arbitrio I.2.5.12.
question: “Do you not want to know this?” In doing so he reveals that the question at hand pertains to more than just “the will”, but to the will in motion [in motu]. He wants to clarify, at bottom, that Evodius is willing to know the truth, just as he wanted to clarify that Navigius was willing to know he is alive (see Chapter 3). In both cases, his “argument” extends an invitation to step forward and authenticate the character of the desire one inhabits. Rejection of this opportunity always remains an option, to be sure—but at the expense of true friendship, dialogue, and advancement on the journey.

Once Evodius willingly acknowledges that “I have a will”, he achieves the first step toward recovering his location. The location he is recovering is the location Adam abandoned, the self-awareness that claims us as responsible moral agents. It is the first step because it establishes only that Evodius has a will, not that his will is taking him in the right or wrong direction. Accordingly, the next phase in Augustine’s “ascent” through the will is to determine whether Evodius has a good will or a bad will. Here again we must stand in correction to one account of this ascent, that of Phillip Cary, which identifies bona voluntas as Divinity itself. Basing his argument on the faulty premise we exposed in Chapter 5, Cary alleges that the Good Will (Cary insists on capitalising it) resides immutably “in” the soul, and that one need only turn to it—indeed to love it—in order to attain the true happy life. But as we argued in Chapter 5 and gestured to above, to turn inward is not to discover a private inner self, but to recover the soul’s location to the image of God. Correspondingly, the purpose of turning inward to what Augustine calls bona voluntas is to prove that all human will to desire the happy life. Though this desire does pertain to an “ineradicable” feature of human nature, as Cary puts it, it is ineradicable only in the formal sense of inescapable orientation, not as material instantiation of the happiness one seeks.

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38 De libero arbitrio I.12.25.82, trans. King. Emphasis added.
39 See De libero arbitrio I.12.25.82, where Augustine threatens to suspend dialogue if Evodius does not concur. On this point see Harrison, Augustine’s Way into the Will, pp. 113-4.
42 Cary, Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self, p. 110.
For indeed, Augustine goes on to point out that even with this formal principle (a principle that eternal law “impresses” on the mind), human beings still fail to reach the desired happy life. They fail, that is, to live an upright and virtuous life that renders them deserving of the happiness they seek. “For this reason, it is no wonder that unhappy people do not attain what they will, namely the happy life. They do not likewise will what goes along with it, namely living rightly, and without willing this no one is worthy of the happy life or attains it.”

Thus it appears in retrospect—although the point remains implicit in book I—that Augustine’s two attempts to ascend the steps of intellect and will re-affirm the soul’s dependence on the Virtue and Wisdom of God. Whereas Wisdom shapes knowledge in spite of ignorance, Virtue shapes action in spite of difficulty by presenting the soul “fit” and “worthy” to receive divine Wisdom. On this account, it is evident that by turning inward to the Good Will, the soul turns not to itself but to the One who forms and shapes it; or more precisely re-turns to the realm of inner conscience in order to acknowledge its lack of virtue and need for wisdom.

Thus at the end of book I, Evodius discovers that not only does he possess a will for pursuit of true happiness, but that bad use of will is the answer to why we do evil [unde malum faciamus?]. From this vantage point or location “in” the will, then, Evodius sets out to disclose the nature of the gift of free will, and to better understand God’s relation to the origin of all evil.

**Receiving the Will: Faith**

In book I, Augustine demonstrated the “self-evidence” of the will as a means of inviting Evodius to reclaim his moral agency. In book II, building on the premise of

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43 This point comes out later: *De libero arbitrio* II.9.26.103. See below.
45 For 1 Cor. 1:24 see *De libero arbitrio* I.2.5.13; cf. *De moribus ecclesiae* I.16.27
46 *De libero arbitrio* I.16.35.117.
book I that sin results from “free choice of the will” [*liberum arbitrium voluntatis*], he tries to prove that freedom of the will is undoubtedly a gift from God, by showing how God exists given the assumptions of the dialogue.

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In Chapter 6, we outlined the role of faith in the problem of evil. In order to identify evil as a *moral* problem, one has to rely upon a vision of the perfectly ordered universe. If one believes creation is naturally good, this being the (theo-)logical extension of belief in a good Creator,47 then one also believes that creation has no room for evil, metaphysically understood, and that evil must be accounted for in relation to God’s nature. To accommodate evil as part of creation in any sense whatsoever is to allow evil no purchase as a morally relevant concept. We are then forced to receive evil within the fabric of the universe rather than hold the evil-doer accountable for authoring sin. Conversely, faith in God enables the believer to frame evil as a moral problem. By refusing to view God as the author of evil (the work of piety), and yet by insisting there is an author of some sort or another (the assumption of morality), the soul ends up raising far more questions about evil than one who subsumes evil under the ontology of creation.48

In addition to opening up the moral problem of evil, faith in God positions the soul to receive the gift of free will. In the aftermath of their dialogue in book I, Augustine and Evodius have established the fact that evil (or sin) comes from “free choice of the will” [*liberum arbitrium voluntatis*]. The next question to arise from this, in Evodius’ words, is “why God gave human beings free choice of the will. If we had not received it, we surely would not be able to sin”.49 Here as well, faith in God directs Evodius to receive free will as a gift, yet not without engendering the disquieting notion that God created the origin of evil. Though one step removed from the authorship of evil, God

47 *De libero arbitrio* I.2.5.12-3.

48 This charge applies not just to metaphysical dualistic accounts like Manichaeism, but to metaphysical monistic accounts that presuppose materialism. Hence widespread denial of “free will” among contemporary (usually non-theist or atheist) scientists and philosophers.

49 *De libero arbitrio* II.1.1.1, trans. King. King’s emphasis.
still appears to be morally implicated through a chain of causation. The challenge in book II, then, is to place Evodius in position not only to deny God’s involvement in authoring evil, but to affirm God’s involvement in authoring the will. Through faith in God’s goodness, Augustine will show Evodius how every good thing he wants to affirm, and every bad thing he wants to condemn, presupposes the existence and goodness of God on the one hand, and God’s gift of free will to humanity on the other hand.

Showing How God Exists

How does faith enable Evodius to receive the gift of free will? To answer that, Augustine invites him to examine another question first: “How is it clear that God exists?” [quomodo manifestum est Deum esse].\(^50\) This question of God’s existence comes up in book II after Augustine presses Evodius to clarify his intentions. In response to his worry that God created free will, therefore God is responsible for evil, Augustine charged Evodius not to abandon his confession of faith which militates against the view that God authors evil.\(^51\) And since God is also held to be Creator of all good things, he continues, it follows that God either created free will as a good thing, or free will originates from somewhere other than God.\(^52\) Yet when Evodius responds to this with a meagre confession of faith, uncertain as to whether God gave free will or not, Augustine presses him as to whether he is “certain that God exists”, or if that too is something he believes rather than understands. “I hold this resolutely, too,” replies Evodius, “but by believing it rather by having a theoretical grasp of it”.\(^53\) Accordingly, Augustine decides that in order to determine if free will was given, they have to clarify how it is certain that God in fact exists. God’s existence, then, is not so much the object of their enquiry, as it is the truth they plan

\(^{50}\) De libero arbitrio II.3.7.20, trans. King.

\(^{51}\) De libero arbitrio II.1.1.1-1.3.7.

\(^{52}\) For these options see De libero arbitrio II.2.4.10.

\(^{53}\) De libero arbitrio II.2.5.12, trans. King.
to manifest through the exercise of reason. By inviting Evodius once again to believe in order to understand (Isaiah 7:9 LXX), adopting the posture of seeker (Matt. 7:7) and the virtues of faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13), Augustine hopes to establish him on much firmer footing to praise God’s goodness in all that He does.

To begin with, Augustine deploys the cogito to ascend up the ladder of being (esse-vivere-intellegere). Calling attention to the five senses individually (vivere), he distinguishes their role as receptors of sense data (esse) from the “internal sense” that gathers them together. Whereas the function of the internal sense is to mediate sense data to reason, thus placing it somewhere in-between vivere and intellegere, the function of reason is judge this data in accordance with the Truth, thus leading to the insight that Truth is above reason.

On the relation between reason and truth, though, Augustine lingers just a bit to establish his point. As in De vera religione, his aim is to prove that something higher than reason exists by revealing the role of Truth in rational judgement. Along the way, he also explores concepts of number and wisdom in response to the biblical verse Ecl. 7:26 (7:25 RSV), “My heart and I have gone around so that I might search out and think about and know wisdom and number”. His basic claim is that number and wisdom, because they are perceived in a non-sensory way, are therefore “common” to all people no matter their vantage point. No one can deplete number

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55 “For we must believe that better people—even some who dwell in this world, and certainly all good religious people in the afterlife—grasp and recognize these things more evidently and completely. We must hope that we are going to be so, desiring and taking delight in such things, disdaining worldly and human things completely”, De libero arbitrio II.2.6.19, trans. King. Emphasis added.

56 De libero arbitrio II.3.7.20-21.

57 De libero arbitrio II.3.8.26f.

58 On this matter Augustine later changes his mind: that is, once he identifies the internal sense more squarely with attentio, intentio, and memory, elevating memory to the same level as reason and will. For analysis of internal (or interior) sense see O’Daly, Gerard, Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind (London: Duckworth Publishing, 1987), p. 73 and passim.

59 De libero arbitrio II.8.24.95, trans. King.
by delighting in numbers, just as no one can deplete wisdom by delighting in truth. Unlike perceptions of colour which depend on the eyes, and unlike any food which is exclusive to the one who eats, number and wisdom are available to anyone at any time through application of non-sensory intelligence, or reason. Augustine even suggests that number and wisdom, just like the eternal law in book I, come “stamped” [impressos esse] on the soul as a given reality. Whether this means our access to them is innate or participatory, he does not say, but his point is that number and wisdom, because they are given, are therefore other than our rational judgement. Hence even if our notions of them remain purely formal, wisdom and number orientate us to higher realities. “Thus just as we have had stamped [impressa] on our minds the notion of happiness before we are happy, for it is through this notion that we know and confidently declare without hesitation that we want to be happy, so too we have had stamped [impressam] on our mind the notion of wisdom before we are wise; it is through this notion that any one of us, if asked whether he wants to be wise, will reply without the shadow of a doubt that he does”.

The same holds for a formal concept of happiness: we know that happiness is our goal even before we find it, because we have an idea of happiness impressed on our mind. This idea serves to orientate our desire for the object, and thus places us in some relation to its material instantiation. On the other hand, a formal concept of happiness is not enough for our journey, and it can even fund the wrong kind of happiness pursuit; as Augustine explains, “To the extent that all people pursue the happy life they are not in error. But people are in error to the extent that they stray from the road of life that leads to happiness, even if they profess and protest that they only want to attain happiness; “error” means following something that does not lead where we want to reach”. As indebted as we are to these ideas impressed on the mind, they are insufficient on their own to direct the soul’s progress. Instead, they

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62 De libero arbitrio II.9.26.101, trans. King. This echoes Augustine's conclusion at the end of De Academicis: the Academics are in error not just when they assent to falsehoods, but when they fail to follow the truth. See De Academicis III.15.34, discussed in Chapter 3.
must be joined to the right kind of desire which delights in the object in its full manifestation. To achieve this, says Augustine, one must respond to the call of wisdom: to the voice that speaks to us through the mediation of the created order. “Whichever way you turn, [wisdom] speaks to you by the traces left behind on its works. It calls you back within when you are slipping away into external things through their very forms, so you see that whatever delights you in a body and entices you through your bodily senses is full of number”.63

Hence with the aid of wisdom and number, not just their formal concepts but their instantiated realities (partially conceived), the soul is carried over to the object of true delight: the truth than which there is nothing greater to conceive. To make this transition from wisdom to truth, Augustine returns to the “common” nature of wisdom and number. From this nature derives the notion of an unchangeable truth, he argues, a reality “containing everything that is unchangeably true”.64 And just as he did with the concept of Truth in De vera religione, Augustine invites Evodius to locate it in one of three places: below the mind, equal to the mind, or superior to the mind. If the mind is superior to truth, that makes the mind the judge of truth; but nobody makes judgements on whether seven and three is ten, but merely acts as a “discoverer taking delight [in his discovery]”.65 And if the mind were equal to truth, that would make the mind the end of its search; yet nobody who seeks something is the end of his search, for by the very act of seeking people “acknowledge themselves to be changeable”.66 The only other option, Augustine concludes, is that the mind is inferior to truth; and this fulfils the task of demonstrating God’s existence. For since they agreed to assign God’s name to anything found above the mind, the demonstration that the mind depends on Truth for rational judgement renders intelligible the belief that God truly exists. “Here you have it: the truth itself!

63 De libero arbitrio II.16.41.163, trans. King.
64 De libero arbitrio II.12.33.140, trans. King.
65 De libero arbitrio II.12.34.134, trans. King.
66 De libero arbitrio II.12.34.135, trans. King.
Embrace it if you can and enjoy it; “Take delight in the Lord and He will give you your heart’s longings’ [Ps. 36:4 (37:4 RSV)].”

From this point forward, Augustine launches into an extended reflection on the nature of delight. Its purpose is to sum up the purpose of the argument: not to prove God that exists in a dispassionate manner, but to fan aflame the spark of desire on which the argument was based. And with the existence of God now firmly established—that is, with a delight in God’s existence now set on fire—Evodius can put the pieces together on the gift of free will.

The Road to Wisdom: Freedom and Providence

As we said above, it is one thing to possess the formal concept of wisdom. It is another thing to pursue wisdom in response to its call. “Wisdom! The sweetest light of the mind made pure! Woe to those who abandon you as guide and wander aimlessly around your tracks, who love indications of you, who forget what you intimate. All the loveliness of Creation is an indication of you”.

Creation is a witness to the workmanship of God. The beauty of each object one encounters in the universe is a testament to the form it received from wisdom. Nothing can give itself form, mind or body; therefore everything points away from itself to “an unchangeable form that endures forever”. Yet because human beings ignore the cues of creation, “hold[ing] fast with delight to their own darkness”, they slip away from a vision of unchangeable truth and become “chained to fleshly labor as to their own shadows”. Yet even in turning their backs to the Form that gives form, fallen souls are not deprived of all form whatsoever; indeed, says Augustine,

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67 De libero arbitrio II.13.35.137, trans. King.
68 De libero arbitrio II.13.35.138-36.142.
69 De libero arbitrio II.16.43.168, trans. King.
70 De libero arbitrio II.17.45.173, trans. King.
71 De libero arbitrio II.16.43.169, trans. King.
“what gives them pleasure shares in the encompassing brilliance of your light. But when a shadow is loved, it makes the mind’s eye weaker and less fit to reach the sight of you”. Clinging to inferior things with love they owe to God, fallen souls are conformed to the image of lower things. In this they lose touch with their creaturely location, the image of God that depends upon the Truth, and become more susceptible to shifting realities that distract their attention from superior goods.

The fact that at no time is the soul deprived of form, though, reveals the extent to which God orders things according to His providence.\textsuperscript{72} Nothing falls utterly away despite turning from God, while creation constantly indicates the path to be followed. Augustine writes: “Therefore, anyone who carefully considers the whole of Creation and takes the road to wisdom senses that ‘Wisdom shows herself favorably to him along the roads, and in all providence does she meet with him’ [Wis. 6:17 (6:16 RSV)]”.\textsuperscript{73} In taking him through this brief account of the “formable” creation, Augustine teaches Evodius that all things come from God and God alone. Nothing that exists can support itself and form itself; therefore all that exists is a gift of God’s goodness. Indeed, even our freedom comes directly from God: for since freedom is tied to judgement, and judgement is tied to truth, freedom emerges in the mind that con-forms to truth as that which gives form to humanity’s creaturely capacities.\textsuperscript{74} In this way, Augustine demonstrates that all good things come from God, and sets the stage for the final question surrounding the gift of free will.

\textbf{Will, Evil, and Intelligibility}

In guiding Evodius to see that all things come from God, Augustine was doing more than proving a point. His entire exercise depends on an anthropological premise: that human beings become fully free only by transferring their delight from creation to Creator. His exercise or “argument” was intended to provoke this: hence why it

\textsuperscript{72} Providence is “form itself”. Harrison, S., Augustine’s Way into the Will, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{De libero arbitrio} II.17.45.174, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{74} Cf. \textit{De libero arbitrio} II.13.37.143.
began with the data from the senses, then moved upward to the mind itself, and finally transcended the mind’s nature to acknowledge a higher reality. In this context, faith in God proved its worth to Evodius by enabling him to acknowledge God whenever a breakthrough took place. For example, when Evodius perceived that all things are “formable”, he immediately knew to assign this to the goodness of God. Likewise when he began to see that Truth exists above the mind, Evodius took delight in the progress he was making by exclaiming to Augustine: “I am completely overwhelmed by an unbelievable joy that I cannot express to you in words. I hear what you say and cry out that it is most certain. But I am crying out with an inner voice, which I want to be heard by the truth itself so as to hold fast to it. I grant it to be not only good but also the highest good and the source of happiness”. Thanks to his faith in God who orientates his delight, Evodius is able to take pleasure in the gifts God reveals to him: to receive those gifts as gifts of creation. But now the question turns from outer things to the gift of free will: how does this gift fit into the picture of God’s good creation?

The anthropological premise is crucial to Augustine’s response. Holding that human beings are fully free only in God, that they must cleave to God with love and serve Him in obedience, Augustine argues that the only way one can achieve this supreme good is by willingly submitting to and delighting in the Truth. His claim is that the will is the sine qua non of good works: that by giving humanity liberum arbitrium voluntatis, God endowed human beings with a special capacity. When Evodius hears this, he is initially stunned into silence. He cannot believe how easily he has taken the will for granted: how integral a role it played in his progress and breakthroughs. Where would he be—what would this dialogue be—without the gift of free will? In the absence of free will, the possibility of delight would vanish; he would simply not be having a conversation about the truth.

75 De libero arbitrio II.18.47.178.
76 De libero arbitrio II.15.39.156, trans. King.
77 De libero arbitrio II.18.47.178, trans. King.
78 De libero arbitrio II.18.47.179 and passim.
To follow up, Augustine distinguishes between the gift of free will, and the four virtues “upon which the right and worthwhile life is grounded”. Here he is responding to Evodius’ question about the capacity of the will for evil, why God did not give the will in the same way that He gives justice. Augustine’s answer involves appealing to the hierarchy of created goods: in this case, the virtues are classified as “great goods” for the mind, while powers of the mind are classified as “intermediate goods”. This classification is then developed in the following way: whereas no one can “use” virtues to accomplish evil, the mind can “use” the will to do good or evil. Yet if free will can be used for either good or evil, wonders Evodius, why is it also classed “among the goods we use?” In other words, Augustine seems to be saying two things at once: that the will is the sine qua non of doing good or evil, and that the will itself constitutes a gift from God. Evodius’ confusion, however, rests on a misunderstanding of “intermediate good”—the equivalent of which is not a “neutral power”. In book III, Augustine will clarify the meaning of this phrase more carefully, but what he says here proves sufficient for answering the objection. After pointing out that the will can use the will through itself—just like reason can know itself through reason, and memory remember itself through memory—he goes on to explain that an intermediate good is not stable, isolated state—a tertium quid or neutral power. Rather it denotes the soul’s location on the way to desired goods, its responsibility for the things to which its love is directed.

To make this clear, Augustine defines the will in relation to one of two goods. Either it “adheres to the common and unchangeable good”, achieving “the great and fundamental goods of a human beings, despite being an intermediate good”. Or it is “turned away from the unchangeable and common good, towards it private good, or

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79 De libero arbitrio II.18.50.190, trans. King.
80 De libero arbitrio II.19.50.192.
81 De libero arbitrio II.19.51.193, trans. King.
82 This is the translation given by Roland Teske for Augustine’s use of media vis in De spiritus et littera 33.58 (New York: New City Press, 1997).
towards something external, or towards something lower”. Whichever way it turns, either toward God or away from God, this intermediate good which we call “the will” endows movement of the will with its voluntary status (i.e. we are responsible). The question arises, then, as to where arises this “movement” [motus] of will that causes it to stray from God’s goodness and truth. If the will is the gift of God made to serve God alone, where on earth does humanity derive the motivation to do otherwise?

Since Augustine asks this question rather than Evodius, it appears that he wants it to be addressed before concluding book II. The question represents a more refined statement on the opening query introduced in book I: that is, it is still flirting with the notion that God, not humanity, is ultimately responsible for evil. To answer this question, Augustine draws an insight from his Platonic conception of created natures. He answer boils down to a single word, nescio, but then broadens out to explain why this answer is valid. Here again, Augustine exhorts Evodius to “[h]old firm with resolute religiousness that you will not encounter, by sensing or understanding or whatever kind of thinking, any good thing which is not from God”. He is free to ascribe all good things he comes across to God, and that includes anything containing “number and measure and order”. But since the movement of turning away from God is a movement away from the unchangeable good, Evodius cannot properly locate it within a rationally ordered universe. Sin, Augustine declares, is a “defective movement, and every defect is from nothing”. Sin is literally based upon “no good reason at all”; it has no foothold in God’s intelligible creation. This is not to say that sin does not “exist” phenomenologically, but that its “existence” is parasitic on the nature of the good. Augustine’s conclusion,

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84 *De libero arbitrio* II.19.53.199, trans. King.
85 The intermediate good of the will is its voluntary status; it is what makes the will a will.
86 *De libero arbitrio* II.20.54.202.
87 *De libero arbitrio* II.20.54.202, trans. King.
88 *De libero arbitrio* II.20.54.204, trans. King.
then, as to the origin of the will’s defective movement, is that it has no origin of which one can speak.

Moreover, Augustine advises that in order to avoid such movement, we ought not to will it to be so. Such defective movement may indeed lie within our power to will, but since only the will to will it can bring it about, we ought not to place the will at its sinister disposal. If this fails to prove convincing as moral advice, Augustine’s closing statement seems to gesture to another mode of approach. Reflecting on the original state in which humanity was created—a theme he will return to soon in book III—he acknowledges the different burden that our life in Adam entails:

What then is more secure than to be in that life where what you do not want cannot happen to you! But since we cannot rise of our own accord as we fell of it, let us hold on with firm faith to the right hand of God stretched out to us from above, namely our Lord Jesus Christ; let us await Him with resolute hope and desire Him with burning charity.90

The answer to the soul’s predicament, it appears from this statement, is to look for divine assistance in the person of Christ. How deeply Augustine believes this, and how deeply he thinks it implicates the soul’s capacity to will, becomes clearer as he develops his final approach to the origin of evil.

**Directing the Will: Understanding**

Up to this point, the objective of *De libero arbitrio* has been to guide us into “the will” (book I), and to help us receive the will as a gift from God the Creator (book II). Having shown that freedom of the will is a good and necessary gift, Augustine’s next task in book III is to (i) deepen awareness of our implication as moral agents, returning us to the “location” into which Adam and Eve fell; (ii) exhort us within this location to willingly turn to God; and (iii) continue to defend God’s goodness against accusation, overturning our fallen tendency to blame God for sin.

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90 *De libero arbitrio* II.20.54.205, trans. King.
In an article exploring Augustine’s account of original sin, Robert Brown issues a major challenge to the Augustinian approach. Citing several approaches Augustine adopts toward original sin, Brown endeavours to call all but one of them into theological question. In his view, such approaches come up woefully short when we judge them according to the (Platonic) premise that “an absolute origin of evil, arising from the free will of the creature, must be incomprehensible”. Though Augustine does espouse this premise in certain contexts, concedes Brown, his inconsistent application of it in respect to the Fall of Adam proves disastrous to his understanding of the human condition.

For example, in *De civitate Dei* Augustine argues that the origin of evil stems not from a deficient cause, but from the soul’s creation *ex nihilo*. Though enabling him to shift the blame for sin from God to humanity, says Brown, it appears to make the Fall of humanity an inevitable extension of human nature. Also in *De civitate Dei* and repeated elsewhere, Augustine maintains both that evil is the result of the soul’s pride, and that pride is itself the evil for which the soul is condemned. As Brown rightly states about this argument, captured by the aphorism “Pride Cometh Before the Fall”, pride cannot be the antecedent cause of the soul’s sin, theologically. Pride is the sin that renders the soul accountable.

Furthermore, there is Augustine’s later argument that the first evil will is comprehensible, but that humans cannot grasp it due to their fallen condition. Brown cites this as an “obfuscation masquerading as an explanation”, and not just because it fails to give us any reason to believe it. It also suggests God is somehow responsible for evil: that evil has some part to play in the intelligible structure of God’s good universe. If this is so, it contradicts the Christian doctrine of divine

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goodness, and draws Augustine dangerously close to espousing Manichean dualism. Yet all that Augustine had to do in response to this question, says Brown, is to maintain that the first evil will is causally deficient, i.e. incomprehensible, and to condemn further speculation on the origin of evil.

Without analysing the (de-)merits of Brown’s argument against Augustine, we draw attention to the moral underpinnings of Brown’s proposal about evil for the purpose of setting the stage for Augustine’s approach. Brown’s worries over a causal account of the origin of evil, we suggest, share a sympathy with Augustine’s argument in *De libero arbitrio*. Not that Augustine has no desire to speculate on the origin of evil, for clearly he does and will do. But that the way in which he approaches it in *this* dialogue, at least, is both morally attuned and pedagogically sophisticated. Ironically, Brown’s citation of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur lends support to this aspect of Augustine’s approach. Ricoeur writes:

> The harm that has been done to souls, during the centuries of Christianity, first by the literal interpretation of the story of Adam, and then by the confusion of this myth, treated as history, with later speculations, principally Augustinian, about original sin, will never be adequately told. In asking the faithful to confess belief in this mythico-speculative mass and to accept it as a self-sufficient explanation, the theologians have unduly required a *sacrificium intellectus* where what was needed was to awaken believers to a symbolic super-intelligence of their actual condition.\^95

Whereas Brown cites this to anchor his criticism of Augustinian “speculations”, Ricoeur’s proposal provides a way in to book III of *De libero arbitrio*. The need to “awaken believers” to a knowledge of their “actual condition” comports well with how book III reveals our location “in Adam”. To put it another way, Augustine attends to a deeper notion of human agency in book III that fleshes out the implications of Adam’s fall from grace. Not entirely uninterested in mapping causal connections—hence his four “theories” surrounding the origin of the soul}\^96—

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\^96 *De libero arbitrio* III.20.56.188f.
Augustine places far greater emphasis on the plea for divine mercy as the means by which the soul returns to Adam’s location. As we explore below in book III, Augustine tries to show us that no matter where evil came from, and no matter how far we have fallen, God can be trusted with the salvation of humanity.

Penalties of Pride: De Libero Arbitrio III

At the end of book II, Augustine asked Evodius where the first “movement” came from that caused the will to sin. His initial answer to his own question was that the movement is unintelligible: God’s creation, and the gift of free will itself, provides no basis for a “cause” of evil. This did not in any way deny the “voluntariness” of the movement, but all the more affirmed that this movement is both voluntary and blameworthy. In book III, Augustine revisits this question to establish the same point. Drawing an analogy between a stone’s weight and the weight of the soul, he shows Evodius how to distinguish the two in terms of their behaviour, and thereby reveal the voluntary origin of the human weight of sin. Whereas the stone moves naturally when it falls to the ground, such motion being proper to the weight of a stone, a stone that likewise falls away from Truth is not acting naturally, but does so willingly. The difference in movements between the stone and the will, then, is that the will has power to “check” its own movement, whereas the stone merely behaves according to its nature. To this comparison, Evodius responds that he knows it to be true. Thanks to their dialogue in books I and II, he is certain not only that he has a will, but that the evil deeds he commits must be attributed to it.

His question in book III, however, has to do with cosmic matters of divine foreknowledge: how God could foreknow, without being responsible for, the sins His

97 De libero arbitrio III.1.2.6-2.11. For the scientific background to this discussion of weights (taken from Aristotle) see Introduction.
98 See Introduction.
99 De libero arbitrio III.1.2.9.
100 De libero arbitrio III.1.2.8.
creatures commit.\textsuperscript{101} In response to this, Augustine takes him back to the first sin of Adam. His purpose is to demonstrate that even in Genesis 3, God’s foreknowledge of Adam’s fall reinforces Adam’s guilt. For since God foreknew in Genesis 3 that Adam would fall, He foreknew that Adam would fall by means of the will. God did not predetermine Adam’s fall from grace. God foreknew Adam’s fall as a voluntary fall, that is, in accord with Adam’s nature. Hence for Augustine, God’s foreknowledge of human behaviour involves foreknowledge of what it is to be human in the first place—namely to have a will. “Hence power is not taken away from me due to His foreknowledge—it is thus mine all the more certainly, since He whose foreknowledge does not err foreknew that it would be mine”.\textsuperscript{102}

On this basis, Augustine preserves the truth that human beings are agents, and more importantly reinforces their moral accountability. Tracing this question back to the first sin of Adam, moreover, he insinuates his later attempt to place humanity in Adam’s location. For the next few pages, though, Augustine engages Evodius on the subject of God’s creation: why God is not responsible for what happens there “necessarily”. His main design, which he never fails to remind Evodius in book III, is to overcome the temptation (of Adam) to impute sin to God, by showing God to be merciful in His ordering of creation (i.e. His judgement). Once again, this is all for the purpose of awakening Evodius’ confession: to enable him to see that despite sin, God’s providence in creation mercifully prevails. Thus even if it were true that sin occurs “necessarily”, he explains at one point, it does not follow that God is to be blamed for sin, only that the human being has been exonerated from it. “Therefore, let us praise the Creator if the sinner can be defended; let us praise the Creator is he cannot. For if he is defended rightly, he is not a sinner; therefore praise the Creator! But if the sinner cannot be defended, he is a sinner precisely to the extent that he turns himself away from the Creator; therefore praise the Creator!”\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} De libero arbitrio III.2.4.14.
\textsuperscript{102} De libero arbitrio III.3.8.35, trans. King.
\textsuperscript{103} De libero arbitrio III.16.46.159, trans. King.
Following this account of “necessary” sins, he raises the topic of the human condition: not only its nature, but also its origin. Though pleased to learn yet again that God commits no sin, Evodius still finds it difficult to understand the cause; the cause of Adam’s sin may well be the will, he says, but what about the cause of the will that sins? In response to his concern about the origin of the origin, Augustine warns Evodius not to look beyond the root of the matter. The answer he wants lies right in front of him: the only cause of sin can be the will itself. Even so, Augustine decides to say more about the topic. Citing 1 Timothy 6:10, “the root of all evils is greed”, Augustine explains that the cause of sin is “to will to have more than is enough”, to espouse an “immoderate desire” for power and pleasure. He goes on to say that desire (cupiditas) is equivalent to a “wanton will”, and that such a will stands in direct contrast to created human nature. “Accordingly, we may conclude that the root of all evils is not being in accordance with nature, which is a sufficient rejoinder to all those who want to lay the blame on natures. But if you ask again about the cause of this root, how will it be the root of all evils?” Desire corrupts human nature, including the will, and that is all there is to say about the “cause” of sin. But again, not quite all. Augustine has one more thing to say about the nature of original sin, and he will return to it momentarily at the end of book III (see below).

For now, greedy desire has been identified as the cause of sin. But greedy desire does not encapsulate the fallen human condition, for one must also consider the penalties that such desire merits. Here, Augustine repeats a claim he has made at various points: a perverse love of power begets others inordinate loves, and these loves surrender the soul to a fragmented state. Accordingly, he turns the focus to the fragmentation of humanity by invoking the twofold condition of “ignorance and trouble” [ignorantia et difficulties]. His aim now, we suggest, is to introduce

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104 *De libero arbitrio* III.17.47.163.
105 Augustine says the same to the Manicheans about creation: do not look beyond the will of God for the cause of all that is. *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* I.2.4.
106 The verse is paraphrased; see *De libero arbitrio* III.17.48.165, trans. King.
107 *De libero arbitrio* III.17.48.167, trans. King.
108 *De libero arbitrio* III.18.51.172.
Evodius to the nature of his own condition, and thereby position him to take responsibility for the penalties of pride.

To understand the penalties of pride, ignorance and trouble, we must first of all avoid categorising them as “involuntary” sins. According to O’Connell, the notion of “involuntary sin” has crept into Augustinian studies due to a faulty translation from John Burleigh, and an article that relies on Burleigh by Malcolm Aflatt. See O’Connell, R.J., “Involuntary Sin in the De Libero Arbitrio”, Revue des Études Augustiniennes 37 (1991), pp. 23-6. See also Harrison, S., Augustine’s Way into the Will, p. 24.

There is nothing involuntary about them; experientially, it may seem as though we have no choice but to obey them, but our complicity in their perpetuation is itself a willing act. According to Augustine, our tendency not to regard them as our sins is part and parcel of our abandonment of Adam’s location. Not wishing to take responsibility for our human condition, we either deny having any condition from which we need saving, or we use our fallen condition to justify our behaviour. Ignorance afflicts our knowledge, trouble afflicts our action; but the one thing for which we are condemned, says Augustine, is our refusal to step forward as lovers on the way. “Accordingly, it is not counted as a fault of yours that you act in ignorance against your will, but rather that you do not search for what you do not know; nor that you do not bind up your wounded members, but that you reject the one willing to heal you—these are properly your sins”. In this way, Augustine starts the shift the focus away from the origin of sin as a past event, and towards a more profound awareness of our present condition as inextricably bound up in the Fall of Adam.

Turning to God: Si Volet

As the argument in book III unfolds, and as Augustine begins to deflect attention away from the origin of sin, it becomes clear that the whole project centres upon one purpose—and that purpose is not to answer the problem of evil. It is not to pass over the problem either, but to use it as an occasion for re-locating the soul. To sum
up: In book I, Augustine enabled Evodius to affirm “I have a will”. In book II, he helped him celebrate the will as a gift from his Creator. In book III, he seeks to deepen Evodius’ awareness of his willing condition, and to exhort him to turn his will to God in prayer and confession.

As we saw at the end of our second itinerary in Chapter 5, often when Augustine admonishes the soul to obey God or turn to God, he makes sure to add the conditional phrase: “if it is willing” [si volet]. If the soul is willing to do this or that, he says, the outcome of such and such will inevitably follow. By establishing this “precondition” within the process of salvation, Augustine means to claim no more than that the human will is involved. We are not saved against our will, as if such a thing were possible. But neither do we always want to be saved, which is why the condition exists. Framed in terms of Genesis 3, moreover, this precondition throws fresh light on the exchange between God and Adam. Whereas God reached out to Adam by asking him a question, Where are you?, Adam decided not to answer God with the full weight of his confession, but to conceal his true location by passing off the blame. In this case, Adam was unwilling to step forward and confess, but willing to hide the truth from God with lies and deception. Similarly in book III, Augustine invites the soul to step forward out of its ignorance and trouble, but makes evident that to do so, it has to want to be saved first. The question, then, is what he makes of this precondition in book III. How does he frame it in relation to the origin of the soul’s Fall, and the origin of the soul’s faith?

To begin with, we return to statements centred on the condition of the soul in the aftermath of the Fall. Afflicted by the penalties of pride, explains Augustine, “human beings are not good, and they do not have it in their power to be good—either because they do not see how they should be [ignorance], or because they see it but they are not able to be such as they see that they should be [trouble]”. At the same time, he suggests, human beings are not without an escape route from sin: Adam’s

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112 Cf. De vera religione 35.65.
113 Cf. De libero arbitrio III.3.7.26
pride has not totally vitiated one’s capacity to return to God, but has left open the possibility of seeking salvation—if the soul is willing.

However, anyone willing [voluntatem] to turn back to God so as to overcome the punishment that his origin deserved in turning away must not only not be hindered but even helped. Thus did the Creator of things show how easily Adam could have remained as he was made, if he had willed [si voluisset], since his offspring were able to overcome even what they were born with”.

Comparing our present location “in Adam” to Adam’s original condition without sin, Augustine suggests that Adam’s unwillingness to remain as he was can be remedied through our willingness to become who we are. In putting it that way, he could be taken to suggest that human beings are the cause of their salvation, not God, and that the main agent of that cause is exercise of the will. However, the only solid conclusion one can draw from this passage is that human beings achieve salvation only if they are willing. It offers no insight into whence this willingness arises, nor reveals whether this willingness already exists.

Matters start to clear up a few passages later. Taking up the question of the origin of the soul—a question he had set aside in book I of this work—Augustine presents not one, but four possible “theories” that he believes are consonant with orthodox Christian faith. In the middle of his second theory, individual creation of souls, Augustine argues that God implanted a “natural judgement” [naturale iudicium] in the soul, and thus the soul is by nature disposed to seek wisdom and peace: “so that it might attain these things not by being born to them but by pursing them”.

However, he then adds to this that if the soul “is unwilling to do so [si...noluerit], it will be rightly held to be guilty of sin, as a soul which has not used well the ability it received”. But then again, he goes on to affirm that despite its fallen condition, the human soul does have the capacity to act. “Although it was born in ignorance and trouble, it is nevertheless not pressed by any necessity to remain in the condition in

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115 De libero arbitrio III.20.55.186, trans. King.
116 De libero arbitrio III.20.56.191, trans. King.
which it was born”.\textsuperscript{117} Though one can quibble with what precisely he means here by “necessity”, it is hard to avoid reading his message as a basic affirmation that the soul has the ability to turn itself around. Either that, or Augustine is affirming not a subjective capacity of the soul, but an objective fact regarding the soul’s temporary condition.\textsuperscript{118} If that is the case, though, the question remains how the soul becomes willing to receive salvation. If no objective barrier to its salvation exists, what names the source of its positive movement?

The truth is, there is so much going on in the pages of book III that disagreement over this question is well nigh inevitable. Part of the problem, we suggest, is that the question itself is not the question Augustine is asking at this particular time. In his 

\textit{Retractationes}, for example, Augustine explains to his Pelagian critics (and any future critics) that the focus of \textit{De libero arbitrio} is the origin of evil, not the origin of faith.\textsuperscript{119} Whether or not this exonerates him from not raising it is another matter, but the point is that it is one thing to examine “whence evil?”, another to raise the question “whence faith?”. Indeed, the fact that faith in God remains a premise of \textit{De libero arbitrio}, as we argued above, suggests at least one reason why the latter question is less pressing to Augustine.

On the other hand, it is difficult to avoid drawing the conclusion, based on certain key passages, that Augustine does affirm the soul’s capacity for self-movement. One example is found in his fourth theory of the soul’s origin. Here we note the basis of his exhortation to the soul is Christ’s command in Matthew 7:7 to \textit{ask, seek, knock}.

For even if He had sent them forth Himself [his fourth theory of origin], even in their ignorance and trouble He did not take away their free will to ask and inquire and strive: He will give to those who ask, He will show to those who inquire, He will open to those who knock, completely beyond fault. He furnishes the diligent and the well-disposed with the ability to overcome such ignorance and trouble, to gain the “crown of glory”. He does not reproach

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{De libero arbitrio} III.20.56.192, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{118} As he does when comparing Adam to the Devil: \textit{De libero arbitrio} III.10.29.106.

\textsuperscript{119} “For it one matter to look into the origin of evil, another to look unto how we may return to our former good or reach a greater good”, \textit{Retractationes} I.9.2, trans. King.
the neglectful, who want to defend their sins on the grounds of weakness, with ignorance and trouble as a crime, but since they remain in that state rather than will to arrive at truth and ease through the effort of inquiry and learning, and the humility of confession and prayer, He pays them back with a just punishment.\textsuperscript{120}

As we have argued in this study, just in deciding to step forward as a lover on the way—to ask, seek, knock—one embodies humility and imitates Christ. This is done only by means of an awakened desire of truth, only by expressing willingness through love of the supreme good. In this passage, however, the source and content of one’s seeking is unclear. The soul is being accused of not seeking the truth, and in turn this seems to affirm that it can seek the truth.

The affirmation of this capacity to seek the truth, moreover, is based on the soul’s possession of a created will, not a re-created will. This becomes clear a few lines later when Augustine praises God for “implanting [in us] the capacity [capacitatem] for the highest good in these beginnings”.\textsuperscript{121} In keeping with his focus on re-entering the location of Adam, he affirms the power of the soul’s will in its original creation as the source from which the soul’s decision to ask, seek, knock springs. “Therefore, the soul is ignorant of what it ought to do, precisely because it has not yet received it. But it will receive this, too, if it uses well what it has received: the power to search diligently and religiously, if it is willing [si volet]”.\textsuperscript{122} Yet again, he adds the qualifier: if it is willing. Had Augustine left this out, he would seem to suggest that the soul’s power is neutral in respect of seeking the good. But since to use what it has received, the soul must be willing to use it, the whole question is thrown back upon the origin of its willingness as the source from which springs its capacity for movement. And in this respect, is it any surprise that at this stage in book III, Augustine decides to introduce us to the weight of a contrary love.

\textsuperscript{120} De libero arbitrio III.20.58.199, trans. King.
\textsuperscript{121} De libero arbitrio III.22.65.221, trans. King.
\textsuperscript{122} De libero arbitrio III.22.65.222, trans. King. King’s emphasis.
As for the fact that it cannot always accomplish what it recognizes it ought to
do—well, the soul has also not yet received this. The more exalted part of it
has moved ahead to perceive the good of what has been done rightly. The
slower and carnal part, however, is not thereby brought to the same view. As
a result, on account of that very trouble the soul is given a warning to call
upon Him Who helps in its perfection, the one Whom it perceives is the
author of its inception. The upshot is that the soul becomes more dear to
God, seeing that it is raised up to be happy not through its own powers but
instead through the mercy of Him from Whose goodness it has its being.\footnote{De libero arbitrio III.22.65.222-3, trans. King.}

If on first impression it seemed possible to achieve happiness on our own, here that
impression comes into conflict with the sudden revelation that human willingness is
divided across different aspirations.\footnote{Cf. Confessiones VII.17.23. “I was astonished to find that I already loved you, not a phantom surrogate for you. But I was not stable in the enjoyment of my God. I was caught up to you by your beauty and quickly torn away from you by my weight”, trans. Chadwick.} In coming to terms with this division, the soul
is motivated to “call upon Him Who helps in its perfection”, and to lay itself at “the
mercy of Him from Whose goodness it has its being”. But to make things even more
confusing, Augustine reverts to suggesting that we ought to praise

the Creator of souls with all due religiousness for having supplied the soul
with the sort of beginning [exordium] that by exerting itself and making
progress it may reach the fruit of wisdom and justice, and for having
furnished the soul with so much dignity that He also put it in its power, if it is
willing [si vellet], to make its way to happiness.\footnote{De libero arbitrio III.22.65.224, trans. King. Emphasis added.}

Allowing for an essential continuity between God’s role as Creator and Redeemer,
Augustine’s failure here to mention God’s purposes \textit{in Christ} seems to imply that the
soul’s capacity is a creaturely given, not an inspired gift.\footnote{Datum not donum; see Introduction.} It seems to suggest that
our conflict with contrary weights of affection is not so weighty as to require God to
act on our behalf. The phrase \textit{si vellet} notwithstanding, the soul appears here partly
capable of returning itself to God, which is why Augustine calls it to give thanks to its
Creator. The point to recall, though, is that his framework for interpreting the soul’s

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item De libero arbitrio III.22.65.222-3, trans. King.
\item Cf. Confessiones VII.17.23. “I was astonished to find that I already loved you, not a phantom surrogate for you. But I was not stable in the enjoyment of my God. I was caught up to you by your beauty and quickly torn away from you by my weight”, trans. Chadwick.
\item De libero arbitrio III.22.65.224, trans. King. Emphasis added.
\item Datum not donum; see Introduction.
\end{thebibliography}
status is shaped by Adam’s Fall to temptation in Genesis 3. For this reason, his conclusion to the argument in book III takes us back to the “site” of Adam’s response to God’s question, and invites us to re-consider God’s offer of forgiveness.

Pride and Persuasion, the Devil and Christ

Earlier in book III, Augustine makes a distinct ion between two sources of sin: sin arising from “our own thinking”, and sin that still comes from the soul, but is elicited from outside.\textsuperscript{127} Affirming that “[e]ach sin is voluntary” and worthy of blame, he also affirms that the latter sin is not as blameworthy as the former sin. If Adam fell through persuasion and the Devil by his own design, the Devil deserves the harsher punishment for his sin and seduction, whereas Adam maintains the hope of salvation if only he will turn to God “in the humility of repentance”.\textsuperscript{128} Augustine then adds, though, that not only Adam, but also Adam’s descendants, have mostly abandoned that hope of salvation to expend themselves in “illicit pleasures”. Their sin begins with pride that elevates them above their location, and which inclines them to “spit out the medicine of mercy” that could heal their sickness.\textsuperscript{129} The situation is so bad, in fact, that God deigned to meet us in our fallen condition by taking on a form that we could recognise from below. With “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” [Jn. 1:14], Augustine discovers a counter-example to the Devil’s invitation that opens the door to healing and restoring created nature. He sums up the contrast in the following pithy way: “Thus the soul that finds him in outward humility Whom it had forsaken in its inward pride is going to imitate His visible humility and return again to the heights of the invisible”.\textsuperscript{130}

Picking up with this topic at the end of book III, Augustine likewise affirms that human beings, through the example Christ sets in His Incarnation, have a new

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[127] De libero arbitrio III.10.29.104, trans. King.
\item[128] De libero arbitrio III.5.15.55, trans. King.
\item[129] De libero arbitrio III.10.29.107, trans. King.
\item[130] De libero arbitrio III.10.30.109, trans. King.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
opportunity to defeat pride by embracing humility. Whereas the Devil persuaded Adam to turn inward and away from God, Christ persuades us to take the humble road to freedom by imitating His example and clinging to His cross.\textsuperscript{131} At every turn, in fact, human beings are susceptible to “impressions” that attempt to lure the soul in one direction or another. If they pay the proper attention to these impressions, that is, “carefully and religiously”, they will discover that “every movement and kind of creature that enters into consideration of the human mind speaks to our instruction. On all sides, their diverse movements and states, as though in various languages, cry out in reproach that we should know their Creator”.\textsuperscript{132}

Even Adam had to contend with impressions, says Augustine, in order to maintain the promised wisdom he was able to possess. Here Augustine casts a spotlight on the location of that “first human being” [\textit{primus homo}] just before Adam consents to becoming a fool. In order to explain the nature of Adam’s location before pride, Augustine appeals back to the idea of an “intermediate state” [\textit{mediam}] that is neither wise nor foolish, but on the way to either one. He does not mean that Adam inhabited no state whatsoever, a kind of suspended middle location between objects of delight. Rather he means to show that Adam, having been originally created with freedom of will, is responsible for abusing will and surrendering up his freedom. “On this basis, we understand how the First Man was still able to be led astray even if he was made as wise. And since his sin was in his free choice, by divine law there followed a just penalty”.\textsuperscript{133} In the process of trying to make sense of Adam’s responsibility for sin, Augustine clarifies that at no point does one will without an object.\textsuperscript{134} One can certainly place restraint on the movement of the will, but one cannot achieve total isolation in the realm of objective goods. In fact, such isolation better reflects the pride of Adam in its attempt to wrest control of its God-given

\textsuperscript{131} “Consequently, since Christ paid for us with His blood after His indescribable trials and miseries, let us hold fast with great love to our liberator!”, \textit{De libero arbitrio} III.25.76.263, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{De libero arbitrio} III.23.70.237, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{De libero arbitrio} III.24.72.249, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{De libero arbitrio} III.25.74.255f; see Wetzel, \textit{Augustine and the Limits of Virtue}, pp. 83-4.
powers. Not that pride does not lead to all kinds of foolishness,\textsuperscript{135} for clearly it does, but that pride blinds the soul to the truth of its foolishness, and renders it incapable of action thereby.

Accordingly, Augustine argues that to defeat pride, one must re-enter the location of Adam. In his attempt to secure this location of moral self-awareness, he began in book I with the self-evident will; in book II, he addressed the claim of faith that God gives to souls free will; and now in book III, he renders the soul morally attuned to receive God’s offer of forgiveness and healing. The threefold scheme is summed up at the beginning of book III where Augustine imagines speaking to a group of sceptical thinkers (not Academics; possibly Manicheans). Though these thinkers do not deny God’s providence over creation, he says, they “prefer to believe, in wicked error, that God’s providence is weak or unjust or evil, rather than to confess their sins in humble religiousness”. On these thinkers, therefore, Augustine urges the piety of faith as a starting point to understanding “the way things are”. “If they would permit themselves”, he writes, “to be persuaded so that

(a) when they think of the best and most just and the strongest, they would believe that the goodness, justice, and power of God are by far greater than and superior to anything they conceive in their thoughts; and (b) considering their own selves, they understood that they owe thanks to God, even if He had willed them to be something lower than they are; and (c) from all their bones and the pith of their conscience they cried out: “I said: My Lord, be merciful to me! Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You!” (Ps. 40:5 [41:4 RSV])—well, then they would be led by the certain paths of divine mercy into wisdom. As a result, they would be neither proud when uncovering new things nor disturbed at not uncovering anything. In coming to know, they would become better instructed; in being ignorant, they would become the more ready to search.\textsuperscript{136}

From this viewpoint, Augustine’s confidence in the “willingness” of Evodius seems to rely upon their agreement on matters pertaining to faith. It is because this journey

\textsuperscript{135} “Pride turns away from wisdom, and foolishness is the result of this turning away”. \textit{De libero arbitrio} III.24.72.249, trans. King.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{De libero arbitrio} III.2.5.190, trans. King. King’s emphasis.
runs “from faith to understanding” that Augustine takes a positive view on the soul’s capacity to will. Very soon, however, he will see the need to call his confidence into question by raising other questions about the origin of faith. When that happens, he will find himself in the convenient position of having presupposed all along a prior movement of love. Then the weight of love, the “precondition” for stepping forward as a lover, will bear him hence into a deeper notion of spiritual awakening, and fold everything up in a divine economy that begins and ends with God.
Conclusion

LOVE LEADS THE WAY

“My weight is my love; wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me”. The place of love in the early Augustine is ever-present and elusive. Haunting the three itineraries we examined in this study, it comes to bear in those situations of intense scrutiny and self-questioning, and draws away in moments of hesitation and arrogant self-posturing. The love we examined in this thesis is the weighty love for truth: the precondition for dialogue, the premise of self-knowledge, and the primal feature of the soul’s status on the way to its end, this love is what drives and shapes Augustine’s career as he sets out to assist others on the journey of desire.

The three itineraries we explored here begin and end with love: not just the soul’s desire to discover truth, wisdom, and happiness, but also Augustine’s desire to draw his readers toward conversion. In *De Academicis*, love inspired the soul to set out in search of truth; and love awakened the soul to realise that in order to find truth, it needed to turn to and call upon the voice and visage of philosophy. In *De vera religione*, love inspired the soul to pay attention to the order of creation; to put a question to different levels of creaturely being; and to rise up and re-enter its spiritual location as a lover of the truth, not the truth itself. And in *De libero arbitrio*, love activated the soul’s willingness to acknowledge the will; to receive its will from God as an intermediate good; and to direct its will back to God from a confessional standpoint, acknowledging divine goodness and human responsibility.

In each itinerary, we traced the function of love as an implicit motional reality. We observed the fulfilment of love’ motion in the soul’s expression of prayer, confession, and delight, each of these deepening the soul’s longing for union with God. In this way, we came to appreciate the early insights of Augustine into the nature of spiritual conversion, and the mechanism of spiritual growth. What is more, in applying the Genesis 3 story as a framework and lens, we captured a deeper sense of both the moral and theological substructure that funds Augustine’s whole approach to the
journey of desire. In God’s question Where are you? we find a succinct summary of Augustine’s early works. It is the question suspended over us, calling us to account; but it is also the question beckoning us forward, inviting us to return. The Academics are called to account for their method of epoche. The Manicheans are called to account for their method of rationalism. And Christians are called to account for their impious assumptions. Conversely, sceptical thinkers are invited forward as seekers of the truth. Manichean “Hearers” encounter the call of wisdom and example of Christ. And Christian believers pursue their origins on the basis of faith, allowing faith to guide the way to understanding and surrender. For each itinerary, the question Where are you? is to be answered in prayer, particularly the prayer that asks God to do something on humanity’s behalf. As Augustine develops, these prayers become more urgent and pervasive: a testament to love’s influence on his self-knowledge and knowledge of God. But the roots of this posture can already be traced in the early works, and indeed expose the depths of Augustine’s AD 386 conversion.

Correspondingly, this thesis demonstrates that by attending to the weight of love, readers uncover the true shape of Augustine’s intellectual and moral development. This thesis provides a window into the young Christian philosopher as he labours to draw individual readers to the truth in which he dwells. The shape of Augustine’s development not only follows the movement of love, but it also unfolds within his deepening awareness of God’s action on behalf of humanity. Indeed, this thesis has served to provide indirect confirmation that Augustine does indeed operate within a Trinitarian framework. Thanks to the recent work of such scholars as Chad Tyler Gerber and Lewis Ayres, we have been able to document several itineraries of the individual’s moral transformation whose intelligibility rest squarely (if sometimes awkwardly) within the realm of Christian confession. All this serves to extend the scope of R.J. O’Connell’s later judgement that the earliest works evince “a thoroughly religious and specifically Christian style of understanding”.

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And what Augustine does for individual readers in his earliest works, he continues to do for a much wider readership during his later pastoral career. The itineraries that defined the remit for his earliest interventions eventually establish a somewhat predictable pattern of reasoning in later works; and not just philosophical works aimed at specific intellectual challenges, but also pastoral writings aimed at a mostly uneducated laity, which further confirms Augustine’s commitment to following the example of the Incarnation. Though space does not permit us to draw out the riches of his later works, one example, taken from a sermon on the Gospel of John, brings together nicely a number of themes and images we have encountered in this thesis. In this sermon, Augustine directs attention to the wayfaring Church of Christ, and invites the Church to yield to the guidance of the humble teacher, Jesus Christ. But only those who have ears to hear Jesus will listen to his voice; and only those whose desire is smouldering will come to taste of his infinite goodness.

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The Gospel reading for this particular day is John 4:1-26: the encounter between Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well. To build anticipation among the congregants, Augustine signals that “great mysteries and figures of great realities” are to be found in this story for those willing to seek them. For example, he notes that Christ arrives at the well weary from the journey (4:6). If speaking to Christ’s divine nature, of course, this is difficult to believe; God does not tire from a journey, just as God does not ask questions in search of an answer. The purpose of these details must lie in something else; as Augustine explains, “they want to suggest something; they are making us alert, they are encouraging us to knock”. They are not to be taken literally, as in stripped of secret meaning, but rather investigated with full attention

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2 In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus 15. The homily is actually on John 1:1-42, but Augustine weaves it together with John 4. For a parallel account see De diversis quaestionibus

3 In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus 15.1, trans. Edmund Hill.
and the charity that builds up, so as to glean from them the message God intends for them to tell.

In this vein, Augustine reminds his congregants that “[f]or you was Jesus weary from the journey”. Jesus deigns to meet us not in the strength of *In the beginning was the Word* (Jn. 1:1), but in the weakness and humility of *The Word was made flesh and took up residence among us* (Jn. 1:14). “His journey is the flesh he took on for our sake”, he says; and that is how we are to interpret his exchange with the Samaritan. And as for the Samaritan, she is a “model of the Church not yet justified, but ready to be justified; for that is what the conversation will deal with”. For indeed, at the centre of this encounter at the well is a conversation between God and fallen humanity. Instead of Adam in the Garden, it is the Church on her journey: thus Augustine invites the congregants to “listen to ourselves in her and recognize ourselves in her, and in her give thanks to God for ourselves”.

Having located us in the encounter with Christ at the well, he turns to explore the hidden meaning behind the verses in question. First of all, Christ asks the woman to *Give me a drink* (Jn. 4:7). Though it seems like a straightforward request, there is more see here than we think; as Augustine lets slip, “But the one who was asking for a drink was thirsting for the woman’s own faith”. Thus in reply to the woman’s reply that Jews and Samaritans don’t mix, Jesus reveals that if the woman knew to whom she was speaking, she would realise that he who asks *her* for drink, is inviting the same request to be put him. “He asks for a drink, he promises a drink. He needs water as if to slake his thirst, and he pours forth water so as to satisfy fully. *If you knew*, he says, *the gift of God*.”

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4 *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus* 15.6, trans. Hill. Emphasis added.
5 *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus* 15.10, trans. Hill.
6 *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus* 15.10, trans. Hill.
7 *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus* 15.11, trans. Hill.
8 *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus* 15.12, trans. Hill.
Even so, the woman reveals that she is not catching on (as do the disciples listening to Jesus!). She sees that Jesus is not equipped to draw water from the well, and does not look beyond the literal meaning of the words he has spoken. But unlike Adam who evades God’s question by covering his shame and excusing his sin, the woman is not hiding anything from Jesus; she is simply taking the first step from ignorance to faith. “While understanding him in a different sense, and thinking in terms of the flesh, she is in some way knocking on the door so that the master might open what was closed. Ignorance—not desire—was knocking; she was still worthy of compassion and not yet instruction”.

But very soon, the woman will step forward as a seeker of the truth, and she will occupy the proper location from which to receive divine light. After Jesus tells her that whoever drinks this water will never get thirsty again (Jn. 14), the woman “heaved a great sigh, longing to be done with the need, longing to be done with the toil”. However, she is still understanding “according to the flesh”, and does not realise that Jesus promises spiritual water from heaven. According to Augustine, the water in the well represents “worldly pleasure in the dark depths”; and those who draw from it are “bent over” in submission to lust. And as for the woman, she is still unaware of the invitation set before her; “Need forced her to this toil”, says Augustine, “and weakness objected to it. If only she could hear, Come to me, all you who toil, and I will refresh you (Mt 11:28)!. That, in fact, is what Jesus was saying to her…”. Thus in response, Jesus commands the woman to Go, call your husband… (Jn 4:16). To interpret this command, Augustine indicates that it could be taken literally; the woman is indeed without a husband, but perhaps is living with “who-knows-which illicit partner”. But even if this is true, it does not cancel the deeper meaning implicit in the text: for as Augustine explains, the command is actually inviting us to come back to our senses—to apply our intelligence, our “husband”, to the matter at hand.

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9 In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus 15.13, trans. Hill.

10 In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus 15.14, trans. Hill.

11 In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus 15.17, trans. Hill.
“Call your husband”, he said; ‘summon the intelligence by which you can be taught, be directed”\textsuperscript{12}. Yet lest we think of this in the wrong way, that is in a proud and boastful manner, Jesus tells the woman to Believe me that the hour is coming, and that the Father seeks worshippers Not on this mountain, not in the temple, but in spirit and truth (Jn. 21-23). It turns out that the intelligence to which the woman is summoned is not the lofty intellect of the proud philosopher, but the humble intellect of the wayfaring lover who prays to God from inside the temple. 

So, you were looking for a mountain? Come down in order to reach him. But you want to ascend? Ascend, by all means, but do not look for a mountain…do everything within; and if perchance you are looking for some high place, some holy place, present the temple within you to God….Do you want to pray in the temple? Pray in yourself. But first be a temple of God, because he will listen to anyone praying in his temple\textsuperscript{13}. 

And with these promptings and clues from Jesus, the woman begins to call back her intelligence, her “husband”, and to present herself to God in the humility of faith. It was a command that invited her, and a dialogue that sustained her; and now it is a faith that delivers her into the hands of her Saviour, who draws from her the faith he needs to quench his thirst. “So then, in terms of that woman, his drink was also that he should do the will of the one who had sent him. Therefore, he said, I am thirst; give me a drink (Jn 19:28; 4:7), so that he might produce faith in her and drink her faith and make it part of his body; his body, you see, is the Church”.\textsuperscript{14}

The awakening of intelligence, as we observe here and observed before, only comes by acknowledging and surrendering to the truth; otherwise there is no truth to which our intelligence can conform. But the point of such surrender is not to end the soul’s journey, but finally to begin it as a self-aware lover. The woman at the well, the Church on pilgrimage, through faith working through love (Gal. 5:6) begin to partake in God’s goodness, occupying the humble place in which Wisdom deigns to dwell. 

\textsuperscript{12} In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus 15.19, trans. Hill. 
\textsuperscript{13} In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus 15.25, trans. Hill. 
\textsuperscript{14} In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus 15.31, trans. Hill.
This is the posture Augustine’s legacy teaches us; and it begins by stepping forward as a lover already on the way.
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