

“ ‘Knowing as we are Known’ in *Confessions* 10 and Other Philosophical, Augustinian and Christian Obedience to the Delphic *Gnothi Seauton* from Socrates to Modernity”¹

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A. THE OBEDIENCE OF MODERN AND MEDIAEVAL AUGUSTINIANS TO THE ORACLE

“Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other. ... [I]t is evident that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he have previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself.”

On this basis, Jean Calvin, from the beginning of whose *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I have been quoting, fixes the order of the *Institutes*. For Calvin, as for Eriugena, Aquinas, and other mediaeval theologians, the unity of epistemology and ontology, though differently balanced between them, determines that system treats first of God, then of the human.² The Geneva Reformer wrote these words about 1536. One hundred years later, another French Augustinian, equally as important for the making of modernity, carried out another investigation of the connection between self-knowledge and knowledge of God. In his *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, René Descartes wrote to the same effect as Calvin had:

... I see that there is manifestly more reality in infinite substance than in finite, and therefore that in some way I have in me the notion of the infinite earlier than the finite – to wit, the notion of God before that of myself. For how would it be possible that I should know that I doubt and desire, that is to say, that something is lacking to me, and that I am not quite perfect, unless I had within me some idea of a Being more perfect than myself, in comparison with which I should recognise the deficiencies of my nature?³

More than religion and philosophy were under the influence of like programmes of self-knowledge, in 1679 Bishop Bossuet reported to Pope Innocent XI on his programme for the education of the Dauphin, the only son of Louis XIV. One of its elements, a treatise he wrote on *Connaissance de Dieu et de Soi-Même* was published under the title *Introduction à la Philosophie* in 1722 after having been found among the papers of Fénelon. It begins:

Wisdom consists in knowing God and by Him to know his own self (*à se connoître soi-même*). The knowledge of ourselves (*nous-mêmes*) ought to elevate us to the knowledge of God. To rightly understand the human, it is necessary to think that it is composed of two parts, which are the soul and the body.⁴

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² Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. H. Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), book 1, chap. 1, vol. 1, pp. 37-39. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1.1.7; 1.2, prol., 1.50, prol., and W.J. Hankey, *God in Himself, Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs / Oxford Scholarly Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 / 2000), pp. 19-35.

³ René Descartes, *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, trans. Haldane and Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), Meditation 3, vol. 1, p. 166.

⁴ Bossuet, *Connaissance de Dieu et de Soi-Même*, in *Oeuvres de Bossuet, Évêque de Meaux*, tome 34 (Versailles: J.A. Lebel, 1818), p. 63.

This determines the division and order of the treatise which after considering the soul, then, the body, and, finally, the union of the two, returns to the knowledge and love of God and how we ought to live in a self-conscious relation to God.

Calvin, Descartes and Bossuet were deeply imbued with the thought of Augustine, preferring him above other teachers. Connecting the knowledge of the self with the knowledge of God is almost certainly owed by them to him and fundamental structures of the arguments of Descartes and Bossuet have their originals in Augustine.⁵ In this they are successors of mediaevals such as Anselm.

Anselm's *Proslogion*, like Augustine's *Confessions*, the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* of Bonaventure, the *Meditations* of Descartes, and the *Enneads* of Plotinus, is the result of disciplined meditation of God.⁶ The *Proslogion*, an address by the self both to God and to the soul, seeks to make our reasoning about God conform to the divine nature itself, i.e. to God's simplicity and self-sufficiency.⁷ Our way to God and his essence must be assimilated. Throughout the *Proslogion*, Anselm's address, or exhortation, is alternatively to himself and to God because they cannot be known independently. To make this evident, the first address in each case begins with the same word, *Eia*, "Go."⁸

Anselm begins with an address by the seeker to himself as other and in his otherness. In language reminding us of the *Confessions* and the process of conversion which Augustine learned from the Platonists, reiterating the most fundamental patterns of ancient Hellenic religion,⁹ Anselm exhorts himself: go, leave behind external distractions, retreat within yourself, and there seek to see the face of God. Immediately after this exhortation to himself, God is addressed with the demand that, from his side, God should also go to the seeker and teach him how to see his face hidden "in inaccessible light." The work both aims to show, and also assumes, that the knowledge of the self and of God are bound up with each other. This logical structure – that reason endeavours to see what it also assumes – is essential to faith seeking understanding, Anselm's title for his little book.¹⁰ Faith is the preliminary form of what must be seen face to face, when we shall know as we are known. This enables Anselm to solve the paradox of Plato's *Meno* – how can we find what we don't already know? – which Augustine also solves in *Confessions* 10. The inadequacy of faith to its object compels the search for vision, understanding and possession. However, faith is also the way beyond the loss it both makes evident and creates.

We must not forget when reading Anselm, who does not cite authorities, what Augustine never allows us to forget, that the context of their arguments is a continual allegorical meditation on Scripture, in which its true meaning emerges by cracking the outer shell of the text. As a Benedictine, Anselm's daily recitation of the Psalms, interpreted

⁵ See Z. Janowski, *Index Augustino-Cartésien. Textes et Commentaire*, Histoire de la philosophie (Paris: Vrin, 2000), there are comparisons of Descartes and Augustine at pp. 22-23, 56-67, 82-95, idem, *Cartesian Theodicy. Descartes' Quest for Certitude*, International Archives of the History of Ideas 168 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), see pp. 90-101, 121-130, 141-149.

⁶ On Plotinus, Augustine, and Descartes in this regard see Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁷ *Proslogion* (Schmitt, *Opera Omnia*, vol. i), prooemium, p. 93, lines 6-10.

⁸ *Proslogion* c. i, pp. 97-98: "Eia nunc, homuncio ... Eia nunc ergo tu, domine deus meus ...". The problem of the relations between address, knowledge and rest are also considered in Augustine, *Confessiones* 1 and there they also bring the reader to the Fall.

⁹ See André-Jean Festugière, *Personal Religion among the Greeks*, Sather Classical Lectures 26 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 21.

¹⁰ *Proslogion* prooemium, p. 94, lines 7.

according to Augustine's instructions in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*,¹¹ would have been an interior dialogue with God by which knowledge was exchanged. His writings emerge from this dialogue and, among them, the *Proslogion* "serves as a paradigm (which his other works covertly copy) for integrating intellectual inquiry into the dynamics of monastic prayer ... unveil[ing] the true nature of inquiry as a lover's exchange."¹² By this interior intercourse, as Anselm learned from Augustine's *De Trinitate*, the self can remember what it lost and who it once was because it remains an image of the Creator, even if a darkened one: "[Y]ou have created in me this image of you so that I may remember you, think of you, and love you."¹³ The trinitarian soul is itself the hidden basis for union with its trinitarian source and contains the means of recognizing what it seeks and willing what it has lost. Significantly, when the goal of Anselm's quest is reached, there is no division between the seeker's address to himself and to God. In the last Chapter of the *Proslogion*, God is asked to affirm that the seeker has reached what the Lord counselled him to demand and Anselm asserts that he will go on seeking and receiving in accord with the Lord's command.¹⁴

Bonaventure's following of Augustine is marked by devoted attention to Anselm's writing.¹⁵ The *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* is measured by its relation to the human soul – the lowest step is below it, the next is above it, the middle is within it. To mount this middle grade, Bonaventure exhorts the soul: "Enter into yourself and see." He assures those who look at themselves: "you will be able to see God through yourself as through an image, and this is indeed [quoting 1 *Corinthians* 13:12] to see through a mirror in an obscure manner."¹⁶

Six elements are found in these mediaeval and early modern followings of Augustine; not all of them are together in each of the texts, although elements are sometimes implied when they are not explicit.

- 1) Knowledge of God and the knowledge of the self are inseparable.
- 2) Knowledge of God is logically and by dignity prior; this priority may also be temporal.
- 3) There is some kind of presence of God to the soul such that an encounter between them is both possible and always in fact occurring, even when we are unconscious of it.
- 4) God demands, and may even explicitly command, that we know ourselves.
- 5) Obedience to this demand normally requires the discipline of meditation and thus a variety of what may be called mystical experience.
- 6) The result of the journey to self-knowledge sought with, or as a condition of, the knowledge of God is that we shall know the two together. Put in the language of Scripture this would be to know as we are known.

¹¹ See Michael Cameron, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, in *Saint Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) pp. 290-296 at 291-293.

¹² Marilyn McCord Adams, "Romancing the Good: God and the Self according to St. Anselm of Canterbury," *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 91-109 at 102. Her analysis of the interchange accords with mine in "*Secundum rei vim vel secundum cognoscentium facultatem*: Knower and Known in the *Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius and the *Proslogion* of Anselm", *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John Inglis, (Richmond [England]: Curzon Press, 2002), pp. 126-150 at 134-140 except that she rightly adds love to its structure.

¹³ *Proslogion* c. i, p. 100; see Augustinus, *De Trinitate* (Mountain et Glorie, CCL 50), 14.8.11, p. 436, 14-16, and 14.12.16.

¹⁴ *Proslogion* c. xxvi, p. 120: "Deus meus ... dic animae meae ... "petite et accipietis.."

¹⁵ See W.J. Hankey, "Dionysius becomes an Augustinian. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium vi*," *Studia Patristica*, vol. XXIX, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1997): 252-59 at 256-259.

¹⁶ Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, text and translation Philotheus Boehner (Franciscan Institute, 1956), c. 3, p. 62.

B. KNOWING AS WE ARE KNOWN IN BOOK 10 OF THE *CONFESSIONS*

For Bonaventure, the “Knowing as we are known” of I *Corinthians* 13:12, is contrasted with the knowing through a mirror darkly which governs knowledge of God through the self. In St. Paul the contrast is in terms of “then” (Vulgate *tunc*) and “now” (*nunc*). “Now we see through a mirror obscurely, then, we shall see face to face.” The “then” is eschatological, the last things belonging to the future, the life of another world to come, or what Paul calls “when the perfect is come” (I *Corinthians* 13:9). Knowing God as Augustine is known by God begins and governs Book 10 of his *Confessions*: “May I know you, the one who knows me, may I know just as even I am known.”¹⁷ Augustine’s repeated *cognoscam* may be taken either as subjunctive or as future indicative, either as a demand, a prayer, or a hope.¹⁸ Augustine did not have to choose, the forms of the subjunctive and of the future indicative being the same. The altogether remarkable result is that, in the self-examination of Book 10, the eschatological hope becomes a present reality. Indeed, the book demonstrates not only that knowing as we are known must happen now, if we are to achieve repentance and forgiveness now, but also that this can be so, because we know by knowing in the divine ideas which are in the Word of God, the eternal Son.

In his self-examination, Augustine demands that he judge himself by the divine standard. He is to judge himself by God or, in other words, God is his judge: “But I do not sit in judgement on myself ... You, Lord are my judge.”¹⁹ He does in fact find God within himself and above himself by finding that he has always been moved relative to the Truth, the Truth always with him and also above him.²⁰

We will recall Bossuet and Descartes when Augustine begins by turning toward himself, and asking himself what he is. He finds he is soul and body but that the soul and mind are superior, governing, and judging: “What is inward is superior (*melius*). All physical evidence is reported to the mind which presides and judges ... [T]he created order speaks to all, but is understood (*intellegunt*) by those who hear its outward voice and compare it with the truth within themselves (*intus cum ueritate conferunt*).”²¹

Searching for this truth within, Augustine follows Plato into reminiscence and the discovery of the infinity of memory.²² There he finds that the ideas are not learned from outside but recognised and assented to within, being already in memory (*iam erant in memoria*).²³ As in the Platonic tradition, thinking is a bringing forth of what is in the self or known through an inward turn, and is thus self-discovery. Despite the need to uncover and bring forth what is hidden within, memory as power of the mind cannot be something absent of which we must go in search. “Memory is present to itself through itself. ... It is I who remember, I who am mind (*animus*). It is hardly surprising if what I am not is distant to me. But what is nearer to me than myself?”²⁴ Having discovered and marvelled at himself:

¹⁷ Augustine, *Confessiones* (ed. Labriolle: Paris, 1947), 10.1.1: *Cognoscam te, cognitor meus, cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum*. See F. van Fleteren, “Per speculum et in aenigmate: The Use of 1 Corinthians 13:12 in the Writings of Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 69-102.

¹⁸ J.J. O’Donnell, *Confessions III, Commentary on Books 8-13* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 154.

¹⁹ Augustine, *Confessiones*, 10.4.6 to 10.5.7.

²⁰ Phillip Cary’s opposition between Augustine and Plotinus on this twofold movement which is essential to his *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self. The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) is false, see pp. 35-44.

²¹ *Confessiones*, 10.6.9 & 10.6.10.

²² *Ibid.*, 10.8.15.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10.10.17.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.15.23 and 10.16.25.

“the power of memory ... an awe inspiring mystery, a power of profound and infinite multiplicity, this mind, this what I am (*et hoc ego ipse sum*),” Augustine reiterates the Plotinian ascents of *Confessions* 7²⁵ and follows Plotinus through the human soul in its changing multiplicity to the stability above it. Significantly, he makes this ascent at the command of the light which is above. Asking of it “What are you saying to me?” Augustine continues:

Here I am climbing up through my mind towards you who are constant above me (*Ecco ego ascendens per animum meum ad te, qui desuper mihi manes*). I will pass beyond (*transibo*) even that power of mind which is called memory, longing to touch at the point where the contact is possible and to be bonded to you where it is possible to be bonded.²⁶

The language here, contrasting the movement of the mind to the stability it seeks, and speaking of touch and union, recalls the ascent with Monica at Ostia described in *Confessions* 9. The description of the experience at Ostia is particularly rich in mystical language derived from Plato by way of Plotinus.²⁷ Augustine says: “we touched it [the eternal] in some small degree by a moment of total concentration of the heart” (9.10.24). At the point of union, the mind is described as “surpassing itself by no longer thinking about itself” (9.10.25). The experience is expressed as a “touching” by means of a flash of mental energy (9.10.25).

This search for God brings Augustine to a consideration of the logic of quest. He returns to the problem of the *Meno* with which the *Confessions* began. When applied to God, the paradox – how can we find what we lost unless we know it (and thus have it) already? – governs both Anselm’s *Proslogion* and the *Confessions*:²⁸ Augustine derives his knowledge of the paradox from Cicero’s *Trusculan Disputations*; and his report of the examination of the slave boy in his *De Trinitate* follows Cicero’s account there.²⁹ He solves the paradox in the Platonic way: what is lost is recognised because it is remembered. Of course it is remembered within. In consequence, Phillip Cary can represent Plato’s doctrine of recollection as “the beginning of Western inwardness.”³⁰ He might have found an earlier, more Socratic, beginning, namely, the virtuous life pursued for its own sake. In the *Republic*, Plato associates the momentous turn from external poetic ethics, concerned with reputation, honours and rewards with the move to what we “have within the soul, invisible to gods and men.”³¹ Thus the quest for God requires self-knowledge – even if, for Augustine and the Platonic tradition generally, the quest for God will also take us above and beyond the self.

In a move which will also be crucial for Anselm (*Proslogion*, Chapter 1) and Boethius (*Consolation*, Book 3), *Confessions* 10 turns the quest for God into the universal quest for

²⁵ There are Plotinian ascents at 7.10-12, 7.17.23, 9.10.23 to 9.11.28. The ascents in *Confessiones* 10 are at 10.6.9 ff.; 10.40.65. The ascent at 7.17.23 is quite detailed, moving step by step from bodies to the soul, which perceives through the body, and from there to the “inward force” of soul “to which bodily senses report external sensations”, ascending from there to “the power of reasoning”, and thence to “the level of its own intelligence”. This is essentially where 7.10.16 begins. Much of it is worked out more fully in Book 10. The Plotinian ascent undertaken together with Monica beginning at 9.10.24 is fuller, starting from corporeal objects. It is especially full at the upper end where the characteristics of Plotinian mystical experience are given.

²⁶ *Confessiones* 10.17.16.

²⁷ On the “touching” of the truth in Plato, *Symposium* 212a, see Festugière, *Personal Religion*, p. 44.

²⁸ Compare *Confessiones* 1.2.2 and *Proslogion* Chapter 1; the paradox in Book 10 is at 10.17.26 - 10.18.27. I am grateful to Dr Ian Stewart for helping me work out this feature of the *Confessions*.

²⁹ Compare Augustine, *De Trinitate* 12.15.24 with *Trusculan Disputations* 1.57; texts are given in Phillip Cary, *Augustine’s Invention*, pp. 16 & 133.

³⁰ Cary, *Augustine’s Invention*, p. 14, he notes that in stating the doctrine of recollection “Plato often uses a distinctive verb (*en-einai*) which means literally ‘to be in.’”

³¹ Plato, *Respublica* II, 366e6-7, where we have “*enon*.”

happiness. Because we all seek happiness (10.20.29), “it is known to everyone” (10.20.29), and it belongs universally to the human memory: “Since no one can say that this is a matter outside experience, the happy life is found in the memory and is recognised when the words are uttered.”³² But of course not every quest for the happy life is successful because not everyone seeks what will really give it, namely “the joy which you yourself are” (10.22.32). Thus “the happy life is based on the truth” (10.22.32). Because “where I discovered the truth, there I found my God, truth itself” (10.24.35), Augustine makes another Platonic ascent to the truth “immutable above all things” and always present (10.25.36). As a result, he is able to pose this rhetorical question about his search for happiness: “Truth, when did you ever fail to walk with me, teaching me what to avoid and what to seek after I reported to you what, in my inferior position, I could see and I asked your counsel?” (10.40.65). As the condition of recognising that now and always he has God as his judge and knows himself as God knows him, Augustine names God as “the truth presiding over all things (*Tu es ueritas super omnia presidens*)” (10.41.66).

This self-examination, or exercise in self-knowledge, carried out in the face of God makes *Confessions* 10 a kind of realised eschatology. J.J. O’Donnell says of it:

... Book 10 renews the ascent theme. What Augustine learned to do at Ostia he now *does*, in writing this text. This is no longer an account of something which happened somewhere else some time ago; the text itself becomes the ascent. The text no longer narrates mystical experience, it is mystical experience.³³

As with Anselm’s *Proslogion*, in which the mystical exchange also moves to the text, the presence of this experience depends on an account of knowledge which is Platonic and which, so far as it involves our always having access to the divine thinking, is characteristic of the Platonism of Plotinus. But Platonism, and indeed Hellenic religion, is also suggested elsewhere in Book 10.

In the third paragraph of that Book, when opposing, as Plato and Descartes also do,³⁴ the notion that God lies, Augustine writes: “For what is it to hear you speak about yourself, except to know oneself (*Quid est enim a te audire de se, nisi cognoscere se*).”³⁵ O’Donnell refers us to the landmark three volume, but nonetheless partial, history by Pierre Courcelle of the command primarily associated with the Delphic Oracle: *Gnothi Seauton*, i.e., *Connais-toi toi-même de Socrate à S. Bernard*. In a note at this point in his translation of the *Confessions*, Henry Chadwick gives us one fruit of the study of Courcelle’s history: “Like Plotinus and Porphyry, Augustine understood the Delphic maxim ‘Know thyself’ as the path to knowing God; conversely knowing God is the way to self-knowledge.”³⁶

This is by no means the only echo of the Delphic command, as mediated through Cicero and through pagan and Christian Platonists, to be found in Augustine. His works are full of them and it takes Courcelle just under forty pages to trace its influence beginning from the *Contra Academicos*.³⁷ I shall not repeat his survey but shall mention a few essentials. One of these is in the *Soliloquies*. There, crucially, he unites self-knowledge with the description of man as image and likeness of God in *Genesis* 1.26: “Who has made the human

³² *Confessiones* 10.21.31.

³³ O’Donnell, *Confessions III*, 151.

³⁴ Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditation 1 and following, Plato, *Respublica*, 3, 382-383.

³⁵ *Confessiones*, 10.3.3.

³⁶ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 180, note 1. See Pierre Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même de Socrate à S. Bernard*, 3 vols. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1974-75), vol. 1, p. 137, note 109.

³⁷ Courcelle, *Connais-toi*, pp. 125-163.

according to your image and likeness, which he who knows himself, recognises.”³⁸ So, in dialogue with Reason, Augustine determines that he wishes to know God and the soul, nothing more.³⁹ In the *Confessions*, another critical unification of Scripture and the command to self-knowledge is found, one repeated many times in his writings.⁴⁰ Isaiah 46.8 (*Septuagint*) demands “Return, transgressors, to your hearts (*Redite, praeuaricatores, ad cor*).” To this Augustine adds a Hellenistic rest (*requiescite in eo*), a Neoplatonic adherence (*inhaerete illi*), and a general Platonic turn inward to truth (*ueritas .. intimus cordi est*).⁴¹

Crucial to understanding the character of Augustine’s thought is recognising that, though the early philosophical dialogues and the *Confessions* are important *loci*, the essential connection between self-knowledge and the knowledge of God is most thoroughly worked through practically in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* and theoretically in the *De Trinitate*. In his explanation of Psalm 70, he explicitly repeats the *Agnosce te*.⁴² The *De Trinitate*, Augustine’s most systematic treatment of the nature of God, is, by the necessity of this logic, a step by step deepening of the understanding that we are essentially rational, what this means, what it makes possible, and what it demands.⁴³ In a brief presentation of the crucial role of self-reflexive subjectivity in Augustine, Dermot Moran writes:

De Trinitate book X specifically addresses the centrality of self-knowledge as the turning point for the conversion of the soul. Self-knowledge is based on an intellectual act that is transparent to itself ... the mind knows itself and circumscribes itself. ... Self-enclosure, self-gathering, is the first step towards self-transcendence.⁴⁴ So far as within the Platonic tradition the Delphic command was understood to direct us to the knowledge of God through self-knowledge and *vice versa*, I judge that no pagan obeyed the oracle more completely than Augustine.⁴⁵

Augustine’s debt to the Platonic tradition is most explicit in Book 7, the heart of the *Confessions*. Here Augustine shows that the knowledge of God and of self are only achieved simultaneously. After the long quest related in the first 6 books, Augustine finally arrives at a true knowledge of the nature of God in a way that solves the problems with which the previous books have been concerned:

- 1) How are we to interpret Scripture?
- 2) What kind of being is the human as image of God?
- 3) Is there anything incorporeal?
- 4) What is the origin and nature of evil?

³⁸ Augustine, *Soliloquiorum* (ed. St. Maur: Paris, 1836), 1.1.4: “qui fecisti hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem tuam, quod qui se ipse novit agnoscit.” On this in respect to the *Gnothi seauton*, see James K.A. Smith, “*Confessions* of an Existentialist: Reading Augustine After Heidegger,” *New Blackfriars* 82 (2001): 273-282 & 335-347, at 275.

³⁹ *Soliloquiorum* 1.2.7: “A. Deum et animam scire cupio. R. Nihilne plus? A. Nihil omnino.” See *De Ordine*, 2.18.47.

⁴⁰ Courcelle, *Connais-toi*, p. 137, note 106.

⁴¹ *Confessiones* 4.12.18.

⁴² Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (ed. St. Maur: Paris, 1835), LXX, sermo 1, 14.

⁴³ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 2.16.27; 2.17.28; 3.2.8; 3.10.21; 4.1; 11.1; 12.15.24; 14. *passim*; 15.15.25.”

⁴⁴ Dermot Moran, “Idealism in Medieval Philosophy: The Case of Johannes Scottus Eriugena,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999): 53-82 at 63; see W.J. Hankey, “Self-knowledge and God as Other in Augustine: Problems for a Postmodern Retrieval,” *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 4 (1999): 83-123 at 112-122.

⁴⁵ See W.J. Hankey, “Mind (*mens*),” *Saint Augustine through the Ages*, pp. 563-67 at 564.

True answers are given to these, when, from the Platonists, Augustine comes to know that God and mind are incorporeal. For Augustine there is a tight interconnection between:

- 1) his arriving at the Platonic conception of the divine substance as pure spirit and essential goodness, and
- 2) his coming to a knowledge
 - a) of his own metaphysical nature,
 - b) of the nature of good and evil, and
 - c) of his responsibility for his own deeds.

Augustine is explicit that he is dependent for this saving knowledge on the *libri platoniorum*, the books of the Platonists. Without their Neoplatonism, his conversion and his Christian religion are impossible. This lays the basis for the books after 7 which first tell of that conversion and then go on to the self-examination of *Confessions* 10 and to the Plotinian treatment of time and eternity in Book 11.

The connection of time and eternity is the basis for our understanding God's speech to us about creation in *Genesis*. The world is seen in *Genesis* from God's perspective. In praising God as the Creator in the last three books of the *Confessions*, Augustine passes to a vision of God's objective working. His work is conversion both of the individual and of the cosmos which come from and return to God. In the work of *genesis*, Augustine's conversion, his subjective story, and all histories whatsoever are grounded. Book 11 asks how the creature who has moved in time can share the eternal knowledge of God. How can the creature in time know its changing process from within the perspective of the divine eternity? The Plotinian notion of a timeless eternity, the *totus simul*, enables this bridging for Augustine, just as later developments within Platonism will rescue prayer from the consequences of providential determinism for Boethius.⁴⁶ The extent to which Augustine can understand *Genesis*, is the extent to which he comes to know himself even as he is known in another way than that achieved in *Confessions* 10. By the exegesis of *Genesis* in the last books, Augustine understands that through which he has been understanding himself since the first words of the *Confessions*, which were words of Scripture. Thus, he knows the cosmic patterns or forms in which his personal history has been enacted.⁴⁷

Put another way, the *Confessions* as a whole is an act of obedience to the divine command *Gnothi Seauton*, as that command was understood in the Platonic tradition. Moreover, Augustine not only needed Platonic help to obey successfully, he proceeded by Platonic means to a Platonic end. To show how this is so, I shall conclude with a very partial survey of the history of the *Gnothi Seauton* in Platonism.

C. FROM SOCRATES TO PLOTINUS : THE PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSFORMATION OF, AND OBEDIENCE TO, THE *GNOTHI SEAUTON*

⁴⁶ See Roland Teske, "Saint Augustine as Philosopher: The Birth of Christian Metaphysics," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 7-32 at 20 and Hankey, "*Secundum rei vim*," pp. 127-134. For how Proclus accomplishes the same, see D.G. MacIsaac, "Projection and Time in Proclus," *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John Inglis, pp. 83-105 at 88.

⁴⁷ As with the Platonists the creation has two main phases, the first is a "creation in the realm of intellect" (12.9.9). This creation lies "outside of time" (12.12.15). Creation as described at 12.27.18, i.e. formation by the return of formless dissimilarity to the One (*unum*) has a structural identity with Plotinian emanation.

No one who wants to oppose Plato the philosopher to Augustine and the later pagan Neoplatonists, with their unification of philosophy and religion, should read the *Apology*.⁴⁸ In it Socrates is presented as on trial in large part “for believing in gods of his own invention, gods other than those in which the city believes” [24c].⁴⁹ In response to this, Socrates represents himself as “a gift of God to the state” [31b] who neglected his own interests in devoting himself to what God had laid on him “both by signs and dreams, and in every way in which the divine decree ever commanded anyone to do anything” [33c]. The imposition of that lot came about through the Delphic Oracle. If this story be not one of Plato’s myths⁵⁰, about thirty years before the trial, a childhood friend of Socrates asked the Pythian priestess whether anyone was wiser than he.⁵¹ She replied that “No one is wiser.” Being conscious of ignorance rather than wisdom, Socrates is represented as believing that God cannot lie, and therefore asking himself: “How shall I explain God’s answer; what riddle is he uttering?” [21b] He decided to set out seeking someone with wisdom in order “to check the truth of the oracle.” Thus he undertook the questioning of those seeming or pretending to be wise which made him such a pest in Athens. While trying to discover the meaning and truth of the oracle, Socrates discovered that: “I was making myself hated, but I felt compelled to put what the God had laid on me first” [21e]. He told his judges that his wanderings in going from person to person were “labours undertaken to establish the truth of the oracle beyond questioning” [22a]. In fact, Socrates found none wise; consequently, “the truth probably is that it is God who is really wise, and the meaning of this oracle is to say that human wisdom is worth little or nothing” [23a]. He concluded that his wisdom is his consciousness of his own ignorance and that the oracle about Socrates was used by God to bring the citizens to the truth about the human condition generally. With this realization his philosophical questioning becomes a work to “vindicate the oracle.”

So far Socrates, despite his eccentric ways, offers a traditional interpretation of the message of Greek religion and of the Delphic Oracle as its medium. Wisdom belongs to the gods, not to humans. *Gnothi seauton* continues to stand against the *hybris* which would pretend that humans can share what belongs to the divine; it tells us: know yourself as human, know your ignorance. Philosophy claims religious authority for its activity, but its message is the same as that of the traditional religion of oracle and poet.⁵² However, as Socrates becomes a martyr for the philosophical life as service to God, something new appears.

As we all know, Socrates was found guilty. In naming his penalty, consistent with how he had represented himself so far, he begins by proposing that, as a benefactor of the city, he should be pensioned and housed as a member of the government. After he offers to pay a tiny fine instead, the jury accepts the death penalty as the alternative, and Socrates

⁴⁸ For such representations of Plato and Socrates see M.L. McPherran, *The Religion of Socrates* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1996), pp. 5-12.

⁴⁹ I prescind from the consideration of the relation between this representation and Socrates himself, on the problematic; see Louis-André Dorion, “A l’origine de la question socratique et de la critique du témoignage de Xénophon: l’étude de Schleiermacher sur Socrate (1815),” *Dionysius* 19 (2001): 51-74 and Gregory Vlastos in *Philosophie grecque*, sous la direction de Monique Canto-Sperber, en collaboration avec Jonathan Barnes, Luc Brisson, Jacques Brunschwig, Gregory Vlastos, 2nd edition (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), pp. 123-144.

⁵⁰ See M. Montuori, “The Oracle Given to Chaerephon on the Wisdom of Socrates. An Invention by Plato,” *Kernos* 3 (1990): 251-259 at 256 “it is purely and simply an invention by Plato,” Dorion accepts Montuori’s conclusions.

⁵¹ On Chaerephon see McPherran, *The Religion*, pp. 214-220. Notice that at *Phaedrus* 229e, Socrates directly takes the Delphic command as binding on himself.

⁵² See Courcelle, *Connais-toi*, pp. 11-25 and McPherran, *The Religion*, pp. 216-218.

makes a final speech. In it he assumes the power given those about to die to prophesy. After predicting that future cross-examiners of the city will be harder on the citizens than he was, he tells his friends the meaning of what has happened. He reveals that his relation to God is very personal indeed. He has an inward prophetic divine “voice” or “sign”, something always accompanying him who “constantly opposed me even in the merest trifles, if I were about to make a mistake” [40a].⁵³ This divine sign, which Plato, in contradistinction from Xenophon, represents only as a check on evil [31d]⁵⁴ and always requiring a rational interpretation to understand, had not opposed him in anything this day of his trial.⁵⁵ The absence of the accustomed sign gives him “great proof” that he is on his way to his own good [40c]. The working of God for his good includes his death.

As we have seen, the result of Socrates’ encounter with the Delphic Oracle accords with the Hellenic religion as conveyed by the poets. Equally, both his own inner prophetic sign and the Oracle also require interpretation; thus a subjective element enters the relation to the divine voice. Self-knowledge and knowledge of the divine will are inseparably intertwined whether the god speaks at his Oracular shrine or within the soul. Nonetheless, Socrates’ “belief in a special direct relation between himself and divine forces” is revolutionary, as both Plato and Xenophon recognised.⁵⁶ The divine appears in interior communion with the individual, caring for his good.

Socrates, as represented in the *Apology*, is given enough to found a religious revolution.⁵⁷ His life will be the saintly exemplar for the followers of this new Hellenic way; his death is its first martyrdom. The Socratic foundations are these:

1. Philosophical activity is a divine vocation.⁵⁸
2. Its work is self-knowledge.
3. In this philosophic labour the Delphic Oracle, who presides over Hellenic religion, is vindicated and its command fulfilled. So philosophy may be represented as the way to fulfil God’s oracular command to self-knowledge.
4. In self-knowledge, and essential to its structure, the positive center by which all is evaluated moves to the divine. God’s knowledge is true knowledge and the standard of human knowing.
5. Religion is not only a matter of the state or family, but also about the permanent good of the individual.

⁵³ In avoiding the “demon” which is the usual way of speaking of what Socrates encountered, I follow Louis-André Dorion, “Socrate, le *daimonion* et la divination,” *Les dieux de Platon, Actes du colloque international de Caen (24-26 janvier 2002)*, ed. J. Laurent (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, forthcoming) showing the demon to derive from Plutarch, Apulius, Maximus of Tyre and Proclus. For Plato and Xenophon, Socrates encounters no intermediate being but the divine itself by way of a voice or sign.

⁵⁴ See also *Alcibiades* 103a-b, *Enthydemus* 272e, *Phaedrus* 242b-c, *Republica* VI, 496c, *Theaetetus* 151a, *Theages* 128d. On the daimonic warning away from politics in the *Republic* in comparison with that in the *Apology*, see Leroux’s note in Platon, *La République*, traduction inédite, introduction et notes par Georges Leroux (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2002), pp. 661-662.

⁵⁵ On the differences and the reason for them, see Louis-André Dorion, in Xénophon, *Mémoires* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2000), notes complémentaires, pp. 50-56.

⁵⁶ W.K.C. Guthrie, *Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 84. Xenophon tries to assimilate Socrates’ privileged divine sign to divinations generally (Dorion, in *Mémoires*, pp. 51-53), Plato represents it as peculiar at *Republica* VI, 496c, and the consequent danger to Socrates in claiming it at *Enthyphro* 3b-c, on which see also McPherran, *The Religion*, pp. 181 & 196.

⁵⁷ Perhaps best on this Socratic revolution, because it makes the continuities with earlier Greek religion clear and depends on no judgment about what is Socratic and what Platonic, is Festugière, *Personal*, p. 39 and *passim*.

⁵⁸ On which laboriously but soundly, see McPherran, *The Religion*, pp. 208-246.

6. The care of God for the one fulfilling the divine command to self-knowledge manifests itself in the gift of an interior divine presence; in principle, self-knowledge and interior dialogue with God belong together.

Only one great shift on this foundation is necessary in order to transform the meaning of *Gnothi seauton*, and it takes place very explicitly and intentionally with both Plato and Aristotle. Both the shift itself, and the transformation it brings about, are of unequalled importance for the religions of the Hellenistic world: pagan ones, Judaism, and Christianity. The philosophical theology of Islam and Judaism are determined by the shift in the doctrine of God undertaken by Plato and Aristotle, but, these religions remain basically communities of law. In contrast, the Christian religion itself gets its character through these philosophical developments: first of all, because as Jaroslav Pelikan puts it: “It remains one of the most momentous linguistic convergences in the entire history of the human mind and spirit that the New Testament happens to have been written in Greek ... the Greek of Socrates and Plato.”⁵⁹ The Christian Church in the Patristic period develops in a mutual exchange with the philosophical schools, especially the Stoic and Neoplatonic, and, because the Christian religion is, like a school, doctrinal, the substance of the religion is deeply affected by the development we shall trace.⁶⁰

We witness the shift first in the *Republic* when, in considering the education of the guardians, Plato criticises the myths about the gods, especially those invented by the poets. As against the lies of the poets, which represent the gods as changeable, able to be deceived and influenced, lying, revengeful, and so on, Plato maintains that “in reality, of course, God is good and he must be so described.” “God is the cause, not of all things, but only of good.” Indeed, God is perfect and, in consequence, changeless. He cannot be affected. Perfect goodness is God’s very nature and determines the other characteristics. *Apatheia*, simplicity, and incorporeality are fundamental attributes of God consequent on changeless perfection.⁶¹ God is not jealous, weakly desiring to keep what he had to himself. Instead the final goal of the human quest for knowledge is Goodness itself, represented through the image of the sun, giving knowledge and being to everything else.⁶²

That this view of God determines the Christian religion, whether Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant – at least until very recently –, will be evident from the first words of the *Articles of Religion* of the Church of England. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* which, at least in law, remain determinative of doctrine in the Anglican churches,⁶³ date from the period between Calvin’s *Institutes* and the *Meditations* of Descartes. The first article gives the doctrine of God which is to be believed, and it is set before the articles on the authority of Scripture. As was the case with Hellenic religion after Plato and Aristotle, and as was certainly true of Patristic and mediaeval Christianity, the philosophical idea of God required that myth and Scripture

⁵⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*, Gifford Lectures at Aberdeen, 1992-1993 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 3.

⁶⁰ On the mutuality of the exchanges see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1990).

⁶¹ Plato, *Republica* II, 379b-381c. On *apatheia* as Christian theological presupposition, see Pelikan, *Christianity*, pp. 86-87, 188-189; on the goodness and immutability of god for Plato and the contrast with the poetic gods, see Leroux’s notes in Platon, *La République*, pp. 564-566; Leroux refers us also to *Timaeus* 29e, 44c-45e, 68c and to *Laws* 889d-900e.

⁶² *Republica* VI, 509b-c.

⁶³ See W.J. Hankey, “Canon Law,” *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. S. W. Sykes and J. E. Booty, (London/Philadelphia: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 200-15 at 209-212.

be read allegorically so as to make the revelation and the doctrine conform.⁶⁴ Augustine was the most important authority for the rules of this kind of interpretation in Latin Christianity. Here are the first words of the first article:

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible.

Aristotle follows Plato (*Timaeus* 29c-30a) when he asserts at the beginning of the *Metaphysics* that “Poets tell many a lie.”⁶⁵ He argues that God cannot be jealous, wishing to keep the wisdom which is essential to him to himself. Rather the unmoved divine Good, desire for whose intellectual self-sufficiency moves all things, shares his self-knowledge with us. This is not only the basis of theology but also of ethics. At the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle urges:

We must not follow those who advise us, being human, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, aim at immortality, and do all things so as to live in accordance with what is best in us.⁶⁶

When this theory about the nature of God, and this view of the human and its goal, are combined, we get a new understanding of the consequence of knowing God and the self together. This appears in a dialogue which was attributed to Plato and very widely read until its authenticity was attacked by Friedrich Schleiermacher, but whose ascription to Plato is now being defended again, the (first) *Alcibiades*.⁶⁷ This dialogue reversed the interpretation of the *Gnothi seauton* of the Delphic oracle.⁶⁸ Whereas, before Plato, its purpose had been to separate the divine and the human, for Plato and his successors, including Aristotle, it was used for the opposite purpose. By self-knowledge we would imitate the gods and abolish, so far as we are able, the difference between us and them. It is perhaps Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*⁶⁹ whom Plotinus has in mind when he asserts at *Ennead* 5.3.4.11 that “to know oneself is no longer to know as a human.”⁷⁰ With Plotinus we are in the midst of the philosophy which, by this time, for 500 years had turned its deepest attention to the care of the self. The primary work of Hellenistic philosophy is the quietude or salvation of the human individual, that which Augustine also seeks, as the first words of the *Confessions* report. The Neoplatonists after Plotinus discover that this requires the reconciliation of philosophy and religion.

It is of the greatest importance for the connection between Plotinus and Augustine that Plotinus refutes Skepticism by a self-knowledge which raises the soul to the unity of thought and being in *Nous*. The knowledge which no Skeptic can undermine is the one we have when soul knows itself in the divine mind.⁷¹ Of course, this connects them both to

⁶⁴ See W.J. Hankey, “Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI.6,” *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 64 (1997): 59-93.

⁶⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.2.

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.7.

⁶⁷ See Plato, *Alcibiades*, ed. Nicholas Denyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 14-26 and Platon, *Alcibiade*, présentation par J.-F. Pradeau (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1999), pp. 22-29 & 219-220.

⁶⁸ H.J. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in late Antiquity. Interpretation of the De Anima*, (London: Duckworth, 1996), 3; Ham in Plotin, *Traité 49 (V.3)*, Introduction, traduction, commentaire et notes par Bertrand Ham, *Les Écrits de Plotin* (Paris: Cerf, 2000), pp. 15-20; Courcelle, *Connais-toi*, vol. 1, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.2.

⁷⁰ Ham in Plotin, *Traité 49*, p. 17.

⁷¹ See Dominic J. O'Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 18-20; Kevin Corrigan, “L'auto-réflexivité et l'expérience humaine dans l'Ennéade V, 3 [49], et autres traités: de Plotin à Thomas d'Aquin,” *Études sur Plotin*, éd. M. Fattal (Paris/ Montreal: L'Harmattan, 2000), pp. 149-172, Ham's

Descartes and the last of the philosophers this paper touches. However, rather than concluding with comparisons between Plotinus and Augustine who are separated by a century and a half, I judge that it is more useful to look at Augustine's nearer contemporaries in the Platonic school, figures like Iamblichus (250-330) and Proclus (410-85).⁷² Just as Augustine's trinitarian doctrine of God is closer to Porphyry's (if Porphyry be the author of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*), than to the triad of the One, *Nous*, and *Psyche* in Plotinus, Augustine also brings together religion and philosophy in ways which are closer to paths followed by Iamblichus and Proclus than to the methods employed by the more intellectually austere founder of Neoplatonism. Moreover, by attending to the later Neoplatonists, we shall encounter a mode of self-knowledge in its relation to divine knowledge, which is different from the Plotinian and Augustinian mode. When these two modes combine in Latin philosophy and theology, we discover that by which we can return to Eriugena, Bonaventure and Aquinas, with whom we also began.

D. FROM IAMBlichUS TO AQUINAS: SCIENCE AS MEDIUM OF THE SELF-KNOWLEDGE GOD COMMANDS

Iamblichus is credited with establishing the curriculum in the Neoplatonic schools and giving the *Alcibiades* its prominent place in that curriculum – it was read first. He gave the practice of self-knowledge as the way to the knowledge of God its centrality in the later Platonic schools. The *Alcibiades* retained its importance as the way into philosophy as self-knowledge and way of life well after paganism was overcome by the religions of the Book.⁷³ However, the analogy by which self-knowledge and the knowledge of God are connected in Iamblichus and his successors has a different structure than that in Plotinus.

Because, for Plotinus, part of the soul always remains above in noetic contemplation, soul and the historical self will not come together more than temporarily. The continual thinking in the realm of *Nous*, which would give a self-conscious identity to the self, must remain mostly hidden to “the other man,” the historical one. Iamblichus judged that if Plotinus were right and we could always ascend to our true selves in *Nous*, we must all always be happy, and turned Neoplatonism decisively against this peculiarity of Plotinus by teaching that the individual soul was altogether descended into *genesis*, none of it remaining above. He, thus, turned Platonism away from immediate knowledge either of the self or of the divine.⁷⁴ Later Neoplatonism was moved toward a positive relation to the sensible and the material, toward Aristotle and his sciences, and toward theurgic religion. The Neoplatonic Academy followed him and regarded Plotinus as having a “non conformist attitude” in respect “to Platonic orthodoxy.”⁷⁵

introduction in Plotin, *Traité 49 (V.3)*, and W.J. Hankey, “Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More than a Source of the Self”, *Augustinian Studies* 32:1 (2001): 65-88 at 75-88.

⁷² For a survey of the *Gnothi seauton* in late antiquity which involves such comparisons, see Henry Chadwick, “Philosophical Tradition and the Self,” *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G.W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, Oleg Grabar (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 60-81.

⁷³ See Luc Brisson in *Philosophie grecque*, pp. 626, 632, 635, 689, 761; Denyer in *Alcibiades*, p. 14; and above all, Proclus, *Sur le Premier Alcibiade de Platon*, texte établi et traduit par A. Ph. Segonds, tome 1 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985), pp. x-civ.

⁷⁴ See Hankey, “Between and Beyond,” 82-87.

⁷⁵ Plotinus himself may have been conscious of his unorthodoxy, see Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism*, p. 18; H.D. Saffrey, *Le Néoplatonisme après Plotin*, Histoire des doctrines de l'antiquité classique 24 (Paris: Vrin, 2000), p. viii; G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1996), pp. 4-17 and R.M. Van den Berg, “Towards the Paternal Harbour: Proclean Theurgy and the Contemplation of the Forms,” *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne. Actes du Colloque*

The Iamblichian shift to the historical human individual and its situation in the material world requires philosophy to become occupied with the question of mediation, and philosophy turns to religion. The religion it seeks must be (to put it in Christian terms) incarnational and sacramental. The return of the Iamblichean totally-descended soul toward the Principle, which he elevated into a transcendence requiring a division between the Ineffable and the One, both of them above being, demands that what is above operate graciously toward it: “the soul’s access to the divine must come ‘from without’ (*exothēn*) which was one rationale for the practice of rituals given *exothēn*, from the gods.”⁷⁶ A god-like, entirely purified priest takes the place of the Plotinian noetic soul always above.⁷⁷ In the Iamblichean Neoplatonism, there must be, and there is, a mediatorial hierarchy. In working out this mediation, psychology coheres not only with a theology, a soteriology, the structure of the spiritual community, but also with an ontology, a cosmology, and a mathematics. Because the individual soul has wholly descended into *genesis*, none of it remaining above,⁷⁸ self-knowledge and knowledge of the divine cannot be immediate. They require philosophical propaedeutic as much by way of physics and mathematics as by metaphysics. Science becomes the way to self-knowledge. The greatest systematizer of the sciences for the sake of the self-knowledge which leads to the knowledge of God is Proclus.

Proclus, following Iamblichus does not regard self-knowledge as immediately attainable. “[T]he soul is not immediately conscious of its own essential *logoi*, and possesses them as if breathing, or like a heartbeat. In order to make this hidden content of its own *ousia* explicit to itself, the soul must draw them forth through what Proclus calls projection.”⁷⁹ This is a gradual temporal process, which involves the creation within soul of what it knows. Crucially, for a contemporary debate, the rational self is developed here in order to be subverted. John Milbank, James Smith, Denys Turner, and others, propose that Christian theology subverts the interiority of the Platonic rational self, and they connect this subversion with the Christian’s need for grace.⁸⁰ Turner writes of *Confessions* 10.26.37 in contrast with pagan Platonism generally, and with Plotinus specifically:

The paradox .. is that there where God is most intimately and ‘subjectively’ interior to us, our inwardness turns out beyond itself towards the eternal and boundless objectivity of truth. The language of ‘interiority’ is, as it were, self-subverting: the more ‘interior’ we are the more our interiority opens out to that which is inaccessibly ‘above’ and beyond it.⁸¹

International de Louvain (13-16 mai 1998) en l’honneur de H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink, éd. A.Ph. Segonds et C. Steel, Ancient and Medieval Philosophy De Wulf-Mansion Centre Series I, XXVI (Leuven and Paris: Leuven University Press and Les Belles Lettres, 2000), pp. 425-442 at 425-26. For a treatment of the differences between Iamblichus and his Neoplatonic predecessors, see D.P. Taormina, *Jamblique critique de Plotin et de Porphyre: quatre études*, Tradition de la pensée classique (Paris: Vrin, 1999).

⁷⁶ G. Shaw, “The Geometry of Grace. A Pythagorean Approach to Theurgy,” *The Divine Iamblichus. Philosopher and Man of Gods*, ed. H.J. Blumental & E.G. Clark (London: Duckworth, 1993), p. 118.

⁷⁷ Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* I.11, 41.4-11; V.15, 219-220, [Jamblique, *Les mystères d’Égypte*, éd. Édouard des Places, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966), p. 62, lines 169-71]; see G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, pp. 51-7, 108-10.

⁷⁸ Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 211.

⁷⁹ MacIsaac, “Projection and Time in Proclus,” p. 96.

⁸⁰ See J. Milbank, “Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul,” *Modern Theology* 13 (1997): 451-474 at 465, Smith, “Confessions of an Existentialist,” *passim*, and others as cited in Hankey, “Between and Beyond”: 67-69.

⁸¹ Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God. Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 69

This is a good description of what occurs, but, in fact, the subversion attributed here to Augustine and other Christians already takes place in the Neoplatonists upon whom their understanding of the self depends.

J.J. O'Cleary writes of how for Proclus the soul has knowledge of itself and the One.

Proclus cites Socrates in the (First) *Alcibiades* as saying that the soul, by entering into herself, will behold all things including the deity itself ... At first the soul beholds only herself but when she penetrates more profoundly into the knowledge of herself she finds in herself both intellect and the orders of beings. However, when she proceeds ... into the "sanctuary" .. of the soul, she perceives with her eyes closed the genus of the gods and the unities of beings.⁸²

To appreciate the subversion of any self-enclosed rational subjectivity in Proclus, it must be remembered that the gods and "the unities of beings" to which he refers are above knowledge in themselves; the soul knows them only as they are in soul. The soul properly knows according to *dianoia*:

[A]s long as our thinking remains *dianoia* without passing over into *Nous* it will seek wholeness without achieving it. ... [*D*]ianoia is always still on the way. The intelligible is present to it only through its own dividing circuit of *Nous* ... This circuit is never finished for *dianoia* because *dianoia* is a circumference which never touches the centre which it explicates. ... [It] is erotic ... drawn towards its object.⁸³

Thus, by her knowledge, the rational soul is pointed towards and opened to what transcends her.⁸⁴ When she does turn to her own unity and thus to the unity of *Nous* and the One, she has also passed over into a mystical union with what is above her. Science, including metaphysics, is anagogy, spiritual ascent, but it is also only a preparation. In his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, Proclus lists the conditions of self-knowledge. Philosophy is given a role comparable to that of purifications, rites of ablution and expiation in the Mysteries, so that "philosophy constitutes a preliminary purification and a preparation for self-knowledge and the immediate contemplation of our own essence."⁸⁵ As with Plotinus, Proclus is clear that we can only wait for what exceeds knowledge. I quote O'Cleary again:

Like the initiate of the mystery cults, one must wait in the outer darkness for the gods to illuminate the soul, so as to bring it into direct contact with the One. This is why prayer and theurgy are necessary supplements to the scientific way, according to Proclus.⁸⁶

There is a comparable transcendence of rational subjectivity in Plotinus. In *Ennead* 5.3, Plotinus' last description of illumination by the One, the language is denuded of any

⁸² J.J. O'Cleary, "The Role of Mathematics in Proclus' Theology," *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, pp. 65-90 at 75-76. For what the Pseudo-Dionysius did with this, see Istvan Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology. A Preliminary Study," *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, pp. 491-532 at 520. Chadwick, "Philosophical Tradition," pp. 72-73 gives an outline of the *In Alcibiades*.

⁸³ MacIsaac, "Projection and Time in Proclus," pp. 99-101. For this image in Plotinus, see *Enneads* 1.7.1; 5.1.11; 6.5.4; 6.9.8.

⁸⁴ This is exactly what Milbank attributes to Augustine, see J. Milbank, "Intensities," *Modern Theology* 15:4 (October 1999): p. 497, note 142.

⁸⁵ Proclus, *In Alcibiades*, prooemium 9, lines 1-7 (Segonds, p.7).

⁸⁶ O'Cleary, "The Role," p. 88. J. Bussanich, "Mystical Theology and Spiritual Experience in Proclus' *Platonic Theology*," *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, pp. 291-310 at 306 refuses to isolate "ecstatic states and visionary experiences" from "the entire way of life pursued by the Neoplatonic mystic."

rational self-elevation.⁸⁷ He speaks of belief in a way that may have inspired Proclus' teaching on faith,⁸⁸ when describing the "sudden reception of a light" which compels the soul "to believe" that "it is from Him, it is Him." There is a breaking in; the illumination "comes". With this arrival of the "true end of the soul" it "contemplates the light by which it sees".⁸⁹

In contrast with current post-modern fideisms,⁹⁰ beside such acts of sheer gift from the Good, the Neoplatonist sets the soul's preparatory journey. Iamblichus, and those who take the path he pioneered, do not let our moral, rational, and religious activity destroy or absorb the gracious act of God any more than they allow religion to become irrational and to replace reason.⁹¹ Much of the most recent writing on Neoplatonism makes this point, but a number of our concerns come together in an essay by Dominic O'Meara with the significant title: "La science métaphysique (ou théologie) de Proclus comme exercice spirituel." His article is a consideration of the austere deductions which comprise Proclus' *Elements of Theology* whose structure is taken from Euclid. O'Meara shows that the work is the equivalent in Proclus of the metaphysics of Aristotle, and is also a rigorously demonstrative science which functions as an "entraînement anagogique" of the rational soul, preparing it for access to *Nous*.⁹² The soul comes to self-knowledge because it is discovering *Nous* within herself. O'Meara concludes with some suggestions about the historical consequences of the Neoplatonic conception of "metaphysics as anagogic conceptual introspection" and mentions Augustine, Boethius, the *Proslogion* of Anselm and Descartes as belonging to the tradition.⁹³

This list can be extended. Both Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* and Thomas' *Super Boetium De Trinitate* teach that we climb the spiritual *itinerarium* by the steps which order the complex of the sciences. These two thirteenth century theologians draw together Augustine with the Pseudo-Dionysius, who as their most authoritative source of post-Iamblichian Neoplatonism, religiously enables and philosophically requires their acceptance of the Aristotelian sciences as media of the self-knowledge which leads to God. Eriugena was the first Latin to think with Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius at once.

For Eriugena, the human necessarily knows that it is, but not what it is. "It does not know what it is because no essence knows itself."⁹⁴ As with Proclus, when the divine is known in the human, it comes into existence in the human mode. Because, Eriugena follows the Neoplatonists in placing God above being, God may be said to be known, to be created, and to come to be in the human. The human also comes to know what it is in this creation of the uncreated God in it, and, because it's substance is self-knowledge,⁹⁵ the human also

⁸⁷ See Ham's comments at Plotin, *Traité 49*, p. 274.

⁸⁸ Ph. Hoffmann, "La triade Chaldaïque ερος, αληθεια, πιστις de Proclus à Simplicius," *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, pp. 459-489 at 469.

⁸⁹ Plotin, *Traité 49*, pp. 17, 29-38.

⁹⁰ See W.J. Hankey, "Why Philosophy Abides for Aquinas," *The Heythrop Journal* 42:3 (2001): 329-348.

⁹¹ On the difference and unity of philosophy, theology and theurgy for Iamblichus, and on the passivity of *Nous* in union, see Taormina, *Jamblique critique de Plotin*, pp. 133-158.

⁹² D.J. O'Meara, "La science métaphysique (ou théologie) de Proclus comme exercice spirituel," *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, pp. 279-290 at 289.

⁹³ O'Meara, "La science métaphysique," p. 290.

⁹⁴ Brian Stock, "Intelligo me esse": Eriugena's 'cogito'," *Jean Scot Érigène et l'histoire de la philosophie*, éd. R. Roques (Paris: C.N.R.S., 1977), p. 330; Eriugena, *De Divisione Naturae* I.48 PL 490B and W.J. Hankey, "The Postmodern Retrieval of Neoplatonism in Jean-Luc Marion and John Milbank and the Origins of Western Subjectivity in Augustine and Eriugena," *Hermathena* 165 (Winter, 1998): 9-70 at 66.

⁹⁵ *De Divisione Naturae* IV.7 PL 770B.

arrives at true being. Owing to its self-willed fall from a Paradise of intellectual immediate self-knowledge into sensible existence, its only way to self-knowledge now is by the creation of the sensible and all else in the human. Only by this self-knowing through all else can the human know itself, and in that knowing return to proper union with its divine origin.⁹⁶ The result is summarized by Moran:

Human knowledge is in fact the knowing of things in the mind of God. In so far as it has knowledge, the human mind participates in this divine intellection. In its ideal unfallen state, it is identical with the divine mind, and manifest reality is in fact co-produced by the human and divine minds acting together. Creation is theophany, and theophany is revelation to minds.⁹⁷

Eriugena stands within a following of Augustine, alternative to Anselm and Descartes, which replaces immediate self-knowledge with one mediated through the sensible and thus, implicitly at least, through the sciences: natural, mathematical, logical and metaphysical in which Platonic knowing as seeing has been superseded by Aristotelian knowing as making.

Bonaventure and Aquinas are successors of Eriugena on this road. How that road to knowledge of self and God is a spiritual *itinerarium* is clear with Bonaventure. In an outstandingly important article Houston Smit has just shown how within the Augustinian and Proclean Neoplatonic structure of his Aristotelianism, the abstraction by which humans know for Aquinas is an act of creation in the mind so that what it contains becomes known to itself. This self-knowledge by creation is a participation in the divine self-knowledge so far as the power which makes this divine-human act possible is an uncreated light:

... the intelligible forms that come to inform our intellects ... are ... produced through our share in the divine spiritual light. This connatural light of our souls produces these forms ... only because all *scientia* pre-exists in it virtually and universally, in partial active potency. ... It requires phantasms not because they already contain what we represent abstractly in concepts, but because ... phantasms provide enough information to render distinct the content which pre-exists in its light ...⁹⁸

A fuller account would show how the abstractions by which science comes to be in us form an *itinerarium* in which knowledge of ourselves and of God develop together and would include the way in which philosophy and revelation are united in the *Summa Theologiae* so that it is in fact “a mystical theology, whose meditation is intended not only to instruct the reader, but to increase in her the virtues of faith and love.”⁹⁹ Thus, by way of Proclus, Thomas would be brought closer to Bonaventure and to Gregory Palamas. Filling out this account would, however, extend the reach of this paper too far.

CONCLUSION

Let us come back to our beginning with these suggestive hints. They indicate further paths of investigation which would show how, having developed as an Hellenic religion in the Patristic period, Christianity made its adherents profoundly obedient to the Delphic *Gnothi Seauton* as transformed in the philosophical religion which found in Socrates a

⁹⁶ Michael Harrington, “*Unusquisque in suo sensu abundet*: Human Perspective in Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*,” *Dionysius* 16 (1998): 123-139, especially 130-138.

⁹⁷ Moran, “Idealism in Medieval Philosophy”: 70.

⁹⁸ Houston Smit, “Aquinas’s Abstractionism,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 10 (2001): 85-118 at 118.

⁹⁹ A.N. Williams, *The Ground of Union. Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 168 and idem, “Mystical Theology Redux: The Pattern of Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*,” *Modern Theology* 12 (1997): 53-74.

forerunner of Jesus.¹⁰⁰ In our time a better unification of religion and culture for Christians will require a recovery of this obedience.

¹⁰⁰ See McPherran, *The Religion*, pp. 3-4.