The Postmodern Retrieval of Neoplatonism in Jean-Luc Marion and John Milbank and the Origins of Western Subjectivity in Augustine and Eriugena

Neoplatonism commanded important scholarly energy and poetic and literary talent in the later two-thirds of our century. Now it attracts considerable philosophical and theological interest. But this may be its misfortune. The Dominican scholar M.-D. Chenu judged the Leonine utilization of St. Thomas to have been detrimental for our understanding of his doctrine. Thomas was made an instrument of an imperialist Christianity. The use of Aquinas as a weapon against modernity required a "misérable abus." The Holy Office made Fr. Chenu pay dearly enough for attempting accurate historical study of the Fathers and medieval doctors to make us give him heed.[1]

The present retrieval of our philosophical and theological past has a very different relation to institutional interests than belonged to Leonine Neothomism. The problems intellectuals now have with truthfulness come more from within themselves than from outside. There is, nonetheless, much in the character of the postmodern turn to Neoplatonism by Christian theologians to cause concern that the ecclesiastical subordination of *theoria* to *praxis* which distorted the most recent Thomism may have an analogue for Neoplatonism recovered to serve our desires.[2] And if, in fact, our eye has become self-distorting, the problem in our relation to our history will be worse than anything external pressures can cause.

This paper aims to begin assessing the character of this distortion in respect to a central question, our understanding of the history of western subjectivity. There are *prima facie* difficulties in this regard with a postmodern use of Neoplatonism. On the one hand, an endeavour to get beyond the modern "turn to

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[1] M.-D. Chenu, "L'interprete de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Étienne Gilson et Nous: La philosophie et son histoire,* éd. Monique Couratier, (Paris: Vrin, 1980), 43-4. For his book describing the historical studies at Le Saulchoir, see G. Alberigo, M.-D. Chenu, E. Fouilloux, J.P. Jossa, J. Ladrière, *Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir*, (Paris: Cerf, 1985). For the Roman censure, see *Acta Apostolica Sedis,* 34 (1942), 37. For a judgment similar to Chenu's, see W.J. Hankey, "Pope Leo's Purposes and St. Thomas' Platonism," *S. Tommaso nella storia del pensiero, Atti dell'VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, 8 vol., ed. A. Piolanti, viii, Studi Tomistici 17 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 39-52 On the character of Chenu's work, there are "Hommage au pére M. D. Chenu," *Rev. sc. phil. theo.*, 75, no. 3, (1991); Jan Grootaers, "Marie-Dominique Chenu, revisité," *Revue théologique de Louvain,* 27 (1996), 79, quoting Ruedi Imbach: in contrast to Maritain and Gilson "Chenu insiste sur le caractére *historique* de l'oeuvre".

[2] See W.J. Hankey, "Making Theology Practical: Thomas Aquinas and the Nineteenth Century Religious Revival," *Dionysius* 9 (1985), 85-127; idem, "Dionysian Hierarchy in St. Thomas Aquinas: Tradition and Transformation," *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident, Actes du Colloque International Paris, 21-24 septembre 1994*, éd. Ysabel de Andia, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 151 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 405-438; idem, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," *Christian Origins : Theology, rhetoric and community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones, Studies in Christian Origins (London: Routledge, 1998), 139-184; idem, "*Theoria versus Poesis*: Neoplatonism and Trinitarian Difference in Aquinas, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion and John Zizioulas," *Modern Theology*, 15 (1999), 387-415.

the subject"[3] is essential to postmodernity. On the other hand, Neoplatonism is central to the origins of western subjectivity.[4] Adding to the improbability of a full respect for the character of Neoplatonism from this perspective is the postmodern dependence on the "textual" past in constituting itself. It is essential to postmodernity and to its problematic relation to the past that its self-construction cannot be immediate.[5] As a result, its interests in the past are selfish and external. What is past is assumed in order that we might get beyond it to our own position. The proper reasons of the past are not entered.

There is a deep conflict with historical objectivity at the origins of postmodernity, a conflict belonging to its subordination of *theoria* to desire. In their opposition to modernity and their yearning to get beyond its struggles, postmoderns cannot love the necessity in which we have become what we are. The consequence is an incapacity for the loving contemplation of difference which a non-manipulative relation to history requires.

In considering whether and how this consequence prevails, I begin by looking at the postmodern relation to the premodern. I go on to consider what in Neoplatonism attracts some contemporary Christian theologians and what they select from it. I pass to a view of the origins of Neoplatonism in the relation of Plotinus to his philosophical contemporaries and predecessors. I attempt to show that, in their Hellenistic horizon, concern with the self was inescapable. After considering Augustine's assumption and transformation of the Plotinian self, I look briefly at the other Neoplatonism on which Eriugena depends.

I conclude with questions about the constitution of western subjectivity posed by the form under which Eriugena combines the opposed understandings of the self and its relation to the cosmos of which he is the heir. One view comes to him from Plotinus and Augustine. Quite a different understanding of self and cosmos he receives from the Iamblichan Neoplatonism mediated to him through Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite.[6] Eriugena's unification of these will leave us

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[3] John Milbank, "A Critique of the Theology of the Right," *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language and Culture*, (Oxford: Blackwells, 1997), 28.

[4] See, for example, Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Plato's *Parmenides* and its Influence," *Dionysius*, 7 (1983), 16.

[5] In respect to Derrida, who, in his relation to Hegel, leads the way, see K. Keirans, "Beyond Deconstruction," *Animus*, 2 (1997), an electronic journal at http://www.mun.ca/animus, 22, 28-31, 39-40, 45-6 and W.J. Hankey, "ReChristianizing Augustine Postmodern Style: Readings by Jacques Derrida, Robert Dodaro, Jean-Luc Marion, Rowan Williams, Lewis Ayes and John Milbank," *Animus*, 2 (1997), 11-16.

[6] Since I only look at pseudo-Dionysius as a part of the western Christian tradition, he will be referred to as Denys. As opposed to the "Dionysios" of "the Byzantine spiritual tradition" and of postmodern theology, this Denys provided Latin medieval theologians with philosophical concepts and forms. Aquinas and others spoke of his Platonism, and modern western scholarship supposes that the pagan Neoplatonic tradition was "determinative of Dionysios' meaning." On the opposition of the two views, see A. Louth's review of *Et Introibo ad Altare Dei. The Mystagogy of Dionysios Areopagita, with special reference to its predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, *JTS* 48, 2 (1997), 712-14. For the view from within western Christianity, see Hankey, "Dionysian Hierarchy," and idem, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 152ff.; for recent scholarship, see the articles of S. Lilla, W. Beierwaltes, and István Perczel, cited below.

with more questions than answers.   But my aim is that we should arrive at deeper questions.

I. POSTMODERN CHRISTIANITY AND NEOPLATONISM.

1. Postmodern and Premodern. Considering the connection between movements in philosophy and theology, on the one hand, and what we make of our history, on the other, I have been attending to some self-consciously "postmodern" French and English philosophical and theological thinkers who find in a turn to ancient and mediaeval Neoplatonism a way forward for western Christian theology.[7] Essential to their postmodernity is a return to the premodern to find what they judge modernity has lost or forgotten. Thus, there is Graham Ward's description of Professor Jean-Luc Marion's work on Descartes: "It is in grasping the roots of modernity that Marion's postmodern thinking sees the possibility of returning to the premodern world which de Lubac, Daniélou and Gilson had reintroduced into early twentieth century French Catholicism."[8]

This move to the past is neither reactionary nor hermeneuticly naïve. Marion speaks about modernity as "completed" in virtue of a "terminal figure of metaphysics, such as it develops from Descartes to Nietzsche."[9]   Milbank, in a similar way, announces that the challenge of modern secular reason "is at an end, for it is seen that it was itself made in terms of metaphysics, and of a 'religion'."[10] But they do not judge that modernity can be simply escaped or leapt over. Dr. Ward is clear that Marion's study of Descartes aims to show the ambiguities at the origins of modernity. [11]   The same is true of John Milbank and arises out of his study of Vico. Their investigations conclude that what modernity became resulted from choice, not from absolute necessity.   Milbank describes the aim of his *Theology and Social Theory. Beyond Secular Reason* as tracing "the genesis of the main forms of secular reason, in such a fashion as to unearth the arbitrary moments in the construction of their logic."[12]   Postmodernity will require questioning and choice. Marion writes: "'postmodernity' begins when, among

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[7] For Jean-Luc Marion's description of his postmodernity, see his *God without being: Hors-texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), xx-xxi; for John Milbank, see his "'Postmodern Critical Augustinianism': A Short *Summa* in Forty Two Responses to Unasked Questions," *Modern Theology*, 7, No. 3 (April, 1991), 225-37; "The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn," and "The Second Difference," in his *The Word Made Strange*, 112-13 and 186-90. On both, see Hankey, "ReChristianizing Augustine Postmodern Style," 33ff.

[8] Graham Ward, "Introducing Jean-Luc Marion," *New Blackfriars*, 76, No. 895 (July/August, 1995), "Special Issue on Jean-Luc Marion's *God without Being*," 323.

[9] Marion, *God without being*, xx-xxi.

[10] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory. Beyond Secular Reason*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 1, 260.

[11] Graham Ward, "Introducing Jean-Luc Marion," 320-23; idem, *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 132.

[12] *Theology and Social Theory*, 3 and see John Milbank, *The Religious Dimension of the Thought of Giambattista Vico, 1668-1744*, 2 vols., Studies in the History of Philosophy 23 and 32 (Lewiston, Maine: Edwin Mellon, 1991-2).

other things, the metaphysical determination of God is called into question." [13] There is, we might say, a modern choosing for us in getting beyond the modern. Evidently, this equally involves staying with something present in it.

This staying with the modern is clear enough for the correlation between phenomenology and theology which constitutes Professor Marion's position, but it is at least equally true for Milbank. For him, there cannot be a "restoration of a pre-modern Christian position."[14] Nor is he uncritical of patristic and mediaeval thought which "was unable to overcome entirely the ontology of substance in the direction of a view which sees reality as constituted by signs and their endless ramifications."[15] "There can be no relapse towards pre-modernity; rather any retrieval must assume a post-modern, metacritical guise." Postmodern skepticism, necessarily on the other side of modernity's conquest of doubt, is the starting point.[16] Thus, philosophical criteria from the immediate present will be used to judge what may be rescued from the past.

With these thinkers, we have an essential relation to the past, because there they hope to find what we experience as lack or may recollect as forgotten. We discern equally a deeply ambiguous relation to the methods of the historical sciences as constructions of modern objectivity. Our present is getting over this objectivity. For John Milbank historical scholarship is a "finite idol."[17] And, while he scours the past to find what we have lost, and criticizes what he regards as inadequate interpretations, he proposes readings of ancient texts which will suit reason subordinated to desire, to *praxis* and *poesis*.[18] He writes:

> 1. The end of modernity ... means the end of a single system of truth based on universal reason, which tells us what reality is like. 2. [T]heology .. no longer has to measure up to accepted secular standards of scientific truth or normative rationality. ... 4. ... the point is not to 'represent' .. externality, but just to join in its occurrence, not to know, but to intervene, originate.[19]

Postmodern theologians are heirs of Nietzsche's unmasking of the mythology of "truthfulness" and of the deceits of the Kantian *ego*, as well as of Heidegger's throwing of subjectivity into time and being into history. They follow Derrida at least as far as his deconstruction of the identity of the modern subject and its constitution of a matching rational object: "the reduction of being to the

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[13] *God without being*, xx-xxi.

[14] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 2.

[15] Milbank, "The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn," 85. See also his "Pleonasm, Speech and Writing," *The Word Made Strange,* 79.

[16] Milbank, "A Critique of the Theology of the Right," 7.

[17] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 1.

[18] On the one hand, there are Catherine Pickstock's criticism of Derrida's reading and her strong alternative interpretation of the *Phaedrus*, in her *After Writing*: *On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 3-46, Milbank's study of Vico, his retrieval of Bishop Warburton on language ("Pleonasm, Speech and Writing," 55-83). On the other, there are Pickstock's impressionistic reading of the Roman Mass, and Milbank's subordinations. For the latter, see Milbank, *The Word Made Strange,* 1-4 and 166, idem, "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism," 231-35, etc.

[19] "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism," 225-26.

'object' whose existence does not exceed the extent to which it is known by the subject."[20]   Marion, however, has not remained with his old teacher at the École Normale all the way. He still tries to write of charity "hors-texte". For him, God as charity is neither pre-, nor post-, nor modern, and so his "enterprise does not remain 'postmodern' all the way through."[21]   But Milbank has followed contemporary philosophy into an inescapably linguistic reality which he understands primarily in Derridan terms. [22]

2. Postmodern philosophy, Christian theology and Platonism against autonomous reason. Situating postmodern theology philosophically does not exhaust its ironies. In general, postmodern theology, having moved from *theoria* as center to *praxis* and *poesis*, is, and must be, antiphilosophical.[23]   Heidegger demanded that the theology of revelation be separated from philosophy.[24] Karl Barth's refusal of the philosophical *logos* turns out to have been prophetic for theology in our century generally, as Heidegger's power over it grew. Thus, though Marion places himself on the side of Barth,[25] the new postmodern theologies are well beyond his neoOrthodoxy. Milbank has grasped this and represents Marion's position justly:

> Marion continues to develop the characteristic twentieth-century theology of divine word as gift and event, he also effects the most massive *correlation* of this theology with contemporary philosophy, but ... he usurps and radicalizes philosophy's own categories in favour of theological ones ... Compared with Marion, the ambition of a Barth is as nothing, for it is as if, so to speak, ... Marion seeks to be both Barth and Heidegger at once.[26]

Marion's most recent book, *Étant Donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, although fixing the limits of the correlation, clearly mixes philosophical and theological considerations. Indeed, in answering questions about "un donateur transcendental" arising from his *Réduction et donation*,[27] and in

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[20] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing*, 70 and see chapter 2, generally.

[21] *God without being*, xxi.

[22] Milbank, "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism," 231 and 234; idem, "The Second Difference," 178; idem, "Pleonasm, Speech and Writing," 79-80.

[23] On this move, associated with getting beyond both Greek paganism and modernity, see Milbank, "A Critique of the Theology of the Right," 32; idem, "Pleonasm, Speech and Writing," 79-80; idem, "The Second Difference," 187-89; idem, "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism," 228, 231-35.

[24] See Heidegger's "The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics," in *Identität und Differenz*, trans. J. Stambaugh, (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 71-2; and Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid speaking: Denials," in *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, eds. S. Budick and W. Iser, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 53-62. The French is Jacques Derrida, "Comment ne pas parler: Dénégations," in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre,* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987), 535-595.

[25] Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant Donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, Épiméthée (Paris: P.U.F., 1997), 329, note 1, describes the fact of revelation (if there is one) as exceeding "l'empan de toute science," so "seule une théologie, et à condition de se laisser construire à partir de ce fait seule (K. Barth ou H.U. von Balthasar ...) pourrait éventuellement y accéder."

[26] Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," *The Word Made Strange*, 36-37.

[27] Jean-Luc Marion, *Réduction et donation. Recherches sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénomèlogie*, (Paris: P.U.F., 1989) and see *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 96, No. 1 (1991) devoted to the discussion

considering the phenomenon of Revelation, the new book brings the philosophical and the theological more directly into relation than any previous work. Still, Marion certainly embraces phenomenology in order to refuse metaphysics.[28]

Milbank would take theological opposition to philosophy to a still more radical extreme. For him "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics." Criticizing Marion's use of "phenomenological donation to rethink it as Christian charity," he writes that:

> An independent phenomenology must be given up, along with the claim, which would have seemed so bizarre to the Fathers, to be doing philosophy *as well as* theology. ... [P]hilosophy as autonomous, as 'about' anything independently of its creaturely status *is* metaphysics or ontology in the most precisely technical sense. Philosophy in fact *began* as a secularizing immanentism, an attempt to regard a *cosmos* independently of a performed reception of the poetic word. The pre-Socratics forgot both Being and the gift, while (*contra* Heidegger) the later Plato made some attempt to recover the extra-cosmic vatic *logos.* Theology has always resumed this inheritance, along with that of the Bible, and if it wishes to think again God's love, then it must entirely evacuate philosophy, which is metaphysics, leaving it nothing (outside imaginary worlds, logical implications or the isolation of *aporias*) to either do or see, which is not -- manifestly, I judge -- malicious.[29]

Crucially, Milbank's embrace and interpretation of Plato is at one with his opposition of philosophy and theology. This opposition is fundamentally Heideggerian even if Milbank understands the history of theology and philosophy differently than Heidegger does. Milbank turns to Platonism as against metaphysical, ontological and autonomous philosophy. His is the Platonism most thoroughly developed by Iamblichus and his followers where revelation and theurgy have essential place. The Plato who is usually seen as the archetypal philosopher has been replaced by one who inscribes reason within myth. One of Milbank's students celebrates Plato as leading "dialogue ... *into* doxology, which for Plato is our principle human function and language's only possibility of restoration."[30]

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of this book. On the philosophical theological problematic involved, see his "Phénoménologie et philosophie première. La question de la donation," *Le Statut Contemporain de la Philosophie première*, Philosophie 17 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), 29-50

[28] Marion, *Étant Donné*, 8 and 10. At 11, he writes: "nous n'insinuons *pas* qu'elle réclame un donateur transcendant ... nous ne sous-entendons *pas* que cette phénoménologie restaure la métaphysique". At 329, note 1, there is: "Même si elle en avait le désir (et, bien entendu, jamais ce ne fut le cas), la phénoménologie n'aurait pas la puissance de tourner à la théologie. Et il faut tout ignorer de la théologie, de ses procédures et de ses problématiques pour ne fût-ce qu'envisager cette invraiseblance." Idem, "A Relief for Theology," *Critical Inquiry*, (Summer, 1994), 580-3. See the critical remarks of K. Keirans, "Beyond Deconstruction," note 17.

[29] Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," *The Word Made Strange*, 49-50; the article was published originally as a response to Marion's *God without Being*; see *New Blackfriars,* 76, No. 895 (July/August, 1995), "Special Issue on Jean-Luc Marion's *God without Being*."

[30] Pickstock, *After Writing*, 43. Her use of the Latin Mass against a modern division of subject and object (195ff.) requires an emphasis on its theurgic aspect. It is essential that material things are

For Milbank, the problem is not philosophy, metaphysics and ontology absolutely, if their substantiality and their quest for autonomy relative to myth could be eliminated. Paradoxically, but consistently for this antiphilosophical theology, for which an independent philosophy is a vain imagination, the desire for rational self-completeness originates in myth. According to Milbank's account, ancient philosophy sought objective substantiality and modern philosophy sought subjective substantiality, because they remained "inside the horizons projected by the Greek *mythos*, within which the Greek *logos* had to remain confined."[31] Moreover, as we shall see, for him, nihilistic postmodern thought is a neopaganism. But, Milbank envisages "another ontology" which is "'another philosophy'" and "another metaphysics".[32] The autonomy of philosophy would disappear. In its place there would be: "A theological ontology, not an ontology independent of a divinely illumined access to the divine."[33] Inscribed within the Christian rather than within the Greek *mythos*, this metaphysics would be properly Christian. Within this context Milbank's theology now turns again to Neoplatonism, though, as with Marion, with a necessary and great selectivity.

Milbank's other philosophy, which does not "position" Christian theology from some pretense to a self-sufficient reason, is prefigured by "the radical changes undergone by ontology at the hands of the neo-Platonists and the Church Fathers: in particular Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite." So, it was "no longer *exactly* Greek." In a postmodern following and radicalizing of what they did, the ancient Greek notions of "presence, substance, the idea, the subject, causality, thought-before-expression, and realist representation" would be criticized. To be left behind are those notions which would found the secular reason and autonomous self which characterize modernity. Those eliminated, "the Platonic Good, reinterpreted by Christianity as identical with Being," could remain.[34]

We have now before us all the elements needed for our analysis of this postmodern turn to Neoplatonism: theology, myth and liturgy, philosophy as autonomous, or metaphysical or ontological, being as an object for thought, the autonomous subject. In an earlier essay, I have looked at the degree to which the postmodern programme involves an accurate representation of Patristic and medieval relations between philosophical reason and Christian theology.[35] The primary aim of this essay is to begin a similar investigation in respect to the question of subjectivity.

3. Postmodern Christian theology, autonomous philosophy and modern subjectivity. We confront immediately the irony that Milbank's theological selection of philosophical notions from Neoplatonism is specifically determined by

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numinous and addressed as if personal. For a better view of the relations between philosophy and religion in Plato, see Gadamer, "Plato's *Parmenides*," 4.

[31] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 295.

[32] John Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic," *Modern Theology*, 11 (1995), 152 and 137 with 132 and "A Critique of the Theology of the Right," 29.

[33] Milbank, "The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn," 100.

[34] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 295-96.

[35] Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold."

theology's specific location relative to the given philosophy of our time. As Barth discovered the extremely narrow space for his work within what Kant allowed, so theologians like John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion and John Zizioulas, work within the space Heidegger assigns them.[36] Even if Milbank accuses Marion of seeking "to be both Barth and Heidegger at once," when to Heidegger are added Derrida and Wittgenstein, Milbank is in a like situation.

Milbank does not only, as Heidegger requires, separate the revelation of being from the revelation of God, and turn theology from *theoria* to *poesis*. But, for him, in the *sillage* of Derrida, reality is linguistic.[37] Moreover, he has not forgotten that he follows Wittgenstein in Cambridge, and so it is now the task of the theology which describes itself as "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism" to expunge its Augustinian interiority and intellectualism. Though this is presented as an opposition to Cartesian dualism, in fact, the Wittgenstein it follows stands with Nietzsche against Plato, Aristotle and the whole tradition of western rationality.[38] Wittgenstein and Milbank are right to judge that for such a project, Augustine is, of necessity, the Christian theologian most to be overcome or reinterpreted.[39]

So far as it sets itself outside philosophy, postmodern Christian theology is at its mercy. This affects not only its content but its method. Here Derrida is most important. He assumes the texts and the tradition whose deconstruction he undertakes to show. His philosophical position is not established apart from what is assumed.[40] Though Milbank wants to remove what is negative in this (for him) nihilist postmodern return to the pagan *agon*,[41] with its deconstructive "immanent

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[36] For Zizioulas I depend on Konstantinos Agoras, *Personne et Liberté, ou "être comme communion"* "ειναι ως κοινωνια" *dans l'oeuvre de Jean Zizioulas*, an unpublished doctoral thesis for the Université de Paris - Sorbonne, December, 1992.

[37] Milbank, "Introduction," "The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn," "The Second Difference," *The Word Made Strange*, 1-4, 113, 189.

[38] See Fergus Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, 2nd ed., (London: SPCK, 1997), 186-90 with 74-6, 80, 206-11. Illumining, for the kind of understanding of the consequences of Wittgenstein for theology and religion moving here, is George Guiver, C.R., *Faith in Momentum. Distinctiveness of the Church*, (London: SPCK, 1990). The key to the future is ridding the western soul of its interiority, the "inner depths of personality." Here Guiver locates a positive link with Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and nineteenth century atheistical Christianity in the need to overcome Augustine's influence.

[39] Milbank is clear about this, and chooses extremely selective reinterpretation. See his "Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul," *Modern Theology*, 13:4 (1997), 465: "What must be argued here against Charles Taylor [*Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 115-59] and others, is that Augustine's use of the vocabulary of inwardness is not at all a deepening of Platonic interiority, but something much more like its subversion." On the reinterpretation of Augustine by Milbank, Rowan Williams, and Lewis Ayres to this end, see Hankey, "ReChristianizing Augustine Postmodern Style," 6, 45ff. and note 41 and idem, "Self-knowledge and God as Other in Augustine: Problems for a Postmodern Retrieval," see n. 39 above.

[40] For example, Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, translated Geoffrey Bennington, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), with Derrida's *Circumfession* and see my "ReChristianizing Augustine Postmodern Style," 12-16.

[41] "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism," 230: "there is a hidden connection between pre-modern pagan dualism and postmodern dualism. The latter's self-proclaimed paganism ..."

dialectic," nonetheless, his works clearly have a like dependence on what is historically given. The difference is that postmodern theology has not as much power over what it assumes as does Derridan deconstruction.

The position of this theology is already determined with increasing specificity by the philosophical result of Nietzschean, Heideggerian, and Derridan deconstruction of metaphysics and its consequences. Within this tradition, postmodern theology also operates by the rereading of texts: texts which must simultaneously both be understood in their difference (so as to provide the means of getting beyond modernity), and which also must be reshaped by need and desire which *theoria* has lost the power to restrain.

So, for example, Catherine Pickstock's return to a Christianity, for which the problem is how it may be distinguished from Platonism, depends upon an effective critique of Derrida's reading of the *Phaedrus*. [42] Her purpose, however, lies entirely within a contemporary problematic. She wishes "a genuine subjectivity", the "restoration of the subject," a "living subject," with "a substantive, though not completed identity," having "a definite but open identity". [43] Appropriately coinciding with this is a Neoplatonic reading of the Platonic Good, which is affirmed,[44] and an embrace of the Socratic dependence on myth as modeling a Christian restoration of language as liturgical. Indeed, the myth about the origins of writing told by Socrates is treated as wisdom.[45] She might be very happy in the Academy under Proclus, as happy as some think Denys was. But, her Christian supplement to Platonism is found in the church as historical and practical intersubjective community. [46] Here she is trapped within the constraints of post-Heideggerian theology in a way that both Milbank and Marion make clear.[47]

With the double-minded relation of postmodern theology to the past in view, I propose to extend my examination of the way in which some contemporary Christian theologians who are engaged in a retrieval of elements of Neoplatonism find what they seek. They are, it seems, blind to fundamental features of that to which they would in part return. Moreover, this blindness is not accidental. It is essential to that endeavour to overcome or deconstruct modern substantial subjectivity which defines their postmodernity. A problem inheres in a retrieval of Neoplatonism under these conditions because at its heart was the reconciliation of the objectivity of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies with Skeptical subjectivity. To overcome Skepticism Plotinus showed the self the multiple forms of its substantial life. Augustine unified these and gave the human self historical and eternal continuity, identity, and substantiality. In this he laid the foundations of western modernity.

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[42]Pickstock, *After Writing*, 3-46.

[43] Ibid., 95, 199, 114, 118, 192, 211-12, 214. This position is less polemical than that of Milbank.

[44] Ibid., 20-22.

[45] Ibid., 23-46.

[46] Ibid., 268-72.

[47] Hankey, "ReChristianizing Augustine Postmodern Style," 41 and 52ff.; idem, "*Theoria versus Poesis*."

Postmodern blindness to what is at the heart of Neoplatonism in its pagan forms, and even more in its Christian ones, is essential, because postmodernity remains caught in the struggles of modernity. Even the possibility of premodern retrieval as part of our own recuperation requires that these past forms are deeply ours. In fact, for postmodern purposes, premodern forms are too much our own. If we choose from them only what we wish to get beyond in our present, we must miss something fundamental to them.

The problem is not with the past but with our relation to our present. We would need to have a less polemical relation to the modern present, if we were to so understand our past as to enjoy contemplative unity with what moves it. Freed from the polemic and from the falsifications which a domination of *theoria* by *praxis* requires, the philosophical - theological - spiritual amalgam which dominated intellectual, institutional and religious history for a millennium and a half before the modern era may become a living element of our own world. A genuine recuperation which would open our present to what is really different in our past might occur.

After all, though in the eighteenth century Neoplatonism was constructed as an object within the history of philosophy in order to be treated as a term of contempt, in the nineteenth century it was revived philosophically for moderns among the German Idealists. It became a home for art in the first half of our century, and has replaced Thomism for many late twentieth century Catholic theologians.[48] But this past theology cannot help us overcome the limits of our present if we allow only that much of it to appear as suits our purposes, and if theological history becomes just another object for manipulation, a resource for self-making.

4. Thomism, Postmodern Neoplatonism, and the Origins of Modernity. As I have indicated, part of the recuperation of Neoplatonism by Christian theologians in our time is its replacement of Thomism or the placing of Thomas within the history of this most long lived of philosophical movements. It is not necessary to tell here again the story of how Thomism, revived in opposition to modern and ancient idealisms which included Neoplatonism, has been succeeded by that to which it was opposed, though the ironies of this history are instructive about the relations between our anti-, or post-, modernity and our misrepresentations of the past. [49] But the conclusion of that story belongs in the present account.

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[48] On how Neoplatonism was constituted as an object within the history of philosophy, see Maria Luisa Gatti, "Plotinus: the Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism," *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 23. On the twentieth century, see my "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 141-51 and Stanislas Breton, *De Rome à Paris. Itinéraire philosophique*, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1992); there is a summary of Breton's *itinerarium* in his "Sur la difficulté d'être thomiste aujourd'hui," *Le Statut Contemporain de la Philosophie première*, Philosophie 17 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), 333-46.

[49] I have told it in W.J. Hankey, "Dionysian Hierarchy," 405-16 and more fully in my "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 139-52 and I shall rely on these here so as limit the reproduction of the same references and the same arguments.

Jean-Luc Marion, and other French thinkers, who work in the wake of Heidegger's criticism of onto-theology, embrace the Neoplatonic elevation of the One or the Good above being.[50] Thomas' identification of God with *ipsum esse subsistens* is now regarded as profoundly problematic. For, after about 1960, the French discovered, against the judgment of Étienne Gilson, that Heidegger had not made, and indeed, would not and could not make, an exception for Thomas in his history of onto-theology.

Despite his hopeful philosophical naïveté in this regard, Gilson is an acknowledged intellectual master for Professor Marion, and something fundamental to his orientation to the history of philosophy and of the relations of philosophy and theology carries over into the mentality of the postmodern Christian theologians we are considering. Though Marion participates in the respectful French reexamination of his work, (centering largely around its relation to Heidegger's account of the history of being),[51] in his study of Descartes, Marion, has followed Gilson closely if not uncritically. Certainly, Gilson's work was crucial for the comparison carried out between Descartes and his patristic, medieval and baroque sources. Gilson establishes, in this context, a way of thinking which habitually opposes the modern and the premodern.[52] Further, it sees medieval thought as moving downhill from the theological - philosophical heights reached

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[50] It is crucial to note, in this context, that Marion is far from uncritical of Heidegger, indeed, his *retractatio* referred to below depends upon a strict delimitation of what constitutes the onto-theological for Heidegger so that he may join other French scholars in asking just exactly where it begins. Thus, it can no longer be used as a characterization of the whole of western philosophy, see Jean-Luc Marion, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théo-logie," and Olivier Boulnois, "Quand commence l'ontothéologie? Aristote, Thomas d'Aquin et Duns Scot," in *Revue Thomiste*, 95 (1995), #1 [Saint Thomas et l'onto-théo-logie], 36, 84-108. It is equally important that, for John Milbank, Marion is not nearly critical enough.

[51] See Dominique Bourg, "Epilogue. La critique de la 'Métaphysique de l'Exode' par Heidegger et l'exégèse Moderne," *L'être et dieu*, Publication du Centre d'études et de recherches interdisciplinaires en théologie 13 (Paris: Cerf, 1986), 215-244; the essays by Vignaux, de Libera, Courtine, and É.-H. Wéber in *"Celui qui est." Interprétations juives et chrétiennes d'Exode 3.14,* éd. A. de Libera et É. Zum Brunn, Centre d'études des religions du livre, CNRS (Paris: Cerf, 1986); J. Beaufret, "ENERGEIA et actus," *Dialogue avec Heidegger, I. Philosophie grecque*, "Arguments" 56 (Paris: Minuit, 1974), especially, 109-112, 130, 141-144; idem, "La philosophie chrétienne," *Dialogue avec Heidegger, 2. Philosophie Moderne*, "Arguments" 58 (Paris: Minuit, 1973), 9-27, 123; G. Prouvost, "Postface," Étienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, *Deux approches de l'être. Correspondance, 1923-1971*, éd. G. Prouvost, (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 292-295.

[52] Jean-Luc Marion, "L'instauration de la rupture: Gilson à la lecture de Descartes," *Étienne Gilson et Nous: La philosophie et son histoire,* éd. Monique Couratier, (Paris; Vrin, 1980), 13-34 traces the mutation in Gilson's understanding of the relation between Descartes and his medieval predecessors until Gilson arrives at the crucial role he assigns Suarez in the rupture with Thomas. Gilson's reading is seen to present "quelque analogie avec celle qu'en d'autres circonstances Heidegger a mise en oeuvre" (24) In "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théo-logie," at 40, as in many other places, Suarez is treated, in a similar way, as definitive in the rupture. On Gilson's misrepresentation of Thomas from within an antimodern polemic, there is, most recently, T.F. O'Meara, o.p., *Thomas Aquinas Theologian*, (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 181.

by Aquinas.[53] Marion has, particularly, followed Gilson in finding the Scotistic transformation of scholasticism by Suarez as a "univocist drift"[54] which leads in Descartes to "a rationality not theologically assured by Christian Revelation, but metaphysically founded on the humanity of 'men strictly men'."[55]

The generally assumed antimodern or postmodern account of the regretted historical movement bringing the West to the modernity now to be overcome is well summarized by Catherine Pickstock.

> ... Descartes follows in the tradition of Duns Scotus, for whom a being is that which is univocal and therefore graspable. ... Marion and Courtine agree in developing Étienne Gilson's analysis of Descartes, by pointing out that the turn to epistemology is pre-enabled by a radical reconstrual of ontology itself, inherited from later scholasticism. ... [As a result] for Descartes, secure being has become being for the *Cogito* ... a single legislating subject ... [56]

For the thinkers we are calling postmodern, this modern self-sufficient rationality cannot keep its promises. With John Milbank, it is not so much directly the Cartesian ego he is trying to unmask but "an ahistorical Kantian subject" whom even the postmodern writers "smuggle back into their philosophies." [57] He associates: the Kantian subject, the endeavour in German Idealism to get beyond it, Descartes and the "'Augustinian' tradition which had always sought the road back to God through 'self-reflection' ..." Crucially, for him, German Idealism did not succeed in overcoming the ahistorical modern subject; one of "Hegel's three great philosophical errors" is that he "retains the Cartesian subject."[58]

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[53] On this distortion of the history of medieval thought by Gilson, see Pierre Magnard, "La Recherche en la philosophie médiévale et renaissante," *La Recherche philosophique en France. Bilan et Perspectives*, rapport de la commission présidée par Pierre Magnard et Yves Charles Zarka, (Paris: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 1996), 166: "L'oubli du Moyen-Age en sa diversité, en son organicité, en sa force critique tient sans doute à l'interprétation qu'en avait donnée Étienne Gilson quand, privilégiant l'architechtonique thomiste comme expression achevée de la 'métaphysique de l'Exode', il crut pouvoir sceller le destin de la 'philosophie chrétienne'. Quelque puissante que fût cette conception, elle revenait à donner du Moyen-Age une vision inutilement statique et à mettre sous séquestre les successifs déplacements de la métaphysique du XIIIème au XVème siècle." Pickstock's representation of the history and of Aquinas is an example of Gilson's interpretation and evaluations. There is something of the same in Milbank, "A Critique of the Theology of the Right," 7-16.

[54] On the crucial role of Suarez in Marion's account of the rupture between the modern and the premodern see Ward, "Introducing Jean-Luc Marion," 318-21. This analysis is also picked up by John Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 40 and by Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing*, 61-62, 122ff.

[55] Jean-Luc Marion, "The Essential Incoherence of Descartes' Definition of Divinity," translated Frederick Van de Pitte, *Essays on Descartes'* Mediations, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 306 and 297.

[56] Pickstock, *After Writing*, 62.

[57] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 279. See also idem, "A Critique of the Theology of the Right", *passim* and "The Second Difference," 175-77. In "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 37, he includes Heidegger's *Dasein* and the Husserelian transcendental ego in the aftermath of the Cartesian *cogito*.

[58] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 149-50, 154.

In this attempt to unmask and dethrone the modern subject, the postmoderns are at one with Gilson's antimodernism. That depended on an opposition to any Augustinian or Idealistic inclusion of being within the self or finding "the road back to God through 'self-reflection'." Gilson supposed that the true way was instead that of existential Thomism which kept being outside the structures of the self. His was an anticritical realism founded in the dogmatic assertion of the objectivity of existent being. Our postmoderns have not followed Gilson in what he affirmed. But one of the negations of the antimodern Neothomist revival they also eschew. Gilson was, in contrast to our postmoderns, very cold toward Neoplatonism in general and to the Denys in particular, and suspicious of Augustinianism.[59]

Marion's postmodern turn to Denys and to Neoplatonism to find a way to a Christian God who is not subject to Heidegger's critique belongs to the reaction against Gilson's Thomistic solution to the Heideggerian critique of the western history of being. That way was first found for him via the theology of Denys, largely the subject of an early book, *L'idole et la distance. Cinq études*. [60]

Denys' God is self-diffusive good before he is called being.[61] So in *Dieu sans l'être: Hors texte,* published in 1982, Professor Marion developed the notion of God not as being, but as love, and was critical of Aquinas and Gilson. In a note, he wrote of Gilson's criticism of Denys for giving primacy to the Good:

> As much as the illustrious historian enlightens us in pointing out perfectly the disparity between Denys and Thomas, his assurance in seeing in it only a progress stifles the properly theological question that is involved here.[62]

For Marion this disparity is to be valued at least as much as the one between Descartes and Aquinas. By 1991, when the book was translated into English, Professor Marion indicated in the Preface that he was reconsidering his

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[59] On all of this see W.J. Hankey, "Aquinas' First Principle, Being or Unity?" *Dionysius*, 4(1980), 133-172; idem, *God in Himself, Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2-17; idem, "Dionysian Hierarchy," 409-13; idem, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 146-48; idem, "From Metaphysics to History, from Exodus to Neoplatonism, from Scholasticism to Pluralism: the fate of Gilsonian Thomism in English-speaking North America," *Dionysius*, 16 (1998), 157-88.

[60] Jean-Luc Marion, *L'idole et la distance. Cinq études*, (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 1977), and idem, *Dieu sans l'être,* 1st ed. (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1982) generally implicate Thomas in the history of onto-theology. Only with the preface of *God without being*, and definitely in "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théo-logie," is Thomas treated more positively and then by giving a Neoplatonic treatment of the place of being in his theology. Beyond Marion, see G. Prouvost, *Thomas d'Aquin et les thomismes. Essai sur l'histoire des thomismes*, (Paris: Cerf, 1996); idem, "La question des noms divins: entre apophatisme et ontothéologie," *Revue thomiste*, 98 (1997), 485-511 and idem, "La tension irrésolue: Les *Questions cartésiennes*, *II,* de Jean-Luc Marion," *Revue thomiste*, 98 (1998), 95-101.

[61] On the way in which being is prior and posterior for Denys (a Neoplatonic way to which Aquinas is heir), see Cristina D'Ancona-Costa, "Plotinus and later Platonic philosophers on the causality of the First Principle," *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 366-67.

[62] Marion, *God without Being*, 217, n. 64.

view of Aquinas. In the *Revue thomiste* for 1995, there is a formal *retractatio*.[63] It is Gilson's representation of Aquinas, not Thomas' doctrine which is problematic.[64] Professor Marion has now discerned that, for Thomas Aquinas, and for Neoplatonic Christian theologians generally, we have not onto-theology, where God is determined according to comprehensible being, from below, so to speak. But rather Neoplatonists do "theo-ontology."[65] In this direction of thinking, God, good beyond being, gives being from above, even to Himself. It is in this giving that being receives its logic.

During this important shift in Professor Marion's evaluation of Aquinas, and during its accompanying positive reassessment of the role of that Neoplatonic tradition in philosophy which connects the medievals and Denys, his purpose relative to modernity remains constant. The mask which hides its incoherences and the falsity of its promises must be lifted.

5. Christian Postmodern Neoplatonism: principles of selection. (i) John Milbank.
Such a purpose, a like anti-metaphysical endeavour to remove the pretense of philosophical reason autonomous of theology, and a like turn to the Church Fathers and Neoplatonism, also moves John Milbank. But, as we have seen, he is more radically determined to crush any autonomy of philosophy in respect to theology. Both the positive and negative aspects of his relation to postmodern philosophy compel and enable him to carry the war of independence by twentieth-century theology in respect to philosophy to new levels. This radically affects the interrelated issues of how he judges modern subjectivity, of how he understands Neoplatonism and what he will take from it. In virtue of these differences, his principles of selection are different from those of Marion. To these differences, we now attend.

Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* endeavours to persuade theologians to get over their "false humility" in the face of modern secular reason whose end is evident because its character as a metaphysics and a religion are now exposed. In virtue of their awareness of the particular metaphysics determining modernity, an awareness which belongs to its completion and termination, he and Marion are both postmodern.   However, Milbank sees also in "the 'new era' of postmodernism (which yet in some ways is but an 'exacerbation' of modernity)" another threat to Christian theology, so he is also critical of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Deleuze, Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida whose writings he takes "as elaborations of a single nihilistic philosophy."[66]   Thus his relation to the postmodern philosophy on which he depends is profoundly divided.

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[63] The *retractatio* is at 33 and 65 of Marion, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théo-logie."

[64] So there is fundamental criticism of Gilson in "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théo-logie," 56, n. 60: "Mais prècisèment il ne suffit pas que Dieu outrepasse l'étant pour lui éviter d'entrer en onto-thèologie ..." At 58, n. 63, he writes "Notre position s'oppose donc absolument à la tactique d'É. Gilson ..."; see also 60, n. 70.

[65] Ibid., 49, 55, 60, n. 70, 62 (by implication so far as he affirms Thomas' Neoplatonic interpretation of *Exodus* 3,14), 65.

[66] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 1, 260, 278.

He employs Heidegger's critique of ontology against Marion so far as the latter retains an autonomous philosophy and the Cartesian or Kantian subject which Milbank supposes integral to it. But, Dr. Milbank does not see himself as in flight from the Heideggerian onto-theological whip, at least in the form of Heidegger's identification of the terrible power of the transcendent in the western tradition. Indeed, he accuses Heidegger of having absorbed the metaphysical mentality of late medieval scholasticism, which he studied as a seminarian, and of reading it back onto the prior history.[67] For him, as also for Marion, onto-theology is a late, essentially a modern, phenomenon. To quote John Milbank, "it is arguable that recent researches suggest that 'modernity fulfills metaphysics' should be radicalized as 'modernity invented metaphysics'."[68] Above all, Milbank is opposed to the immanent, to philosophical reason in its original and self-constitutive opposition to myth.

While this position is close to that of Marion in "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théo-logie," it is by no means identical. For Milbank, Marion, though profound and accurate in his perceptions of the character and faults of Heidegger's thought, remains too much within it, his theology of love being only an opposed mirror of Heidegger's preoccupation with being.[69] Despite the intentions of his own work, he retains a Cartesian foundational subjectivity.[70] Further, and directly related to these, Milbank judges Marion's correlated phenomenology to be the contemporary equivalent of Scotus' fideistic metaphysics "independent of theology."[71] Clearly, Marion has not fully abandoned, as theology now must, "all scholastic attempts to graft faith onto a universal base of reason", has not fully turned to the method of the Church Fathers. Rather he continues "doing philosophy *as well* as theology."[72] Marion is "still within a self-sufficient metaphysics, which is identical with secular modernity."[73]

The question of autonomy for reason is everything for Milbank. If Marion's attachment to phenomenology, and so to philosophy in its independence of

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[67] Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 41; idem, "Can a Gift be Given?", 140; on the rationalism of Neoscholasticism, see Hankey, "Making Theology Practical;" 91-2. Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, 193, compares Wittgenstein and Heidegger in this regard.

[68] Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 40.

[69] Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given?", 138ff. and "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 46: "And if the ultimate phenomenon is exactly describable as the gaze of a subject, it would appear that it is after all merely ontic, and in seeking to trump ontological difference, one has instead connived again at its obliteration." He notes that this was Marion's criticism of Levinas. For Jacques Derrida also there can be a move to negative theology within the Heideggerian criticism of onto-theology which assumes what it seems fundamentally to deny; "How to avoid speaking: Denials," 9: "Yet the onto-theological reappropriation always remains possible ... my uneasiness was nevertheless also directed toward the promise of that presence given to intuition or vision. The promise of such a vision often accompanies the apophatic voyage."

[70] Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 37ff.; idem, "Can a Gift be Given?" 132 ff.

[71] Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 45; idem, "Can a Gift be Given?" 137ff. where Milbank considers how, for Marion, theology's "exit from metaphysics" has to do with "his relationship to Heidegger."

[72] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 381; idem, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 49.

[73] "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 47.

Christian theology were shed, the history of philosophy and theology would be rightly understood. Overcome would be Marion's

> problems in acknowledging that neoplatonic philosophy and Christian theology interpreted the ontological difference in a viable mode other than that of Heidegger.[74]

He would then be able to fully follow the Church Fathers and "Platonic / Neoplatonic philosophy" which "*already* pressed against any philosophical subordination of *mythos*, *cultus* and community." And so hesitations about naming God "being" first of all could be dropped.[75] This theological overcoming of the problem of ontology would be accompanied by an overcoming of modern subjectivity.

As we saw, in his selection of elements from Neoplatonism, Milbank took "the Platonic Good, reinterpreted by Christianity as identical with Being."[76] Indeed, for him, with Aquinas: "To assert this primacy [of Being], in contrast to Dionysius, is finally to disperse the Neoplatonic suspicion that actuality ... is necessarily *adverse* to perfected good or absolute unity." He judges that both pagan and Christian Neoplatonism "grasped that Being .. need not be ontic."[77] Aquinas is then embraced in his difference from Denys, rather than, with Marion, so far as for Thomas remains with Denys and makes God prior to being. In fact, Milbank's "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics" is an extended critique of Marion's notion that God gives himself being.[78]

But Milbank's solution to the problem of subjectivity reveals both how radical is his Christian ontology or metaphysics, how different it is from anti-modern Neothomist realism, and yet how dependent it is upon postmodern philosophical developments. Following them, reality, including the reality of God, has become linguistic. Only by making Being linguistic, and by proposing this as the authentic Christian theology of the begotten Word, can Milbank bring back "another ontology" in the face of Heidegger. In fact, we now have not ontology but "logontic" in which the divine and human are interchangeable. Man creates his linguistic world so totally, that "man as an *original* creator" participates "in some measure in creation *ex nihilo*".[79]

Since postmodern linguistic has replaced ontology, the problem is now to overcome the nihilism which is the negative element in postmodern philosophy, the element which involves staying with the Kantian ahistorical subject.[80] This is surpassed when postmodern paganism is placed, as pagan Neoplatonism was placed in the past, within Christian myth. Specifically postmodern paganism is

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[74] Ibid., 43.

[75] Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given?", 152.

[76] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 295.

[77] Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given?", 143.

[78] As is also "Can a Gift be Given?".

[79] Milbank, "Pleonasm, Speech and Writing," 79. Gilson would be chagrined to find his history used for a philosophy which places being within language.

[80] Catherine Pickstock's *After Writing* as a whole undertakes this overcoming.

placed within the myth of universal ontological peace which Milbank sees as belonging to the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.[81] So he writes:

> The real cultural issue lies between [postmodern] nihilism and theology. Christian theology has been able, like sceptical postmodernism, to think unlimited semiosis. ... The contrast with postmodernism lies at the level of metasemiotics, where the nihilists seem only able to think of signified absence in terms of a necessary suppression, betrayal or subversion. ... For theology ... alone difference remains real difference since it is not subordinate to immanent univocal process [Milbank's characterization of deconstruction] or the fate of a necessary suppression.[82]

By saving postmodern scepticism from the negativity which ruins it, Milbank places himself:

> both with and against postmodernity, in the belief that the latter is confined by a gnostic myth which turns interpretative indeterminacy into an ahistorically determined fate of necessary arbitrariness and despotic concealment.

By denying, against Hegel, "determinate negation," and with faithful confidence opening oneself to indeterminate infinity, Christians can travel beyond the modern static subject without the bitterness of postmodern philosophy. We may accept that

> the infinite deferment of self-identity through the mediation of a linguistic work which 'passes away from us' may be originally the mark, not of alienation ... but of our being rhetorically transported through history by the testimony of 'all of the others.'[83]

By the Holy Spirit, the "Church perpetuates or renews a Creation prior to all coercion and conflict" and is the divine community where all is external. In the community of reconciliation "'self-immediacy' is infinitely surpassed."[84]

Surpassing the modern autonomous self by means of communal intersubjectivity, determines what Milbank selects from Neoplatonism and what he finds inadequate about even its Christian forms. The appeal of Neoplatonism to this postmodern theology which has turned its back both on ancient philosophy grounded in substantial being and on modern philosophy grounded in subjectivity is its situation between these. The problem for it is that Neoplatonism, both pagan and Christian, is not free from these foundations but, is, in fact, the transition between them.

(ii) Jean-Luc Marion.

The embrace of Neoplatonism is just as selective with Professor Marion. And, as with Milbank, what is eliminated is that which would lead to substance

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[81] For Milbank, Augustine is the preeminent Christian teacher here. See *Theology and Social Theory*, 294, 402-403; idem, "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism," *passim*; Fergus Kerr, "Simplicity Itself: Milbank's Thesis," *New Blackfriars*, 73, No. 861 (June, 1992), special issue on *Theology and Social Theory*; 307 and David Burrell, "An Introduction to *Theology and Social Theory*," *Modern Theology*, 8:4 (October, 1992), 325, 328.

[82] Milbank, "The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn," 113.

[83] "The Second Difference," 189.

[84] Ibid., 184-86.

and its result in the Cartesian or Kantian ego. In his *L'idole et la distance,* Professor Marion interprets hierarchy, the term Denys invented,[85] so as to set it, exactly against hierarchy, as it actually developed in western institutions, medieval, as well as modern.[86]

The contrast appears as follows. In the political model of hierarchy, each superior level possesses something, an ontic content, which gives it authority over its inferiors. This content must be protected for the hierarchy to survive. The First for Marion's Denys, in contrast, renders itself sacred not to hide itself as origin, but because that origin is also to be the goal of every level of the hierarchy. The goal is possible because the creator defines himself, not by a content, but by an ecstasy. So Christ defines himself by giving himself away as gift to the hierarchy. The process, ours in his, is charity and ecstasy all at once. This ecstasy reconciles mediation with immediacy and creates a hierarchy which is not ontological. Since the Principle defines itself as action, rather than as a content, the continued giving of the gift involves immediate communion with the action and, thus, the mediation of a new giver. This mediated immediacy[87] allows the return of creation to its creator in what would destroy the political model of hierarchy, but fulfills the sacred order of Denys.

The trouble is that, as a matter of fact, for the Procline - Dionysian tradition, especially as it was received and transformed within the Aristotelian Neoplatonism of Aquinas, the fundamental gift of the Creator is the substantial or self-sufficient being of the creature.[88] But, if there is, in fact, real gift and real

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[85] On Denys, see Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence*, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1993)*,* 21 and D.J. O'Meara, "The hierarchical ordering of reality in Plotinus," *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 66-67 which considers the problems with reading hierarchy back into the earlier Neoplatonism.

[86] My account here is a summery of that in my "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 155-57. It owes very much to the paper on this subject by Michael Harrington delivered in my Seminar on Neoplatonism at Dalhousie University in 1996. Marion's treatment of Denys is in *L'idole et la distance*, 177-243.

[87] See *L'idole et la distance*, section 15, "Médiation immédiate," 201-219.

[88] For example, *Summa contra Gentiles* III, 69, this gift of substantial being is required for the existence of philosophical sciences which for Thomas treat the forms of being, one of them is *pars philosophiae dicitur theologia sive scientia divina* (*Summa Theologia* [Piana, Ottawa, 1953] I,1,1, obj. 2). On the history, see Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers,* Cambridge Studies in medieval life and thought, 3rd series; V.20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 218: "Thomas's Aristotelian ontology is a prolongation and development of Pseudo-Dionysius's Aristotelianisation of Proclus's ontology"; 76-80 and 217-252; idem, *Saint Augustine and the Western Tradition of Self-Knowing,* The Saint Augustine Lecture 1986 (Villanova: Augustinian Institute, Villanova University, 1989), 21-30; Hankey, *God in Himself*, 165-66; Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 118 ff., and Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters xlvi (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1995), 257-65. For the argument overall, see W.J. Hankey, "'Dionysius dixit, Lex divinitatis est ultima per media reducere': Aquinas, hierocracy and the 'augustinisme politique'," *Medioevo. Rivista di Storia della Filosofia Medievale* [Padova: Antenore] XVIII (1992), *Festscrift*

reception, then each who receives in the hierarchy receives something of its own, indeed receives its own substantial power of existence. The sacred hierarchy, as the West developed it, was political in just the sense which Professor Marion would avoid. In this it was at least a possible, and perhaps the necessary, result of this theological and philosophical Neoplatonism.[89]

6. The dilemmas of postmodern selectivity. For all their efforts to get around this conclusion, so as to avoid giving any basis to the substantiality of the modern self-related subject, the postmodern thinkers at whom we are looking cannot manage it. In fact, Dr. Milbank has effectively conceded on this point in "Can a Gift be Given?" which is based in a critique of Derrida and Marion.

The perspective of Milbank's criticism of Marion is his own determination to overcome the modern autonomous ahistorical self by means of the historical intersubjectivity of the community of endless *praxis*, a communal life which defines God for us. It is from this viewpoint that Milbank opposes the absence of reciprocity in Marion's Dionysian giving. Milbank maintains that this lack is anthropologically incorrect and that Marion is moved to such a conception because of his endeavour to add donation to the principles of phenomenology. It belongs to the principles of Milbank's analysis that the motive for this endeavour is a correlation to a theology which substitutes charity for being. It follows that, for Milbank, the presupposition of Marion's ecstatic giving which assumes no intersubjective interchange must ultimately be the remains of the modern inherently substantial ahistorical and autonomous subject.[90] However, if Milbank were himself to work out the implications of his criticism positively, he would need, at the least, to bring back substance, as well as being, as a category within the Christian Neoplatonism which anticipates for him essentials of postmodern theology. He would have to give to all his mutually dependent donors a mutual substantiality within which they could give and receive.

A further examination of the actual forms in which Christian Neoplatonism occurred in its first millennium will show repeatedly, in the way we have just witnessed, not only that the desired and the rejected elements are found bound together, but also that their union and development are more Christian than pagan. The Christians united traditions divided against one another in pagan Neoplatonism and combined extremes beyond those contained within the thought of their pagan predecessors. Partly, Dr. Milbank recognizes this.[91] But neither he nor Marion draw the consequences. These stand against an elimination of the proper autonomy of philosophical reason, against a refusal to ground subjectivity in substance, and also against a denial of the self-related substantiality of subjectivity.

Antonio Tognolo, 133-150; idem, "Dionysian Hierarchy," 426-38; idem, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 164ff.

[89] On Marion's actual relation to those institutions, see Graham Ward, "Between Postmodernism and Postmodernity: The Theology of Jean-Luc Marion," *Postmodernity, Sociology and Religion*," ed. Keiran Flanagan and Peter C. Jupp, (London: MacMillan, 1996), 196.

[90] Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 37ff.; idem, "Can a Gift be Given?" 132 ff.

[91] Milbank, "The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn," 94.

In my "Denys and Aquinas. Antimodern cold and Postmodern Hot," I examined some of the relations of philosophy and theology which characterized the Latin Christian unification and development of the elements and traditions of Neoplatonic thought. I concluded that those relations were such that they could not be understood from within an endeavour to strictly limit or even abolish the rational autonomy of philosophy. Further, it seems to me that the coming together of theology and philosophy in those systems depends - as both Professor Marion and Dr Milbank would agree - on the way self-relation and being are unified for Neoplatonists. In Aquinas, the systematic unity of philosophy and theology is dependent on his unification of subjectivity and being in the divine. I concluded:

> Aquinas gives the side of division, self-knowing *νους*, self-reflexive form, being which has *reditio completa* and is therefore thought and will, and the distinct being of the Three Persons, more weight in his transforming acceptance of the Neoplatonic amalgam than Denys does in his. As a result, unlike Denys, he is able to draw the *de deo uno*, the *de deo trino*, and the *de deo creante* into one continuous argument and to unite a philosophical ascending logic with the descending logic of *sacra doctrina*.[92]

In what follows, I will examine some aspects of the origins and development of Neoplatonism up to Eriugena in order to ascertain something of how this unification of subjectivity and being was constructed. My aim is to show that it is not only characteristically Neoplatonic, but even especially Christian. I am led to think that the notions which Dr. Milbank, in common with other Postmodern thinkers, would eliminate from Christian Neoplatonism are not only essential to it, but, are even intensified or created in the move from pagan to Christian Neoplatonism, at least as this occurs in the Latin West. If this be so, we will be forced to ask if Latin Christians can select some elements from the historically existent *summae* of Christian Neoplatonism without either reverting to earlier pagan forms or renouncing the logic of theology become systematic for something more arbitrary. Finally, we will be presented with the question as to whether a postmodern relation to Neoplatonism which aims to eliminate the foundation of the modern self can adequately think what is essential to that synthetic tradition. If, indeed, we discover, as characteristic of Latin Christian Neoplatonism, just what the thinkers we are considering hope to expunge, then, by their own argument, we will have discovered there an essential step in the formation of the modern western self.

II. NEOPLATONISM.

1. Plotinus. A natural beginning for a consideration of the character of Neoplatonism is *Ennead* V.1, entitled "The Three Initial Hypostases." Here Plotinus situates himself relative to his philosophical predecessors. He speaks of the Stoics, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Aristotle, Pythagoras, as well as of Parmenides and Plato. Crucially, we find at V.1.8 the interpretation of Plato's

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[92] "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 173.

Parmenides which makes Neoplatonism.[93] Here, the content of Plotinus' teaching about the structure of true reality - his ontology or henology - is united with his characteristic perspective on, or way into, that fundamental structure, namely through the soul. Here, we find also his method, namely, a recovery of our sense for our worth and our origin by getting over the awe and admiration we have for what is in fact lower. As a consequence of the discipline of withdrawal, we will gradually discover the three primary forms of reality. The movement of self-discovery and of knowledge of reality are inseparable. Here, we find philosophy praying so that thinking might pass from division toward union. [94] There are doctrines peculiar to Plotinus -- for example, his notion that part of the soul never descends, but remains always above in intellectual contemplation -- but even these have a long future. [95] In sum, we encounter approaches and doctrines which will persist, both throughout the history of Neoplatonism, as well as into those philosophies which are supposed to be its undoing.

The preoccupation with the self, and with its recovery of true self-knowledge and substantiality, or what Augustine will call its rest,[96] is fundamental. The history of Neoplatonism before the Christians closed its schools, and took it over, can be written in terms of this preoccupation which Christian

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[93] Exegesis is central to Plotinian philosophy, see Gatti, "Plotinus: the Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism," 14 ff., and the hierarchical exegesis of Plato's *Parmenides* is definitive (Gatti, 24 on Beierwaltes). On the exegesis of the *Parmenides*, see, first of all, E.R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One," *Classical Quarterly*, 22 (1928), 129-142 and the recent survey, H.-D. Saffrey, "Les débuts de la théologie comme science (IIIe-VIe)," *Rev. sc. phil. theo.*, 80, # 2 (Avril, 1996), 213 ff., English translation W.J. Hankey, "Theology as science (3rd-6th centuries)," *Studia Patristica,* XXIX, ed. E.A. Livingstone, (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 332-33, as well as the articles of Lilla and Beierwaltes cited below. For a philosophical consideration of the differences between the Platonic dialogue and its varied Neoplatonic interpretations, see Gadamer, "Plato's *Parmenides*," 3-16. To correct the anachronism involved in speaking of Plotinus in terms of hierarchy, see O'Meara, "The hierarchical ordering of reality in Plotinus," 66-81.

[94] *Ennead* V.1.6.10; see Rappe, "Self-knowledge and subjectivity in the *Enneads*," *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), n. 45, pp. 273-74, and, on the place of prayer in the emergence of the authentic self in Plotinus (with a comparison to Descartes in this regard), 251-2. On Boethius' imitation of Plotinus and their common following of Plato and the difference between Procline and Plotinian prayer, see W.J. Hankey, "'Ad intellectum ratiocinatio': Three Procline logics, *The Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena's *Periphyseon* and Boethius' *Consolatio philosophiae*," *Studia Patristica,* XXIX, ed. E.A. Livingstone, (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 245-47. On the religious character of Plotinian Neoplatonism, see Gatti, "Plotinus: the Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism," 25 on Dörrie, and 31-4.

[95] *Ennead* V.1.11; I use the text in Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge, Mass./ London: Harvard, 1966 -1988); see also *Enneads*, IV.3.12; IV.8.8.

[96] Augustine's *Confessions* has a subjective beginning and an objective conclusion in this regard: "inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te" (1.1.11-12). At the end he testifies: "Tu autem bonum nullo indigens bono semper quietus es, quoniam tua quies tu ipse es" (13.38.53.12-14). In the midst is "Versa et reuersa in tergum et in latera et in uentrum, et dura sunt omnia, et tu solus requies" (6.16.26.29-30). My text is that of Labriolle, Paris, Budé, 1947. See R.D. Crouse, "*Recurrens in te unum:* The Pattern of St. Augustine's *Confessions,*" *Studia Patristica* XIV, ed. E.A. Livingstone, *Text und Untersuchungen* 117 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), 392.

theology continued.[97]   The concern with human salvation, which is the work of philosophy become theology and spirituality, separates the Neoplatonists from Plato and Aristotle. Hellenic philosophy has a more direct objectivity, a more naïve interest in, an easier access to and final fulfillment by, being. The Hellenistic self, seeking self-mastery, quietude or freedom, images and is summoned by the freedom and self-sufficiency of the One. This is the message of Plotinus. [98]

The search for salvation places the Neoplatonists both with, and also on the other side of the Skeptics. The Neoplatonists continued that concern with the self, its repose, quietude, self-mastery or self-containedness which moved the Epicureans, the Stoics and the Skeptics. On this account, the fundamental division and development within non-Christian Neoplatonism, a division reflected in the differences between Augustine and Denys, and their successors, is about the human soul, its nature, its place, and about what of human individuals can be saved and how.

Augustine's stand is with Plotinus so far as he must equally begin by overcoming Skepticism. These two share with the Skeptics the search for repose, but both find the Skeptical way vain because of its inability to overcome its dependence on the sensuous and thus what is lower than soul. Both Platonists find that this dependence makes the soul forget its nature, origin and worth and so also "the Father God."[99]   For both the authentic self will be discovered by a liberating movement inward and upward. Augustine's move depends upon the spiritual odyssey completed by Plotinus.

In *Ennead* V.1, Plotinus begins with the separated Skeptical self which rests in itself *vis a vis* the sensible world. Plotinus opposes it, and uncovers its origin in the spiritual hypostases. That discovery is a transformation in which its true character and worth are disclosed. The movement of discovery is at the same time both inward and upward (for we are in the hypostases as participants and they are in us as causes). We learn, importantly for the questions before us, *both* in *and* beyond introspective self-discovery, to distinguish our empirical *and* our authentic selves.[100] This emerges when we reflect that, roughly speaking, in *Ennead* V.1, the

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[97] See, for example, C.G. Steel, *The Changing Self: A Study of the Soul in later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus,* (Brussels: Paleis der Academien, 1978); Gregory Shaw, "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," *Traditio*, 41 (1985), 1-28; idem, "Theurgy as Demiurgy: Iamblichus' Solution to the Problem of Embodiment," *Dionysius*, 12 (1988), 37-59; idem, "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), 116-37, which are gathered and extended in idem, *Theurgy and the Soul: the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus,* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1996).

[98] See *Ennead* V.1 and VI.8 and Gatti, "Plotinus: the Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism," John Bussanich, "Plotinus' metaphysics of the One," George Leroux, "Human Freedom in the Thought of Plotinus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 28-9, 55-7, 61-2 and 311-2.

[99] Compare Augustine *Confessiones* 6.16.26.27-33 (considered in the light of 5.10.19, 5.14.25 & 6.11.18) with *Ennead* V.1.1. I owe this comparison to my student Eli Charles Diamond.

[100] On which, in useful comparison with Descartes, see S. Rappe, "Self-knowledge and subjectivity in the *Enneads*," 250-74. Another approach showing the relevance of the same comparison is J. Dillon, "Plotinus, the First Cartesian?" *Hermathena*, 149 (1990), 19-31.

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treatment of nature as animated and governed by soul is Stoic, the treatment of *nous* is Aristotelian, and the treatment of the One and Good is developed under the preeminent authority - that of Plato. Neoplatonic self-discovery resumes the prior history of philosophy. It is necessary, then, to recollect how the self, as philosophy knows it, emerged relative to soul and being.

    2. Stoics and Skeptics. Skepticism has a sophisticated relation to the ancient schools, but, in the end, it is a disappointed Platonism. [101] The Skeptic seeks the identity and stability for the self which Plato found first in the forms, which are what truly are. Rising higher, the Platonic Socrates found the ground of what is desired in knowledge and true being in the Good, the source of thought and being but beyond them both. This erotically powerful ideal of identity and stability underlies Skepticism. It is the assumption both moving the Skeptic's quest and defining the self he discovers when (from his perspective) he gets over Stoic dogmatism. For, more immediately, the Skeptics stand in relation not to Plato but to the Stoics. With them, the Skeptics share the goal and purpose of philosophy, while, at the same time, they reject the Stoic means to that end as dogmatic. With the Stoics, the Skeptics seek quietude, against them they place two negations.

    The Skeptic discerns, on the one hand, that quietude cannot be reached from the dogmatically assumed self of the Stoics. From the Skeptical perspective, Stoics assume a self caught in a collision between the ideal and real, the universal and particular, the intellectual and the sensual.[102] Thus, the assumed self was caught in the conflict of that in relation to which it sought to stabilize itself. In consequence, quietude will not be found should the mind thus assumed reach identity with objective being in judgment about the true and the false, the good and the evil. In judgment's objectivity, the Skeptic supposes that he will be subject to the oppositions in reality. On the other hand, the Skeptic actually discovers, in the suspension of judgment caused by the equipoise of oppositions preventing decision about the truth, the quietude formerly sought by resolving the contradictions in judgment.[103] In the reflex back upon the self caused by the wall of opposition the sufficiency of the self is known. Importantly, the movement here is the circle of self-knowledge. This result even the Skeptic finds astonishing. As so often in philosophy and theology, he is given and constructs, in the moment of real despair, what was fruitlessly sought. This will later seem to be grace.[104]

    And indeed it is astonishing. But miracles are not explanations in the history of philosophy, so we must ask how? How was it that, in the self unable to attain identity with its object in judgment, there is satisfaction? How was it that the self, detached and apart, was able to be satisfied with itself, and to find in itself the identity Plato found in being (and the Neoplatonists preeminently beyond

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[101] What follows is an interpretation of Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Bk. I in which I was assisted by discussion with my colleague Dr. Dennis House.

[102] See Gretchen Reydams-Schils, "Roman and Stoic: The Self as Mediator," *Dionysius*, 16 (1998), 35-43.

[103] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Bk. I, xii.

[104] In the Preface of Anselm's *Proslogion* for example.

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being)? For an answer we must turn, as the Neoplatonists did, back to Plato and Aristotle.

This question is crucial to the matter of this paper, because this question is about the movement from being, or substance as object, to the subject or self. We are asking how satisfying rest, or identity, once sought in identification with the other, could now be supposed to have been attained in the opposite, that is, in the self alone. The answer paradoxically is to be found in the soul as Plato and Aristotle understood it.

For both, the soul is all things. For Plato, this is by likeness. All is in the soul. Thus, in the correspondence of inner and outer, there is perception and motion, knowledge and rest.[105] For Aristotle, in the final analysis, the soul, as *nous,* both becomes all things and makes all things, and the soul both knows itself and is with itself in its objects.[106] The soul, as all things and, thus, as the place of satisfied rest, is the ideal presupposed not only by the Stoics but equally by the Skeptical quest despite the Skeptics' pride in their escape from dogmatism. Plotinus exploits the ideal assumption contained in the Skeptical quest for quietude.[107]

The Stoics, though relating *logos* and matter differently than Aristotle does, follow him in still finding themselves at home with themselves in objective union with the cosmos. They seek, through unshakable judgment about the true and the false, the good and the evil, union of the human and the universal *logos.* The Skeptical wiseman is the one who discovers quietude as a accidental consequence of his reaction against the failure of objectivity, which objectivity then appears to him as dogmatism. To the degree that the Stoic wiseman, in the fortress of his disciplined containedness, has separated self-knowledge and self-relation from the self-related movement of the *logos* in the cosmic whole, there is a profound and fatal ambiguity which the Skeptics detect. For Sextus Empiricus, detecting this separation, Stoic objectivity is a cover for subjective freedom.[108]

The Skeptics regard themselves as more honest about how the self inescapably remains with itself than is the Stoic claim to objectivity. They think that, in this discovery, they have really attained freedom from the contrariety of the objects of sense and thought and of desire and will. Within themselves the Skeptics find all they need. Further, they know and possess this sufficiency in a reflexive presence to self. For, in the failed search for quietude through objectivity, they have been thrown back upon themselves.

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[105] Plato, *Timaeus* 34c-37d, 41dff.; *Phaedrus* 245cff.; and Aristotle's representation of Plato's teaching, *De Anima*, I, 2 404b16-26; I, 3 406b27ff.; see on the Platonic "precedence of *psyche,*" Gadamer, "Plato's *Parmenides,*" 9-15.

[106] See Aristotle, *De Anima*, III, 4-5. Aristotle's doctrine here generally and particularly that mind is what it thinks (*De Anima* III, 4,[429b29]-III, 5) is crucial for Plotinus, see H.J. Blumental, "On soul and intellect," *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 87-8, 92-4.

[107] On the end which the Skeptical quest assumes see Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Bk. I, xii.

[108] This paragraph both in form and content is mostly owed to Ian Stewart. He is interpreting J. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* (Leipzig, 1905-24), I: 54a, e, f; 59b, 60, 66, 85c, 158, 180; II: 180, 44, 52, 53, 55, 56, 69 in the light of Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Bk. I.

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Plotinus takes Skeptical selfish freedom as his starting point. And even though he regards its self-understanding as false, he maintains the reflexive relation to self which belongs to it. Plotinus takes us within ourselves to the higher causes, and so, to the All. Thus, he brings out into the open, and uses against the Skeptics, the ideal implicit in their yearnings and solutions. But, more, he develops what is new with them. As Hans-Georg Gadamer puts it:

> Plotinus' concept of the soul ... has completely transformed the concept of being into the concept of a self-related power, a *dynamis* which thinks itself. With this he has for the first time given priority to reflection in the field of ontological questions. He stands at the threshold of a new age.[109]

Nonetheless, something of the ambiguity in the assumption moving the Skeptical quest remains in his doctrine. Self-reflexive thinking does not unify the human soul for Plotinus. To get closer to such a modern position we must wait until Augustine.

3. The Plotinian selves. The irresolution of Plotinus on the issue is indicated by the fact that one of the most controverted matters in Plotinian scholarship is the question of the status of the human individual for him. His differentiation between the empirical self, on the one hand, and the authentic selves discovered in the ascent (the intellectual self and the self alone with the One), on the other, is a solution to the dividedness of our experience. As solution it attracts postmodern thinkers since the Plotinian self "can never be grasped as a definite object, as this or as that."[110] But the multiplicity of the Plotinian selves involves profound problems as well. The first of these is the difficulty in putting together the doctrine.

My own inclinations,[111] in respect to the controverted matters, are to affirm that there are ideas of human individuals within *nous*, while I maintain, at the same time, that the historical, or lower, self belongs within the definition, or *logos*, of man. I judge that soul remains (as thinking self-reflexive subject), when it achieves *henosis* with *nous*.[112] At the same time, I deny that union with the One

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[109] Gadamer, "Plato's *Parmenides*," 16. The passage quoted is followed by a postmodern look back beyond both Plotinus and the associated "Christian age of inwardness" to Plato.

[110] Rappe, "Self-knowledge and subjectivity in the *Enneads*," 269, she notes the attractiveness of the Plotinian multiple selves to postmodern thinkers and so balances Gadamer.

[111] In almost all things, I follow Gerard J.P. O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self,* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973) and A.H. Armstrong, "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus," *Dionysius*, 1 (1977), 49-68.

[112] O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy* concludes that the self does not disappear at the intelligible level, indeed, the self is not annihilated but retained even in *henosis* with intellect. O'Daly at p.65 examines *Ennead* IV.4.2, where Plotinus says that the soul, "must of necessity enter into one-ness (*henosis*) with *nous* by reason of its conversion" (line 26). "But this *henosis* does not imply ... that the soul loses its identity": "the two are one, and two" (lines 29-30). "One cannot fail to be struck by the use, once again, of the paradox of self-intellection, now clearly applied to explain how and why the human self, reverting to the Intelligible, *remains itself,* while at the same time being one with the totality of Being." (O'Daly p.65) The paradox is: "all intellection implies self, precisely because it is only in the act of reflexion, which presupposes a subject, that intellection occurs. But ... since this reflexion is upon the very subject of the dualized, intelligizing self, self-intellection

annihilates the self. Awareness, when we are with the One, is beyond intellectual self-reflexion, and what remains of us there is beyond being because the One is itself beyond being and reflexive knowing. Plotinus' thought at this point is aporetic. [113] I suppose that embodiment, which must be distinguished from individuation, is as much manifestation as it is fall, so that embodiment is rightly willed by the good soul. I have, thus, made all the choices on the side of a real human individuation in Plotinus and minimized his difference from Iamblichus and his tradition.[114]

    4. The Divisions within Hellenic Neoplatonism. Even if, when interpreting Plotinus, we choose all the options which favour real human individuation, still deep problems remain. The bodily and the noetic selves remain external to one another.[115] Porphyry felt the problems when he pushed the thought of Plotinus to its ontological conclusion, identifying the self with the *nous* in an ascending logic, thus finding a way of permanent escape from the cosmos, and saving the philosopher (and only the intellectual) from the Platonic cycle of rebirth.[116] Iamblichus confronted the same when he pushed psychology the opposite way, accusing Plotinus and Porphyry, by their intellectualism, both of having betrayed the Platonic tradition and also of rendering it impotent because inaccessible except for the few.[117]

    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, even if soul remains as thinking subject when it achieves *henosis* with *nous*. 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 we were always so conscious, we must all always be happy. A Stoic confusion of the universal and the individual would be permanent.[118] The opposed way to bring self and soul together is to have the whole soul descend, none of it remaining above.

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does not lessen the unity of being - indeed, it depends for its integrity upon that unity." (O'Daly p.64).

[113] O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy,* 88-94.

[114] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul,* 11ff and 109ff.

[115] Armstrong, "Form, Individual and Person," 61-6; Shaw, "The Geometry of Grace," 117; idem, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 63-5, 109-10.

[116] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 13-4. The source for our knowledge of Porphyry's doctrine is Augustine, *De ciuitate dei* 10.29-31; see Andrew Smith, *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition. A Study in Post-Plotinian Neoplatonism,* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), 57-59. For a brief outline of the developments and divergences in Neoplatonism, see Saffrey, "Les débuts de la théologie," 201-220, *Studia Patristica*, XXIX, 332ff.

[117] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul,* 4ff.

[118] Iamblichus, *In Platonis Dialogos Commentarium Fragmenta,* trans. Dillon (Leiden: Brill, 1973): (Frag. 87), 201 "If when the best part of us is perfect, then the whole of us is happy, what would prevent us all, the whole human race, from being happy at this moment, if the highest part of us is always enjoying intellection, and always turned towards the gods? If the Intellect [*nous*] is this highest part, that has nothing to do with the soul. If it is a part of the soul, then the rest of the soul also must be happy" (201). On the Stoics, see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 73.

This way Iamblichus and Proclus took.[119]   It unites psychology and experience and effectively shifts, against Plotinus, as Augustine also shifted relative to him, the continuing identity of the self to the side of historical self-conscious experience.

> The Iambichean soul has two lives, but because of its embodied condition it could only know one of them. ... The "one person" that Iamblichus knew himself to be ... was the completely descended soul identified with its particular mortal body. Indeed, the *self*-consciousness of any soul was rooted in this identification.[120]

This shift makes possible saving the whole human individual. But salvation requires theurgy's turn to the material media.

Iamblichus' soteriology as theurgy was most significantly distinguished from the soteriology of his predecessors because "theurgy promised salvation to the soul without relieving it of its self-alienation."[121] Grace, not an effort to lift the self towards its higher intellectual life, predominates: "the soul's access to the divine must come 'from without' (*exothen*) which was one rationale for the practice of rituals given *exothen*, from the gods." [122]   This Neoplatonic solution to the Hellenistic quest for salvation has its Christian future in great part through Denys.

The contrasting Porphyrian way of solving the Plotinian problematic, and bringing self and soul together, has a future through Augustine. But his solution to the problem left by Plotinus corresponds to Porphyry's psychology only if taken together with Porphyry's telescoping of the divine hypostases. For Porphyry, at the level of the spiritual hypostases Being is drawn up into the One.[123] If, against Plotinus, the First was then said to be, the corresponding psychological

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[119] E.R. Dodds, ed., Proclus, *The Elements of Theology,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), xx; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 109; on the differences between Proclus and Iamblichus which do not affect our discussion here, see ibid., 72ff., 102-6.

[120] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 108-9.

[121] Shaw, "The Geometry of Grace," 116 and *Theurgy and the Soul*, 64ff.

[122] Shaw, "The Geometry of Grace," 118.

[123] These assertions about Porphyry's doctrine depend upon Pierre Hadot's *Porphyre et Victorinus* , 2 vols. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1968) and upon his researches into its mediation and its medieval history, e.g. idem, "L'image de la Trinité dans l'âme chez Victorinus et chez saint Augustin," *Studia Patristica*, VI, ed. F.L. Cross, *Text und Untersuchungen* 81 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962), 409-442; idem, "La distinction de l'être et de l'étant dans le 'de Hebdomadibus' de Boèce," *Die Metaphysik in Mittelalter*, ed. P. Wilpert, Miscellanea Mediaevalia (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963), 148-53; idem, "Dieu comme acte d'être. A propos des théories d'Étienne Gilson sur la 'metaphysique'," *Étienne Gilson et nous*, 117-121; idem, "Dieu comme acte d'être dans le néoplatonisme," *Dieu et l'être: exégèses d'Exode 3,13 et de Coran 20,11-24*, éd. Centre d'études des religions du livre, CNRS (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1978), 57-63; idem, "L'être et l'étant dans le néoplatonisme," *Études néoplatoniciennes*, éd. J. Trouillard *et al.*, (Neuchâtel, 1973), 27-39.   The articles of S. Lilla and W. Beierwaltes cited below rely on this work, as does my treatment of the medieval history in "Aquinas' First Principle," 143-45 and *God in Himself*, 3-7. For a recent summary of the state of the question with his own precisions, see John M. Dillon, "Porphyry's Doctrine of the One," *Chercheurs de sagesse*. *Hommage à Jean Pépin*, publié sous la direction de Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Goulven Madec, Denis O'Brien, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 131 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1992), 356-66.

development would have the ascent of the historical self into the noetic soul take place without leaving historical experience behind. Eternal salvation would then be possible without losing the unity and identity of the human self. The resulting human individuality would be simultaneously above and below, noetic and historical, substance and relation, self-conscious and soul. It is self-related subject. We know this as possibility because in this way Augustine actually develops the human self as *mens.* So we leave Plotinus, and the vertical trinity of descending subordinated hypostases, for Augustine's horizontal trinity of equal substantial relations in a unified self-consciousness.

III. AUGUSTINE

1. Plotinus, Augustine and Skepticism. With Augustine, a decisive step is taken toward constructing a human self-identity established in the historical world. Once again to say anything useful within the confines of this article, I must resolve an infinity of scholarly disputes without going into them. We begin this cutting of the Gordian knots of Augustinian scholarship by treating his deeply consequential starting point, his refutation of Skepticism in *Contra Academicos* and the other early dialogues,[124] as placing him within the *sillage* of Plotinian Neoplatonism.

Augustine regarded what he took from the "books of the Platonists"[125] as an essential condition of his conversion to Christianity. Although, in contrast to Christianity, which is true philosophy, even Platonism cannot possess what philosophy seeks.[126] Still, Augustine has a carefully worked out description of the self in philosophical categories. There is, for him, always a "metaphysical" self defined in philosophical terms -- *anima*, *ratio*, *mens*, *ratiocinatio*, *scientia*, *sapientia,* etc. -- worked out in the most technical way, continually refined and qualified from the beginning of his writing until the *Retractationes*.[127] No more for Augustine than for Plotinus can such inherited and complex knowledge of himself be immediately derived from or reduced to introspective experience.

He makes an explicit and reasoned choice of Platonism from among the philosophical schools.[128] His view of reason, of its relation to human being, and of the self-transcending interior knowledge by which it reaches certainty are, in a general way, Platonist. So is his view that the knowledge of the ideas or forms, seen in and by the light of the Good above them, is the essence of wisdom and

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[124] Reason is established against the Skeptics in a step Augustine took early and which remained decisive. See *Contra Academicos* 3.9-16; *De beata uita* 2.7; *Soliloquiorum* 2.1.1; *De immortalitate animae* 1.1; *De libero arbitrio* 2.3.7; *De trinitate* 15.12.21; *De ciuitate dei* 11.26.

[125] *Confessions* 7.9.13f.; translated into Latin, these included at least a few treatises of Plotinus, see *De beata uita* 1.4; *De ciuitate dei* 10.10.14; 10.10.23. Among these was *Enneads* VI.1. Its language is reflected in Augustine's "Quaestio 'de ideis'" (*De diuersis quaestionibus* 46).

[126] *Contra Iulianum* 4.14.72; *Soliloquiorum* 1.4.9.

[127] On this see W.J. Hankey, "Ratio, reason, rationalism (ideae)" for *Saint Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, edited Allan Fitzgerald, Eerdmans, 1999, 696-702; idem, "ReChristianizing Augustine Postmodern Style," note 40.

[128] *Contra Academicos* 3.11.26; 3.17.37-18.41; 3.20.43; *De ciuitate dei* 8.2f.; 10.1.

happiness. The intellectual vision of the eternal ideas, which are the reasons of all things, brings beatitude to the human, or rational, soul. God enables this vision by the infusion of an intelligible light given so far as the purified soul adheres to the uncreated divine ideas by love.[129]

Like Plotinus, he "does philosophy" (*pace* Milbank), not only by inheriting the categories of self-knowledge.[130] When Augustine says that he can be certain of his existence even when in doubt, and that "I know that I know," "for just as I know that I am, so it holds too that I know that I know,"[131] he establishes rational self-knowledge both as a standard and as a reliable one. This experienced self-knowledge is essential to his theology so far as the divine and human trinities of *esse*, *scire*, *velle* are reciprocally connected.[132]

With the specific character of this trinitarian self and its construction relative to Skepticism, [133] Augustine is both within Plotinian Platonism and beyond it.   For him, as for Plotinus, self-knowledge and the knowledge of God, are inescapably intertwined, and include the knowledge of all else.[134] So Augustine can say that he wants to know only God and the soul.[135] For this, with Augustine and Plotinus, humans must move inward to pure thought, to thought which is one with its object. This *intellectus* or *nous* is an Aristotelian moment at the heart of Neoplatonic ascent.   But, what is reached has a different status, or better, an Augustinian *stasis* at this point makes all the difference.

Augustine establishes a landing, so to speak, in reason and rational self-consciousness, where Plotinus, determinedly ascending, does not stop.[136] Augustine's refusal of hypostatic hierarchy in respect to both the divine and the

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[129] *Soliloquiorum* 1.4-8; *De diuersis quaestionibus* 46.1 & 3; *De trinitate* 10.5.7; compare *Ennead* VI.7.17.36-38; VI.7.21.12-17; VI.7.24.1-5.

[130] On the relation between what Augustine inherits and what he establishes in thought, see Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader. Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation,* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996).

[131] Augustine, *De ciuitate dei* 11.26.20-25, *CCSL*: 48, 345-46: *quando certum est me esse, si fallor ... quod me noui nosse, non fallar. Sicut enim noui esse me, ita novi etiam hoc ipsum, nosse me*. See also *De trinitate* 10.3.5, *CCSL*: 50, 318: where Augustine says that even when seeking to know itself the mind knows what it is to know and that it knows and, thus, as the knower, knows itself. For other similar texts see G. O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, (London: Duckworth, 1987), 169-71.

[132] *Confessiones* 13.11.12 with Chadwick's notes to *Enneads* VI.4.14, VI.5.9.35, VI.8.17.25. See St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 279-80 and Gatti, "Plotinus: the Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism," 28-9.

[133] This is crucial for establishing the Neoplatonic character of Augustine's writing. Goulven Madec is right in *Saint Augustin et la philosophie.   Notes critiques*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 140 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1996), 18: that, in virtue of his enthusiastic reading of the Plotinian or Porphyryan *Libri platonicorum*, Augustine is clearly a Neoplatonic Platonist but that this does not involve accepting the hierarchy of the hypostases. We must add, however, that his Neoplatonism does involve the general Hellenistic ordering of everything to the salvation of the soul and the Plotinian beginning from Skepticism which is part of that orientation.

[134] *De uera religione* 39.72; *Confessiones* 7.1-2 & 10; *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 41.6-8; 145.5; *De trinitate* 14.12.15f.

[135] *Soliloquiorum* 1.2.7.

[136] *Ennead* VI.7.20-25; VI.7.31; VI.7.34-35; VI.7.41.

human involves a unification of the self and a consistent and continuous self-identity which is not Plotinian and places Augustine further than Plotinus on the road to a modern subjectivity. [137]

This is the Augustine for whom self-certainty, the knowledge both that I am and what I am, is established in doubt, in being deceived.[138] It is crucial that the self-certainty of our existence as reasoning life remains essential to us, belonging to the nature of immortal mind, even when our being, understanding and loving are directed to God, and act in and by God's own trinitarian life.[139] Brian Stock, whose recent book on Augustine takes postmodern accounts of reading into account, explains the presence of the arguments against Skepticism in the last books of the *De Trinitate*. The arguments:

> view the uncertainties of temporal existence ... against the background of the irrefutable knowledge of the mind's existence. ... The reader .. reaches a new stage of interpretation *interiore modo* (8.1.29). ... The neoplatonic ascent that is reassessed at 8.2 and 10.5 is thus transformed into a normal method of intellectual progress: 'Ascending inwardly, so to speak, by steps of contemplation through the soul's regions, we note the beginnings of an experience ... through which reason, arising in us, permits us to recognize the inner man.' [12.7.88-101][140]

For Augustine, the human *mens*, which is image of the divine Trinity, must be unshakably certain of its own being at the point where, in pure self-knowing, it finds the unity of being, thinking and willing.

So Charles Taylor puts Augustine at the foundation of Cartesian modernity in the chapter on Augustine in *Sources of the Self*, a chapter entitled "In Interiore homine." He writes, "On the way from Plato to Descartes stands Augustine."[141] Stock finds that Augustine "anticipates ... Descartes," because for them both "Certainty can come only through a type of rational proof." Stock shows that

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[137] On the character of Augustine's *mens* I follow Edward Booth, "St. Augustine's 'notitia sui' related to Aristotle and the early neo-Platonists," *Augustiniana*, 27 (1977), 70-132 & 364-401, 28 (1978), 183-221, 29 (1979), 97-124; idem, "St. Augustine's *de Trinitate* and Aristotelian and neo-Platonist Noetic," *Studia Patristica*, XVI, pt. II, ed. E.A. Livingstone, *Text und Untersuchungen* 129 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), 487-490; idem, *Saint Augustine and the Western Tradition*, 11-21. In establishing a postmodern reading of Augustine, Lewis Ayres, "The Discipline of Self-Knowledge in Augustine's *De Trinitate* Book X," *The Passionate Intellect. Essays on the Transformations of the Classical Traditions*, Presented to Professor I.G. Kidd, ed. Lewis Ayres, Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities VII (New Brunswick, U.S.A.: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 261, tells us that he strongly disagrees with an understanding of Augustine's work like Charles Taylor's which finds in it "the key building blocks of the modernist notion of the 'self'." The treatment of Augustine's self Ayres most directly confronts (as ahistorical and too Plotinian) is that of Booth (note 7, 263-64).

[138] 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), 333-4.

[139] *De trinitate*, 15.12.21.

[140] Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 276-77; see R.D. Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method," *Studia Patristica*, XVI, pt. II, ed. E.A. Livingstone, *Text und Untersuchungen* 129 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), 506-510.

[141] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 127.

reason, deepening interiority, and self-certainty succeed reading, and thus scripture, as providing the necessary certainty and in this he compares Augustine to Descartes.[142]

2. Augustine's self-certainty and divine trinity. The Augustinian self-relation is trinitarian, and it is both inadequate image and also an analogous way to the trinitarian First Principle.[143] Our postmodern theologians make much of the difference between Descartes' use of Augustine's unification of thinking and being and Augustine's use of them for the analogous ascent, a difference of which Descartes was himself conscious. [144] By this means they seek to keep Augustine safely on the other side of Scotus, Suarez, and of the late medieval univocity of being. Augustine, then, belongs to the postmodern cure. [145] But, this difference pointed to does not by itself secure what they need. Augustine's human mental trinity is an unbreakable rational self-certainty established, in the face of doubt, by experience which manifests the character and existence of the self which is primarily soul and mind.[146] It is *also* an analogy of the divine Trinity establishing our capacity for union with the trinitarian God. The *perichoresis* of knowledge and love by which the mind moves toward higher union does not contradict the rational self-certainty inherent in the triadic self-relation.

A comparison here with Plotinus is once more illumining. The ascent which analogy allows and requires is a point of contact with Plotinus. *Ennead* V.1 is above all against the empty and evil self-assertion which is Skeptical pride. Equally, for Augustine, humans are not to stay with the empty self-relation of the human *mens,* as opposed to the divine *perichoresis.* The human mind must not remain an object to itself.[147] That would be Hell. Nonetheless, it is precisely at the point of the correspondence and union between the divine and human trinities that the most important difference between Plotinus and Augustine emerges. [148]

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[142] Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 261; idem, "'Intelligo me esse'," 334 considers likenesses and differences. See also O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, 171 with references to recent literature.

[143] E.g. *Confessiones* 13.11.12.

[144] Marion's most extended treatment of differences between Descartes and Augustine on the *cogito* is "Formulations augustiniennes et cartésiennes" in Jean-Luc Marion, *Questions cartésiennes II, Sur l'ego et sur Dieu*, Philosophie d'aujourd'hui (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 37-43; see also idem, *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes: Analogie création des vérités éternelles et fondement*, éd. corrigée et complétée (Paris: Quadrige/ Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), 282: on will and knowing in Augustine and Descartes; 384, note 22 on the *cogito* ; and idem, *Sur le prisme métaphysique de Descartes*, 138-41, 147. See Prouvost, "La tension irrésolue: Les *Questions cartésiennes, II*.

[145] See Marion, *Sur le prisme métaphysique de Descartes*, 231-33 and idem, "The Essential Incoherence," 303-4 where Augustine is with Damascene, Aquinas and Anselm against Suarez, Scotus and Descartes who are guilty of the "univocist drift that analogy undergoes" (306). Idem, *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, 69ff., 162.

[146] *Ratio* characterizes the human, and it, or *mens*, is the best part of soul, e.g. *Contra Academicos* 1.2.5; *Retractationes* 1.1.2.

[147] *De trinitate* 14.12.15; *Retractationes* 1.1.2; *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 121.6.

[148] Booth, "St. Augustine's 'notitia sui'," *Augustiniana*, 28 (1978), 209-211: "Thus two neo-Platonist conceptions of the self-love and the self-knowledge of the One are simplified in themselves and are

In common with Plotinus, Augustine's mental edifice constructed against damning Skepticism is eclectic: neither purely Platonic, nor Aristotelian, nor Stoic but all three. So Augustine's self-consciously Platonic positions in respect to reason and the ideas are modifications of elements traceable at least to Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic patterns of thinking. He is not always a precise guide to the philosophical character of his borrowings. He took them from synthetic modifications, e.g. Cicero's, as well as from writings of the Platonic school.[149]

Augustine regards himself as learning from the Platonists to understand God and the human soul through the immateriality of reason.[150] This is, in fact, contrary to the Stoic conception of the First Principle. However, it is in an Aristotelian and Stoic way, but not Plato's, that he conceives the absolute First Principle to be self-related mind. Augustine speaks of the ideas and reasons which give form and order to creatures as contained in the divine intelligence.[151] Though he associates his position with Plato's, [152] and while it is important that this is a Hellenic and not a specifically Christian development, (*pace* Catherine Pickstock), it must be distinguished both from Plato's position and from Plotinian Neoplatonism. This Middle Platonist position assumes the Aristotelian modification of Plato, because Aristotle demolished the ontological independence of Plato's forms and made them the objects of divine thought.[153] Plotinus follows Aristotle here but places this thinking identity of thought and its object below the One. It is of the greatest consequence that Augustine at this point separates himself from Plotinus. As Edward Booth argues at length, versus Plotinus the Augustinian *notitia sui* involves an Aristotelian doctrine of *nous*.

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interrelated and then applied to the human *mens.* Its self-knowing and self-loving are detached from divine self-knowing and self-loving. The possibility of attainment of this perfect equality in the human *mens* makes it clear that there is no need for man to seek absorption of mind and soul into a transcendent whole; it became conceivable too that the mind could generate its norm of truthfulness in self-knowing, and a moral norm through its self-loving. So it set up a moral ideal as clearly as the neo-Platonist, but unmistakably human. ... So consciousness presupposes self-consciousness: not as the binding structure of the entire noetic cosmos, not as an insight into the nature of thought, but as a consequence of the realization that self-love and self-knowledge mean the complete presence of *mens* to itself. Derived from the more transcendent conceptions, the rejection of a transcendent and separated faculty alone made possible an integrated structure of subjectivity. ... [T]he human mind has an independence and measure of its knowing in [correcting 'is'] equality with itself."

[149] Attempts to sort the elements are found in Booth, "St. Augustine's 'notitia sui'," *Augustiniana*, 29 (1979), 106 [a lapidary summary]; idem, "St. Augustine's *de Trinitate*," [on Augustine's knowledge of Aristotle]; Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 42-74; and O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, 8-79. A. Solignac, "Doxographies et manuels dans la formation philosophique de saint Augustin," *Recherches Augustiniennes*, 1 (1958), 113-148, remains indispensable.

[150] *Confessiones* 7.1; *De ciuitate dei* 8.5; *De trinitate* 5.1.2.5.

[151] *De diuersis quaestionibus* 46.2-3.

[152] *De ciuitate dei* 12.27. Pickstock, *After Writing*, 211 contrasts the Platonic good with "the superlatively and demonstrably realizable transformation of the Forms into the Ideas of God in Christianity" and rightly sees this transformation as crucial to the development of subjectivity. But, in fact, and crucially, the preChristian Hellenes undertook this transformation; see Gadamer, "Plato's *Parmenides*," 5.

[153] *De Anima* III,5; *Metaphysics* XII,9,1074b15-1075a5.

Theologically, when compared to Plotinus, Augustine's trinitarian interpenetration of remembering, understanding and loving, involves a flattening or telescoping of vertically subordinated hypostases, or spiritual substances. Augustine's flattening was anticipated by Porphyry and by Marius Victorinus, a Christian Platonist.[154] So, Augustine is moving with one direction of the logic inherent in Neoplatonism when the vertically subordinated trinity of Plotinus becomes his horizontal trinity of equal substantial relations: God is self-related being, thought and love. Augustine's development of this direction in Neoplatonism has enormous consequences for his contribution to the history of western subjectivity.

Theology and anthropology or psychology move together in this Hellenistic world. In Augustine, Plotinus' hierarchical, and so divided, self is also flattened out within the rational self-relation and certainty of a unified historical and immortal human individuality. Human reason, for Augustine, is simultaneously above and below, intellectual and historical, wisdom and science. Despite his use of a Plotinian hierarchy of intellectual forms, Augustine can speak interchangeably of the human and the human mind both as rational and as intellectual, and can designate the intellect as *ratio superior*.[155] Reason is not tightly separated from *intellectus*, nor angelic from human cognition.[156]

In *ratio*, the human self is bound together. Reason sees its own mutability and is aware both of its success and its failure. Mind discerns both the eternal and unchangeable above itself, and its own inferiority. The human mind judges itself, but not the superior light by which it estimates its own character and place, its

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[154] On the developments in Porphyrian trinitarian theology see Salvatore R.C. Lilla, "Un dubbio di S. Agostino su Porfirio," *Nuovi Annali della Facoltà di Magistero dell'Università di Messina* [Roma: Herder], 5 (1987), 319-331; idem, "Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, Porphyre et Damascius," in *Actes du Colloque sur Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident,* éd. Ysabel de Andia, série Antiquité 151 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 117-35; idem, "Neoplatonic Hypostases and the Christian Trinity," *Studies in Plato and the Platonic Tradition. Essays Presented to John Whittaker*, ed. M. Joyal, (Aldershot: Avebury, 1997), 157; Werner Beierwaltes, "Cusanus and Eriugena," *Dionysius*, 13 (1989), 134, n. 64; idem, "Unity and Trinity in East and West," *Eriugena: East and West. Papers of the Eighth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, Chicago and Notre Dame, 18-20 October 1991,* ed. B. McGinn and W. Otten, Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies V (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), n. 10, pp. 212-214; 223-24; idem, "Unity and Trinity in Dionysius and Eriugena," *Hermathena*, 157 (1994), n. 10, pp. 7, 13-14. These studies rely upon the earlier work of Pierre Hadot and others.

[155] It belongs to what Augustine has in common with pagan Neoplatonism and his difference from it that he both makes careful differences between the forms of rational life and then also treats reason which recognizes its own limit as all embracing. Examples of hierarchy subordinating reason to intellect, which looks upward toward immutability and simplicity are *De ciuitate dei* 10.2; *De uera religione* 3.3; *De diuersis quaestionibus* 46. Reason is science, looking to the temporal at *De trinitate* 12.7.10; 12.14.22-15.25; 13.1.1-2; 14.8.11; *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 135.8. Reason and science may be opposed both to ratiocination, below them, and to intellect and wisdom, above. In the contrast with intellectual vision, the mutability of reason and the subordination of reason to intellect's grasp of changeless divine truth is manifest: *De trinitate* 3.2.8; *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 121.6.

[156] *De libero arbitrio* 2.3.7; *De trinitate* 12.3.3; 14.12.16; *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1.17.28; *De Genesi ad litteram* 3.20.30; 4.32; 6.12.20-22; *Tractatus in Ioannis Euangelium* 3.4; 15.9-20.

truth and its error. Because mind grasps its own relation to its superior, Augustine can demonstrate to reason its dependence on the eternal truth.[157] Because immaterial, mind grasps itself as a whole, it is knower and known. So being, intellect and love are commensurate.[158] A notion of reason as self-moving in a return upon itself is fundamentally Platonic and pervades Augustine's thought, but in Augustine it is used to unify the self in a way Plotinus cannot do.[159]

Moving from subjective certainty in rational self-relation, he both resolves the ambiguities about the self which Plotinus left unsettled and, like a good Neoplatonist, conforms self and divinity. So those who want to remain with a Postmodern ambiguity, or even oscillation, where something so dangerous as the self is concerned, should stay with the Skeptics or with Plotinus. The Plotinian selves remain irreducibly beside one another because both the One and the substantial Being of Intellectual self-relation, in the difference of Intellect from the One, are models and causes of its identity. Both hypostases are also the goals sought in its quest for freedom and authentic existence.[160] Such a self must move back and forth between being and non being, between identity and otherness. Its identity cannot lie in a knowledge which is its own. To find postmodern selves, we should better look to Plotinus than to Augustine, to pagan rather than to Christian Neoplatonism.[161]

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[157] *De libero arbitrio* 2.6.14; 2.12-14.

[158] *De Genesi ad litteram* 7.21.28; *De trinitate* 9.4.4f.

[159] *Contra Academicos* 1.1.1-3; 1.8.23; 2.3.4-8; 3.19..42; *De ordine* 1.1.3; 2.9.30-31; *Confessiones* 7.4.7; 7.10.16; 13.2.2-3.4. Crucially, the *conversio*, which unifies human self-consciousness, unites the *Confessions*, and the human and the divine. R.D. Crouse, "'In Aenigmate Trinitatis' (*Confessions*, XII,5,6): The Conversion of Philosophy in St. Augustine's *Confessions*," *Dionysius*, 11 (1987), 61 writes: "Existence, knowledge of the truth, and the *voluntas* which is their bond of union: that is the trinitarian paradigm which informs the thought of the *Confessions*, whether in the autobiography of Books I-IX, or in the doctrine of the soul's conversion in Book X. But it is in the final three books that the pattern is disclosed in its metaphysical dimensions, as grounded in, and dependent on, the triunal activity of God, in the descent and return of all creation from and to its principle. It is within that broader context of *conversio* that the conversion of the rational creature, in its knowing and its willing, has its deepest meaning." See also Crouse, "*Recurrens in te unum*," 389-92 and my "ReChristianizing Augustine Postmodern Style," 21-23.

[160] *Ennead* VI.8.6-7; VI.8.9; VI.8.12-13; VI.8.16-24; *Ennead* VI.9.1.43-44; VI.9.2ff: especially, VI.9.4.7-10; VI.9.8.25-30; *Ennead* VI.9.7.20-21; VI.9.11.24-25; ultimately the One and the individual belong together.

[161] E.g. Compare Augustine, *De trinitate* 15.15.24-25 as interpreted by Rowan Williams, "*Sapientia* and the Trinity: Reflections on the *De Trinitate*," *Collectanea Augustiniana. Mélanges T.J. van Bavel*, [=*Augustiniana*, 40:1-4 (1990)], 325-26 with Plotinus *Ennead* VI.7.35; VI.7.41; & *Ennead* VI.9.7.20-21; VI.9.11.24-25. Though there is a necessary heteronomy in the highest knowing for both, the knowledge of God and reflexive self-certain knowledge come together more for Augustine than for Plotinus. For Plotinus the heteronomy is necessitated by the difference of the One and Intellect, evidently for Augustine there is no such difference. A more complete encounter on this question would take into account Williams, "The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the *De Trinitate*," J.T. Lienhard et al. (eds.), *Collectanea Augustiniana. Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, (New York & Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993), 121-34 and Ayres, "The Discipline of Self-Knowledge." This encounter I undertake in "Self-knowledge and God as Other in Augustine," *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittalter*, 4 (1999), 83-127.

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3. Augustine's inclusive *mens* and future developments. So far I have spoken of the Augustinian self largely in terms of reason, and emphasized *ratio* as the foundation of subjectivity established in temporal and ontological continuity. This *ratio* may exist both as *scientia,* and so may be rightly ordered even when looking outward and below. It may also attempt to exist as empty selfishness and degrading sensuality, so as to be hellish. But this is only one side of Augustine. His human *mens* includes all the forms of knowing - as Eriugena will make clear - and so his *notitia sui* may also look above. Then, rational self-relation will be realized in *sapientia.* As wisdom, it looks with Plato to find truth within and above in the forms, which beyond Plato have become divine ideas. Even then we are not finished ascending.

The *acies mentis,* by which the soul touches the truth known only in God,[162] truth known properly only when so known, is, like the simple self of the Plotinian *nous,* transformed in *henosis.* There apprehension moves beyond consciousness of self.[163] Moreover, because the final moment of Augustine's mental triad is love, union is its destiny and proper completion. Thus, there is, in Augustine, finally, and one may even say, most of all, a negative and mystical theology, a human self which exists only in the otherness of union.

At this point, Porphyry, as reconstructed by Pierre Hadot, comes back to mind, for this is most like his primary *einai,* the 'to be' simplified beyond predication: "the most intensive possible unity of thought and being without difference."[164] Here, also we may be encountering the unification of the first two hypostases of the *Parmenides,* and so may also have approached the Trinity of Denys.[165] This Augustine of a mystical and negative theology is not, however, to be set against the self-certain rationalist. And one need only to speak of Anselm of Canterbury to recollect that Augustine's thought may be further developed in a systematic, mystical and negative Neoplatonic direction while retaining its trinitarian rational self-certainty and will, in this form, move western theology.[166]

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[162] *De beata uita* 4.35; *Soliloquiorum* 1.6.12; *De diuersis quaestionibus* 46.3; *De trinitate* 9.6.11-12; 12.15.24; *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 37.22; 51.10; 121.5; *Tractatus in Ioannis Euangelium* 15.19-20.

[163] *Confessiones* 9.10.25.

[164] Werner Beierwaltes, "Eriugena's Platonism," *Hermathena*, 149 (1990), 63.

[165] Beierwaltes, "Unity and Trinity in Dionysius," 6ff.; see also his, "Unity and Trinity in East and West," 212; and "Eriugena's Platonism," 58-63; S. Lilla, "Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, Porphyre et Damascius," 117-135 [supplements the Procline sources of Denys with Porphyry and Damascius]; idem, "Neoplatonic Hypostases and the Christian Trinity," 181-84; and my summary of this scholarship in "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 166-68. István Perczel, "La bibliothèque du pseudo-Denys l'Arèopagite," *Annuaire, École pratique des hautes études, Section des science religieuses*, 104 (1995-96), 396-97 finds in Denys' contraction of the two first hypostases of the *Parmenides* not a Christian innovation but rather a faithful following of Iamblichus. A comparison of the doctrine with *Enneads* VI.8 will detect in Porphyry a development of Plotinus, see Gatti, "Plotinus: the Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism," 28-9 and A.H. Armstrong's introduction to VI.8 in his Loeb Plotinus, VII, 223-34.

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

Augustine opposed Porphyry so fiercely because they were so close.[167] They differed not about the end - union of the self with the eternal Principle which would give it final rest - nor even about the logical character of the means. For both of them, material theurgy or, in Christian language, sacramental enactment, are subordinate to the Word, the *logos,* intellectually apprehended.[168] They differed on the particularities of the way. And so, if we are to see Augustine wholly, we need to recollect that, just as the last moment of the trinitarian *mens* is love moving to *henosis,* so also, its first moment, and the one corresponding to being, is *memoria.* There Augustine returns to God.[169] There, all he undergoes in time is gathered. In consequence of the equality of the moments in the triadic Augustinian *mens*, his historical identity, achieved and endured through becoming and collected in the being of memory, can itself be gathered into union when lover and the Beloved meet. What Porphyry desired is accomplished and more than that for which he could hope.[170]

That said, we must recognize as well that Augustine certainly does not develop the possible relations of *scientia* and *sapientia* or systematically draw them together.[171] Though the neglect of this totalizing possibility makes him attractive to many now, it compelled in antiquity the journey onward to Boethius and Eriugena. Still what evolves is present in the incomparable Father of western Christianity. Even if the possible system is not elaborated, Augustine's resurrection faith is not intelligible if all the aspects of his human individual are not finally one. The rational, moved and self-moving historical subject; the intellectual soul, seeing when illuminated by divine truth; and the self, stripped to its barest point, so as to be united only in silent unmoving rest, are one individual. Augustine will be made systematic when the Roman Neoplatonism which he hands on encounters, unpolemically among the Christians, the far more formally systematized Neoplatonism inaugurated in Iamblichus and, primarily via Proclus, enwrapping Denys. Toward the systematizing of the elements of Augustine's gigantic thesaurus and the reconciliation among the Christians of the divisions of pagan Neoplatonism, we must now turn.

Looking to Boethius, Eriugena and beyond, the Iamblichan thinking provides the place for the Augustinian *mens.* This is an ontological or henological situation which must surprise. But our origins should be for us more intellectually surprising than our present.

IV. **MOVING TO ERIUGENA**

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[167] *De ciuitate dei* 10.30 and Christos Evangelou, "Porphyry's Criticism of Christianity and the Problem of Augustine's Platonism," *Dionysius*, 13 (1989), 51-70, especially 62.

[168] See Smith, *Porphyry's Place,* 148-50; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 14, 105 and R. Dodaro, "*Christus sacerdos*: Augustine's Preaching Against Pagan Priests in the Light of *S*. Dolbeau 26 and 23," *AUGUSTIN PRÉDICATEUR (395-411): Communications présentées au colloque des 5 au 7 septembre 1996,* éd. Goulven Madec, Collection des Études augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 159 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1998), 377-393.

[169] On memory generally there is *Confessiones* 10; on the way God is there, see 10.24.35.

[170] Booth, "St. Augustine's 'notitia sui'," *Augustiniana*, 28 (1978), 206.

[171] See J.A. Doull, "What is Augustinian *sapientia?"* *Dionysius*, 12 (1988), 61-7.

1. From Iamblichus to Eriugena. Something of the Plotinian soul which never descends remains in Augustine. True understanding, the necessary ground of communication, is possible only by the turn inward and upward to intuition of the divine ideas, which the access to God of our *acies mentis* always enables. Beyond Plotinus, for Augustine, the rational and loving human *mens*, certain of its existence even in doubt, is present to itself both in this ascent and when it turns downward and outward.

As we have seen above, the power of Augustine's *mens* to maintain a self-conscious rational identity in this duality shares equally important common ground with the opposed Iamblichan-Procline psychological tradition. For that tradition and for Augustine, the continuity of the self has shifted to the historical individual. But the way of salvation for this embodied self requires in this Neoplatonic tradition a development of hierarchy in a manner not found in Plotinus or Augustine.

The return of the Iamblichan-Procline totally descended soul toward the absolute Principle demands that what is above be accessible to the alienated individual and operate graciously toward it. With Iamblichus and his successors, this happens not in virtue of a division of the self, but rather because of a hierarchical and hieratic division among humans, as well as within the spiritual reality generally. A god-like, entirely purified priest takes the place of the Plotinian noetic soul always above.[172]

In the Iamblichan 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 - to speak in Christian terms: church and school -, with an ontology, and with a cosmology, but even, with a mathematics.[173] I quote Gregory Shaw:

> Dodds noted that Iamblichus introduced the "law of mean terms" to the Platonists which allowed him to bridge the gap between the intransigent unity of the One and the dividedness of the Many.[174] By postulating a middle term, or, as it turns out, middle *terms*, Iamblichus established a continuity between irreconcilable extremes, a principle of mediation that became one of the most important elements in post-Iamblichean Platonism. ... Theurgy, then, was the dynamic and embodied expression of the mathematical mean, for in theurgic ritual an unbroken continuity was

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[172] 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), 62, 169-71]; see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul,* 51-7, 108-10; idem, "The Geometry of Grace," 116. Compare Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* I.2 372D and *Letter 8*; see Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary*, 92-4.

[173] On the coherence of these elements in Iamblichus, see H.J. Blumental & E.G. Clark, "Introduction: Iamblichus in 1990," *The Divine Iamblichus. Philosopher and Man of Gods*, ed. H.J. Blumental & E.G. Clark, (London: Duckworth, 1993), 2-3; Andrew Smith, "Iamblichus' Views on the Relationship of Philosophy to Religion in *De Mysteriis*," *ibid.*, 84 and the works of Shaw which will give access to the bibliography.

[174] Dodds, *Elements of Theology*, xxi-xxii.

established between mortal and immortal realms, allowing embodied souls to enter divine energies through rites that were both divine and human.[175]

In the law of mean term, we encounter what the West will call the *lex divinitatis,* the divine law of total mediation to which grace and nature both will be submitted by Latin theologians at least up to the 17th century.[176] All extremes are mediated, there is no movement from the bottom to the top except through a middle term. By this law of vertical integration, the flattened Augustinian self-reflexive human subjectivity, which immediately mirrors and touches God, is cosmically placed. In hierarchy, position is everything. Equally, the position of the human determines how hierarchy develops.

In the Iamlichan-Procline thinking, everything is, by necessity, related: the place of the human soul, the total system, its law of mediation. The human has no immediate access to intellection, the knowing in which the whole is seen. We cannot return to the Absolute as if from nowhere. The place of the soul must be known, and we must know how, from that place, return is possible. Its place is, in fact, in the middle, at the horizon of the material and the intellectual. To understand what this means, it may be helpful - looking backwards - to recognize that, among pagans, the problem is the placement of the human individual in respect to mediating soul, while, with the Christians, having replaced soul with the human, the question becomes the relation of mediating humanity to the mediating God-man.[177] Either way, placed, as humans are, at the middle, and not being able to return immediately, if we are to return to the absolute source at all, we must turn in relation to the whole, including the material. So, it must both in fact be the case, and also be able to be shown to be the case, that every place may be a way back, provided that every means is used.

In consequence, it is not enough that we should have the logic of the whole in *The Elements of Theology.* Our access to the system must equally be worked out, if it is to have the required totality. Part of the required showing is the reconciliation of all the forms of revelation. This demands that the sharing of the divine thinking, which is philosophy itself, as even Aristotle understood it,[178] must be reconciled with the nonphilosophical forms of divine disclosure. Barbarian and Greek must be reconciled. Philosophy does this when it extracts the truth from myth by a conceptualizing demythologizing. In this context, theology becomes science and we understand the necessity and character of *The Platonic Theology* of Proclus. Philosophical demythologizing, which also subordinates the gods of the Greek pantheon to higher intellectual and henadic orders, reconciles Barbarian to

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[175] Shaw, "Theurgy as Demiurgy," 39-40.

[176] See Hankey, "'Dionysius dixit'," *passim*; idem, "Dionysian Hierarchy," 416ff.; idem, "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI.6", *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge,* 64 (1997), 59-93; idem, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 164-65; idem, "Augustinian Immediacy and Dionysian Mediation in John Colet, Edmund Spenser, Richard Hooker and the Cardinal Bérulle," *Augustinus in der Neuzeit. Von Petrarca zum 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Dominique de Courcelles, (Editions Brepols-Turnhout, 1998), 125-165, with the writings of David Luscombe cited.

[177] Hankey, *God in Himself*, 32-3; Patrick Quinn, *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God,* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996), 52-65.

[178] *Metaphysics* I, 2.

Greek as well as the converse. For this rational subordination allows "room for a Christian interpretation of part of the Procline hierarchy" after the manner of Denys.[179]

Yet something still more is demanded than the intellectual subordination of the mythical and a reconciliation of myth and philosophy from the side of reason. Thoughts and words, even if they be hymns, will not alone suffice. Like the God of the Christians, the pagan gods now have spoken,[180] and likewise they command or reveal things to be done. Matter in all its forms has been shown to be good by the character of its relation to the principle and to the individual soul.[181] It can be and must become means to the soul immersed therein. And so we move from *The Chaldean Oracles*, where the gods speak, to *The Mysteries of Egypt,* where divine-human theurgic interaction is defended and explained.[182]

In these developments religion and science belong together and the power of scientific theology grows. Theurgy is practical and anagogic, but, it is no less science. It is grounded in the theological science which reduces the gods to concept and order, science discerning the ratios of reality as it is ordered to and by the gods. Science discovers the place of the human soul and its harmonies, as the ratios by which it is constituted. Science brings into relation lack and abundance, so "natural elements that preserved pure impressions of their divine sources" are brought by theurgy into contact with our embodied souls in order to awaken "their correspondences."[183]

Theurgy bridges reality for the human being, both in the middle, and also needing mediation. Mediation is the law and necessity of its nature. The laws governing mediation constitute our reason as the epistemological, ontological and soteriological structure of the human soul created out of what is intermediate between thought and the sensible, and standing between the two worlds.[184] Because intermediate between the intellectual and the sensible, psychic reason is mathematical.

The theological elements of Proclus are modeled on the mathematical reasoning of Euclid. In consequence, reason is at the heart of a logic which is also totally transcendent with respect to the One - as the *Elements of Theology* show. And so it will not surprise us to discover that the *lex divinitatis,* laying down the universal structural discipline, is itself epistemologically disciplinary, that, as a mathematical law, its rational certainty stands within a system of demonstration. When Latin Neoplatonic Christians unite Augustinian self-certain subjectivity with

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[179] Saffrey, "Les débuts de la théologie," 218, *Studia Patristica*, XXIX, 337.

[180] Édouard Jeauneau, "The Neoplatonic Themes of *Processio* and *Reditus* in Eriugena," *Dionysius*, 15 (1991), 4.

[181] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul,* 28-36.

[182] Saffrey, "Les débuts de la théologie," 214-16, *Studia Patristica*, XXIX, 333-35.

[183] Gregory Shaw, "Theurgy as Demiurgy," 52. See also his, "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification," which emphases that theurgy must be divine work toward humanity to be in any useful sense human work, and *Theurgy and the Soul*, *passim*.

[184] Proclus, *A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's* Elements, trans. G.R. Morrow, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), Prologue I.6-9 [17-25, pp. 14-22]; I.14-15 [43-47, pp. 35-7]; II.3 [62-3, pp. 50-1]; Definitions 1-*passim* [85-177, pp. 70-139] and Ian Mueller's Foreword, xvii-xxiv.

a law which has its own rational evidence, autonomous reason, indeed science, is at the center of theology. And that theology is turned to the world as well as to God.

When the two certainties natural to human reason, one Augustinian, the other Iamblichan, are united, the result is a self-certain human subjectivity well constituted ontologically, and epistemologically evident. Such a human reason should be able, theologically, cosmically, and ontologically, to maintain itself in respect to the world. This combination is hinted at in Boethius and accomplished in Eriugena. [185] In the first, a flight from the world to restful eternal simplicity is philosophy's full work, though Christian faith may suggest a more positive relation to the world.[186] But, in Eriugena, all is accomplished. The single system is both total *exitus* and complete return. Essential to the complete cycle is an Augustinian human subjectivity situated in the Iamblichan middle between the divine non being and creaturely existence, a humanity in which the world is made, and to which it belongs. The road from Iamblichus to Eriugena passes through the Denys.[187]

2. Denys. Eriugena had no direct knowledge of non-Christian Neoplatonism. [188] His relation to that world is through Christian theologians, primarily Augustine and Denys. Denys' works, the *Ambigua* and *Scoliae* of Maximus the Confessor, and the *De hominis opificio* of Gregory of Nyssa, he translated from Greek.[189] In the Dionysian *corpus*, Eriugena found the logic of a Neoplatonic system originating in and circling back upon the One and Good.[190]

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[185] On their "crossing" see the pregnant remark of John Milbank, "Theology with Substance: Christianity, Signs, Origins," *Journal of Literature & Theology*, 2 (1988), 11-12: "The vertical and participatory character of the Dionysian 'symbol' came to be crossed with the horizontal and 'arbitrary' character of the Augustinian sign." For scholarly treatments see R.D. Crouse, "Augustinian Platonism in Early Medieval Theology," *Augustine, from Rhetor to Theologian*, J. McWilliams, ed., (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 109-20; idem, "*Primordiales Causae* in Eriugena's Interpretation of Genesis: Sources and Significance," *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena, The Bible and Hermeneutics*, ed. G. Van Riel, C. Steel, J. McEvoy, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 211ff. which opposes seeing this crossing in terms of the ancient Neoplatonisms. On the other side, see W.J. Hankey, "The Place of the Proof for God's Existence in the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist*, 46 (1982), 379-382; idem, *God in Himself*, 46-53; idem, "Dionysius dixit," 130-34; idem, "'Magis... Pro Nostra Sentencia': John Wyclif, his mediaeval Predecessors and reformed Successors, and a pseudo-Augustinian Eucharistic Decretal," *Augustiniana*, 45, fasc. 3-4 (1995), 235-39; idem, "Dionysius becomes an Augustinian," 252-59; idem, "Augustinian Immediacy and Dionysian Mediation."

[186] See Hankey, "'Ad intellectum ratiocinatio'," 245-51; idem, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 162-73.

[187] For the passage, see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Studien zur Problemgeschichte der Antiken und Mittelalterlichen Philosophie VIII (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

[188] Beierwaltes, "Eriugena's Platonism," 53-7.

[189] Édouard Jeauneau, *Études Érigéniennes,* Études augustiniennes 18 (Paris, 1987), 89.

[190] Ibid., 58. On Denys as conveying the pagan Neoplatonic circle see Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 75 and Jeauneau, "The Neoplatonic Themes of *Processio* and *Reditus* in Eriugena," 8-29. Louth, "St. Denys the Areopagite and St. Maximus the Confessor: A

The Divine Names, belonging to the procession,[191] begins in several ways with unity, just as it ends with perfect and one. Denys writes:

> all these Scriptural utterances celebrate the supreme Deity by describing it as a monad or henad, because of its supernatural simplicity and indivisible unity. [192]

But the initial unity is by no means intended to be opposed to the goal of the return, the divine *Trias*. This is how what is "'huper' being, divinity and goodness" is described in *The Mystical Theology*. [193] The *corpus* concludes with this treatise on *henosis*, mystic union, so completing a Neoplatonic *exitus* and *reditus* theological circle.

Nor is the primal *mone* contradicted by what follows it in *The Divine Names* which goes on immediately from the one to speak of God as Three. Within the *De divinis nominibus*, our naming passes from unity and goodness[194] in order by way of being, life, thought, power. In the midst are, as Dr. Saffrey has noted, "great and small, identical and different, like and unlike, motionless and moving ... characteristics which Proclus had himself selected when he had pulled them out of his own exegesis of the *Parmenides*,"[195] from which we return to perfect and one by means of omnipotence, peace[196] and government.

According to Denys, he is naming the ineffable and unknowable which is known and named by us only in virtue of the revelation in Scripture. The divine is not known in itself by our multiplication of predicates -- though it would be false also to refuse it this manifestation of its plenitude and generosity.[197] In naming God, we are approaching him through his creation, indeed, better, our ascription of names is how God is in us according to the mode of human reason. When we examine the whole list of names and their ordering, we seem to have here the

Question of Influence," *Studia Patristica*, XXVII, ed. E.A. Livingstone, (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 171 places Denys' relation to philosophy within his theology.

[191] On the structure of the system, see *De divinis nominibus* [=*DN*] 1 & 2 and *Mystical Theology* [=*MT*] 3 with the comments of Paul Rorem, "The Place of *The Mystical Theology* in the Pseudo-Dionysian *Corpus*," *Dionysius*, 4 (1980), 87-98; idem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) in notes on pp. 52, 53, 57, 61, 72, 127, 140; idem, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary*, 195-204.

[192] *DN* 1.4, *PG* 589D, B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* I; (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), [=S] page 112, lines 10-12, Luibheid translation in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* [=L] 51; and *DN* 13, *PG* 977B; S 226, 8, L 128-129. Beginnings from unity other than that in *DN* 1 are, *DN* 2, *PG* 636C, S 122 9-10, L 58, which insists on *The Divine Names* as a treatment of what refers "indivisibly, absolutely, unreservedly and totally to God in his entirety," and *DN* 3, which is of the Good.

[193] *MT* I,1, *PG* 997A, A.M. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), page 141, line 1, L 135.

[194] Good is used both interchangeably with One at the beginning (*DN* 1.1, 1.2) and has a chapter devoted to it (*DN* 4) as does One (*DN* 13).

[195] Saffrey, "Les débuts de la théologie," 219, *Studia Patristica*, XXIX, 338.

[196] On peace as a "mean" term in a Iamblichan sense, see Rorem's notes *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* on pp. 121, 123, 170.

[197] *DN* 1.2; 2.4; 7.3.

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logical movement within God according to which the differentiated creation comes forth and returns. Here is then both a divinity and a cosmology.[198]

Just as the creature as medium of divine self-relation and self-manifestation is present in *The Divine Names*, a creating, revealing and saving divine mediation is at the center of the *corpus* as a whole. The celestial (or angelic), and the ecclesiastical, hierarchies, which are described in treatises with these titles, mediate for humans the *proodos* of *The Divine Names* to the *epistrophe* of *The Mystical Theology*. Significantly, within these treatises is found the Iamblichan *lex divinitatis* and it was through them that the law of mediation was transmitted to Latin thought and institutional life and was endowed there by Denys with Apostolic authority.[199]

The ground of the divine self-relation in the medium of creation is God's own self-relation as trinity. Denys' trinitarian theology is in this regard a Christian transforming development of the Neoplatonic treatment of the hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides* and is comparable to but different from that development in Augustine's trinitarian theology. Eriugena is the heir to both and the peculiarities of his system are to be understood from the way he unites and develops what he receives from Denys and Augustine.

This view of the trinitarian theology of these three Christian thinkers is set out by Werner Beierwaltes in a series of English articles which summarize recent books he has published in German. In respect to Augustine and Denys it coheres with the philological researches of Salvatore Lilla. Werner Beierwaltes writes:

> Dionysius' concept on the divine one-ness is philosophically determined by the essentially distinct concepts of the absolute *non*-being One and the *Being* - One as developed in Proclus' *Parmenides Commentary*.[200]

Here we recognize a paradoxical unification of the fundamental oppositions, the telescoping which scholarship has found first in Porphyry, who directly, and by way of Victorinus, certainly influenced the trinitarian theology of Augustine. Indeed both Augustine and Denys understand the First Principle as triadic unity and unified triad, perfectly simple, completely internally distinguished.[201]

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[198] See the comments of Beierwaltes, "Unity and Trinity in Dionysius," 8 and "Unity and Trinity in East and West," 217; and of D'Ancona Costa, "Plotinus and later Platonic philosophers," 366-67.

[199] *DN* 7.3, *PG* 872B, S 198 18; *DN* 11.2, *PG* 952A, S 219 16; *Celestial Hierarchy* 4.3 *PG* 181A, G. Heil, *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), page 22, lines 16-20; *Celestial Hierarchy* 13; *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 5.1-4; etc. See Hankey, "'Dionysius dixit'," 143-46; idem, "Dionysian Hierarchy," 422; idem, "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI.6", 61; idem, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold," 164-65; idem, "Augustinian Immediacy and Dionysian Mediation," with the works of David Luscombe cited; Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary*, 31-6; and Editors' notes in Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Introductions; Commentary Books V-VIII*, in *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker* , W. Speed Hill, General Editor, vol. 6 pt 2, (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance texts and studies, 1993), 1080- 1081.

[200] W. Beierwaltes, "Unity and Trinity in Dionysius," 5.

[201] On the errors involved in opposing the Dionysian and Augustinian approaches to the Trinity, see W.J. Hankey, "The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius and the Structure of St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae*," *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani*, ed. L. Obertello, (Roma: Herder, 1981), 367-375 and Beierwaltes and Lilla.

As Professor Beierwaltes writes, the divine unity is "*nonetheless trinitarian*, the Trinity 'derived' from the unity, or the unity as an internally relational Trinity." So, "Dionysius conceives the absolute unity (the [!] One) also as an internally *relational* tri-une oneness."[202] Trinitarian unity is possible because the Dionysian Principle is self-related. Self-related subjectivity has appeared again just where it must not, if the best hopes of our Postmodern Christian Neoplatonists are to be realized.

> [The Plotinian] form of immanently relational Thought, thinking Itself and yet reflecting towards its Origin, is the *philosophical* model for the Christian Unity in Tri-Unity: the Trinity.[203]

A crucial passage for Beierwaltes' interpretation is this from *The Divine Names*:

> the differentiations within the Godhead have to do with the benign processions and revelations of God. ... [T]here are certain specific unities and differentiations within the unity and differentiation .. . Thus, regarding the divine unity beyond being, they [those fully initiated into our tradition and following sacred scripture] assert that the indivisible Trinity holds within a shared undifferentiated unity its supra-essential subsistence, ... its oneness beyond the source of oneness, its ineffability, its many names, its unknowability, its wholly belonging to the conceptual realm ... and finally, ... the abiding and foundation of the divine persons who are the source of oneness as a unity which is totally undifferentiated and transcendent.[204]

On this Beierwaltes writes, "this formula emphases the unity of the three within the trinity: unified through difference and differentiated through unity."[205]

The development of Neoplatonism in this direction is impelled by the Christian revelation. The language of Holy Scripture about the Father, Son and Spirit require this drawing together of the unity and division, negation and affirmation more completely and more paradoxically than in Plotinus.

> [The Christian scripture] entails the attribution of *both* negativity and positivity to *one* and the *same* object. In accordance with the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides* the eminent (first) One is absolutely *transcendent* ... pure, superessential eternally relationless Simplicity. The *second* form of unity, which arises from the absolute One and in self-knowledge turns back to the One, is ... *differentiated* within itself ... This allows it to receive those relational predicates which are denied the superessential One ... The putting together of these dimensions must be considered as intending to abolish or lessen the realm of *difference* between both these two forms of unity, insofar as God with *all* his predicates must be thought of as pure unity.[206]

In this way God is being for Denys. By the same logic that the gods and separated hypostases of Proclus become predicates and divine names, and to

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[202] Beierwaltes, "Unity and Trinity in Dionysius," 6

[203] Ibid., 5.

[204] *DN* 2.4, *PG* 640D-641A, S 126.10-127.4, L 61.

[205] Beierwaltes, "Unity and Trinity in Dionysius," 7.

[206] Ibid., 6. See also Beierwaltes, "Eriugena's Platonism," 58-59.

degree that this is actually accomplished, Triadic unity becomes self-reflective thought and love, and is, therefore, also being. These three are inseparable.

> Dionysius increases the absolute otherness of the divine One through the lavish use of the basically negative prefix 'super' ... *At the same time* ... the implications of the '*being-* One' are valid for God or the Divine Unity in just the *same* intensity. This is so since He who Is ... as unchangeable *Being himself* is abiding identity in himself, and yet also is difference in the sense of constituting being and giving share of his absolute goodness: He is the Cause of All; despite all the difference from thought in the realm of plurality: He is absolute Self-thinking, a thinking which embraces the ideas. The divine ideas constitute an intelligible framework of the world, *before* the world, - unitary and unifying in divine thought.[207]

Given all this, the drawing together of Augustine and Denys by Eriugena may not be as much a betrayal of both as we have been led to think.

V. ERIUGENA

The fundamental systematic structure of Eriugena's *Periphyseon* and its treatment of the divine Trinity are Dionysian. Beierwaltes writes that the influence of Denys:

> made possible an internally differentiated, relationally-moved conception of Trinity in Eriugena. Divine unity constitutes itself as creative thinking, willing and loving threeness (in the manner of self-explication).   It comprehends and preserves itself as a whole. Thus, the trinitarian unity may be understood as an internally moving and relational network which begets, creates or forms itself in an original self-unfolding. This inner relationality ... arises or is "caused" through the self-unfolding of the principium .. into that which is constituted by him - and hence as his own being.[208]

Eriugena expands Denys' Trinitarian self-differentiating Deity into one which in its self-constitution and self-creating brings all into being.[209]   The expansion or magnification of the self-differentiation to such a degree that Eriugena can speak of a divine self-causing is the special point here.[210] That self-causing becomes the creation as distinguished from God when an Augustinian subjectivity is included within the Dionysian. Eriugena's Christian universe comes to be in a self-related subjectivity, divine and human, uniting Denys, and one tradition of Neoplatonism, with Augustine, and another tradition.[211]

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[207] Beierwaltes, "Unity and Trinity in Dionysius," 7.

[208] Ibid., 10.

[209] At *DN* 2.5, *PG* 641D, S 128 10, Denys writes of a *theogonia*; Beierwaltes, "Unity and Trinity in Dionysius," 19, note 64.

[210] E.g. *De Divisione Naturae* I.12 *PL* 452ff.; see Beierwaltes, "Unity and Trinity in Dionysius," 11-13; Crouse, "*Primordiales Causae* in Eriugena's Interpretation of Genesis," 215; Jeauneau, "The Neoplatonic Themes of *Processio* and *Reditus* in Eriugena, 15-9. Jeauneau connects Eriugena on this point with Proclus' notion of the self-constituted by means of a reference to Jean Trouillard.

[211] Jeauneau, *Études Érigéniennes,* 145.

The direction of spirit in the *Periphyseon*[212] is from the uncreated and unnamable simplicity above being, through intellect, reason, imagination and sense, as created and creative means, to the created material cosmos, from which the return to the uncreated is effected. In the general structure, a vast system of mediations, there is much to recall Denys and the Greek Fathers, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor.[213] But Augustine is at the heart of this system.[214] Crucially, that by which Eriugena's God moves from his own non-being to himself as created being, is the human. [215] The Uncreated and creating divine subjectivity returns to itself as Uncreated and Uncreating end through the human *mens* which is joined to it immediately in the divine-human Mediator.[216] At the middle of a system of mediation in the Iamblichan tradition is Augustinian immediacy.

> This anthropology significantly alters Dionysius's view of our relationship to the angels, since Eriugena presents a direct, unmediated relation between humanity and God. As Édouard Jeauneau has noted, a passage from Augustine highlights this theme: "Between our mind, by which we know the Father, and the Truth, that is to say, the inward light through which we know Him, no creature intervenes." Eriugena often uses Augustine's phrase, *nulla interposita creatura*, to describe the human mind as God's image and its contemplative vision.[217]

In a thoroughly Augustinian way, the psychological powers gathered in the human stand in immediate proximity to the First Principle, but here they comprise the actual medium of creation. In contrast to Augustine's *De Trinitate* or the *Consolatio* of Boethius, the interest is not in finding a way from the human to the

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[212] General considerations of the structure will be found in Édouard Jeauneau, "Le Thème du retour. Inédit. Résumé des cours donnés à Rome et à Genève en 1982," *Études Érigéniennes,* 365-394; idem, "The Neoplatonic Themes of *Processio* and *Reditus* in Eriugena," 3-29. References to the text of the *Periphyseon* and to other secondary literature supporting the particular interpretation I offer here will be found in Hankey, *God in Himself,* 52-53.

[213] On the decisive role of Maximus in the formation of Eriugena's mind, see Jeauneau, *Études Érigéniennes,* 34-5; on the Greek patristic influence generally 175-210; on how it provides the general structure, idem, "The Neoplatonic Themes of *Processio* and *Reditus* in Eriugena," 8-11.

[214] Donald C. Duclow, "Isaiah Meets the Seraph: Breaking Ranks in Dionysius and Eriugena?" *Eriugena: East and West. Papers of the Eighth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, Chicago and Notre Dame, 18-20 October 1991,* ed. B. McGinn and W. Otten, Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies V (Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 233-52, provides a profound analysis of what Eriugena takes from Dionysius and where he departs from him in virtue of his attachment to Augustine. R.D. Crouse, "INTENTIO MOYSI: Bede, Augustine, Eriugena and Plato in the *Hexaemeron* of Honorius Augustodunensis," *Dionysius*, 2 (1978), 144 explains the principle by which Eriugena selects from Augustine; idem, Crouse, "*Primordiales Causae* in Eriugena's Interpretation of Genesis" shows how Augustine and Denys cohere in his thought.

[215] *De Divisione Naturae* III.17 *PL* 678C; see L. Michael Harrington, *Human Mediation in Eriugena's* Periphyseon, M.A Thesis, Department of Classics, Dalhousie University, 1997; idem, "*Unusquisque in suo sensu abundet*: Human Perspective in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*," *Dionysius,* 16 (1998), 123-140.

[216] See Donald F. Duclow, "Dialectic and Christology in Eriugena's *Periphyseon,*" *Dionysius*, 4 (1980), especially 110.

[217] Duclow, "Isaiah Meets the Seraph," 241; Jeauneau, *Études Érigéniennes,* 145.

divine rest, but rather in showing how ineffable non-being, before all definition, being and multiplicity, comes into definite, varied, perceptible, and predicable, being by passing dialectically, or "running through," intellect, reason, imagination and sense, the powers of the human *anima.* The human mind, mediating at the middle of all, both of what is and of what is not, unites all the created kinds as diverse forms of unity and division. The Augustinian *mens* contains all the forms of knowing, as all the ways in which unity and division meet. It can found all the kinds of created being by its *theoria* because, in Eriugena, as in Platonism generally, knowing and being belong together.[218] What knows all makes all. So, "in homine ... universaliter creatae sunt".[219]

In terms of Neoplatonic light theory, the world is a *theophany*. In this the light beyond light manifests itself. "The world is the 'negati affirmatio' or the understandable and expressible mode of being of that Being which is not understandable and expressible as Himself."[220] Being the medium of the expression of the unknown, the human stands on both sides. As Donald Duclow explains:

> Eriugena places the human being among the primordial causes within the divine Word. He further describes humanity as created in God's image and likeness, with two basic features: (1) a self-ignorance whereby humanity knows only *that* it is, not *what* it is; and (2) a self-knowledge that embraces all creation, visible and invisible. In the first, the human being reflects God's unknowable transcendence. In the second, the human being becomes--in Maximus's phrase-- "the workshop of all things, *officina omnium*," and faithfully mirrors God's creative Wisdom. Simultaneously transcending and embracing the whole created order, humanity thus becomes a precise image of its divine exemplar. [221]

In this self-relation, a Dionysian triad requiring movement outward in order both to explicate the Principle and to return to it dominates. But this domination is temporary. The movement outward is the means to self-knowledge and finally Augustinian self-knowledge embraces all. To understand Eriugena's dialectic here it is necessary to hold in one view the common character and origin of the Dionysian and the Augustinian trinities together with their differences and their reconciliation within his system.

While Eriugena knows and uses Augustine's *Esse*, *Velle*, *Scire*, he transforms it both by misstating it (by reordering *Scire* and *Velle*) and by reducing it to the

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[218] *De Divisione Naturae* I.12 *PL* 452ff.; Jeauneau, "The Neoplatonic Themes of *Processio* and *Reditus* in Eriugena," 14-19.

[219] *De Divisione Naturae* IV. 8 (*PL* 774A), see *God in Himself,* 53-55. On the genesis of the idea within Eriugena's writing Mark Zier, "The Growth of an Idea," *From Athens to Chartres. Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought. Studies in Honour of Édouard Jeauneau,* ed. Haijo Jan Westra, (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 80.

[220] Beierwaltes, "Eriugena's Platonism," 68; idem, "Negati Affirmatio," *Dionysius*, 1 (1977), 127-59.

[221] Duclow, "Isaiah Meets the Seraph," 241. See Stock, "'Intelligo me esse'."

Dionysian trinity of *ousia*, *dynamis*, *energeia*.[222] This triad, as constitutive of intellectual beings, is found in Iamblichus, Proclus, Denys and Maximus.[223] For Eriugena, the human conceived thus necessarily knows that it is but not what it is. "It does not know what it is because no essence knows itself."[224] Through the appearance of all things by the active explication of the hidden *ousia* which is its being created in the human, all comes to exist and to be known. The human thus comes to know what it is and, because it's substance is self-knowledge, [225] the human also comes to true being.

The creation of the sensible in the human enables it, fallen out of a Paradisal intellectual immediate self-knowledge into sensible existence, to know itself and in that knowing to return to proper union with its origin.[226] The human which must come to know itself thus in order to be complete and properly itself both is all things and it is essentially self-knowing. As we have seen, this has been its character at least since Plotinus.

Eriugena, in a naïvely daring way, draws Augustine's immediate self-knowledge into the Dionysian mediated self-relation and vice versa. The later medieval war between the Franciscans, with whom the Augustinian-Plotinian side weighed more heavily, and Thomas Aquinas and his followers, with whom the Dionysian-Aristotelian side was stronger, shows that this reconciliation was not final. The reiteration of the same war in the philosophy of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries indicates the same. Nonetheless, the unsurpassed drawing together of opposites within the thought of a Latin theologian gives evidence of the immense spiritual power present in such a combination. For, here, Greek Christian Neoplatonism, in a profoundly apophatic form, is joined with what in Augustine has seemed most incompatible with that.

The *Periphyseon* is the first explicitly systematized Christian theological cosmology, if Origen, some of whose thought Eriugena knew, be not counted. Certainly it is the first *summa* in Latin.[227] Its spirit is new, and altogether

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[222] See *De Divisione Naturae* II.31 *PL* 603A; V.31 *PL* 942A; I follow Harrington, *Human Mediation in Eriugena's* Periphyseon, 68-72; for the differences between the two trinities, see Stock, "'Intelligo me esse'."

[223] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* II.1, 67.5; Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 169 (Dodds, 146); Dionysius, *DN* 4.23, *PG* 724C; S 170 16-17; *Celestial Hierarchy* 11.2, *PG* 284D, Heil 42 1-2; Maximus, *Ambigua* 10.41 *PG* 1184D, (Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 142). I owe this list to Louth's note 107 at this point in his translation.

[224] Stock, "'Intelligo me esse'," 330; *De Divisione Naturae* I.48 *PL* 490B.

[225] *De Divisione Naturae* IV.7 *PL* 770B: "notitiam .. qua se mens humana cognoscit, substantialiter homini inesse".

[226] Harrington, *Human Mediation in Eriugena's* Periphyseon, 35-8; 40--41; 44-46; 50-72; 79-80.

[227] See W.J. Hankey, "Theology as System and as Science: Proclus and Thomas Aquinas," *Dionysius*, 6 (1982), 88. Some assert that the distinction of being the first systematic theologian belongs to Origen, see R.D. Crouse, "Origen In The Philosophical Tradition of The Latin West: St. Augustine and John Scottus Eriugena," in R. Daley, ed., *Origeniana Quinta: Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989,* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 565-569, for further developments see Rainer Berndt, "La théologie comme système du monde. Sur l'évolution des sommes théologiques de Hughes de Saint-Victor à Saint Thomas D'Aquin," *Rev. sc. phil. theo.*, 78 (1994), 555-572.

optimistic. All reality is for human contemplation, that contemplation is a creative running through all the kinds of being and non-being, and by the knowledge of ourselves gained in that creating contemplation, we are saved. There is no Plotinian flight to the peace of an unmoving center. At least in principle, the human spirit by whom the worlds were made can both be free in the world, and free from the world whose underlying cause the Uncreated Creator makes it be.

What beyond its own freedom causes this new spirit to break out when it does, we cannot determine here, though certainly Gregory the Great's reclaiming of the world for the Church is already the beginning of the transition from consolation to creation.[228] But surely it is evident that this transition to a principle, human and divine, which is self-present, infinitely self-reflexive, and causally foundational gathers something substantial of patristic Christian Neoplatonism. In Eriugena, the Christian West takes Greek Christian Neoplatonism into itself; the result will be western Christendom's medieval and modern worldly confidence.[229]

Conclusion

How shall we draw this conclusion back to the considerations with which we began? Can we retrieve from Christian Neoplatonism notions like transcendence, participation, analogy, hierarchy, and teleology without those that found a secular subjectivity? Can notions like presence, substance, the idea, the subject, causality, thought-before-expression, be cut out of this essentially systematic mentality? Can the autonomous self-certifying reason, the philosophy or metaphysics, which builds the structures of these simultaneously religious, theological and philosophical schools of the spirit be extinguished? Does the move from pagan to Christian secure these ends? Is it "bizarre" to think of "the Fathers, to be doing philosophy *as well* as theology"? [230] Would we follow them if we were to evacuate "philosophy [which] in fact *began* as a secularizing immanentism, an attempt to regard a *cosmos* independently of a performed reception of the poetic word" so that it is left "nothing (outside imaginary worlds, logical implications or the isolation of *aporias*) to either do or see, which is not manifestly . . . malicious"?[231] The apparent answer to all these postmodern questions is 'No'.

Such a view of the relation of philosophy to what is revealed in sacred scripture, Christian or pagan, will not suffice. With the Christians this is partly because they thought of themselves as doing philosophy. Theology as distinguished from philosophy was not there for them to be doing "as well". For

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[228] Hankey, "'Dionysius dixit'," 132-133; Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection,* Transformation of the Classical Heritage 17 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 8ff.; R.A. Markus, "The Sacred and the Secular: From Augustine to Gregory the Great," *JTS*, 36 (1985), 84-96; R.D. Crouse, "*Semina Rationum*: St. Augustine and Boethius," *Dionysius*, 4 (1980), 75-85, especially 84; idem, "Augustinian Platonism in Early Medieval Theology," 113.

[229] See Hankey "'Dionysius dixit'," *passim*; idem, "Dionysian Hierarchy," 435-8; Werner Beierwaltes, "Negati Affirmatio," 130-31; idem, "Cusanus and Eriugena," 123ff., 135ff., 129-30; idem, "Eriugena's Platonism," 68-70; Booth, *Saint Augustine and the Western Tradition*, *passim*.

[230] Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 49.

[231] Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," 50.

Augustine Christianity was "vera philosophia."[232] For Eriugena, true philosophy, by which the highest and first principles are investigated is true religion. Conversely true religion is true philosophy without which no one enters heaven.[233] Evidently our categories just do not apply. But if we ask instead whether, for Christians or pagans from Iamblichus to Eriugena, the need of philosophy for divine speech and religious acts stands against the proper certainties of philosophical reason, we cannot answer 'yes'. If we consider how Augustine's trinitarian self-related human *mens* is historical, and is rationally established against Skepticism, and yet is, at the same time, an analogy of the revealed divine Trinity, no creature intervening between the two trinities, we shall have trouble separating the revealed and the rationally self-certain. Indeed, as with Eriugena, we shall find the revealed is preliminary. Nor will regarding Denys, and the basis of his demand for hierarchical mediation, help to separate philosophical reason and scriptural revelation or prevent the words of scripture being submitted to the law of mediation.[234] And when we look at the trinitarian theologies of Denys and Augustine together, the situation becomes even worse.

It is not so much that we can describe their accounts of the First Principle in terms of the unification, in a manner anticipated by Porphyry, of the first two hypostases of the *Parmenides*. After all, that is certainly our reflection on Augustine and Denys, not their own. This makes what they did intelligible to us in terms of our historically defined categories. Nonetheless, we do reach here the center of the problem with any attempt to expunge the roots of foundational self-reflexive subjectivity from premodern Christian Neoplatonism. Trinitarian theology for these decisively influential Latin and Greek Fathers cannot unite the one and the three without self-relation in being, thought and love, and hence without affirming (as well as denying) being, thought and love in God. Our quest for salvation which began with the Stoics and Skeptics, a quest which was both joined and transformed by Plotinus and his divided followers, is not refused satisfaction by their Christian heirs. Self-relation both immediate and mediated is in the divine. It grounds and summons human subjectivity.

And thus we come to Eriugena. For with him it becomes absolutely clear that the divine and human trinitarian selves must be seen together. Indeed, John the Scot follows his Neoplatonic predecessors, for whom what has substantial being, because it remains in (as well as goes forth from, and returns to) the unknowable One is no more knowable than the One. Another way to put this, and indeed the right way to put it, is that human being comes to be and comes to be known in the creation which takes place in and through the human. Is this just the desired result of John Milbank, and those who think as he does, or its opposite? Is

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[232] *Contra Iulianum* 4.14.72: *nostra Christiana quae una est vera philosophia*. On the problems with looking at Augustine's philosophy in modern categories, see Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method," 501-506.

[233] *De divina predestinatione*, I, *PL* 357-358; see Beierwaltes, "Eriugena's Platonism," 69-70."

[234] Among the Latins, Denys was both involved in the separation of theology and philosophy and in theological subordination of revelation to the law of reason, see Hankey, "The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius," and idem, "Aquinas, Pseudo-Denys, Proclus and Isaiah VI.6." For what he thought he was doing see Louth, "St. Denys the Areopagite and St. Maximus," 171-72.

this transcendence, participation, and analogy without presence, substance, the idea, the subject, and thought-before-expression? I think not. Is the need of the human for total otherness so as to be its self the opposite of modern subjectivity? Or rather, is the interconnection of the two the ground of western modernity? I find in unification of the two opposed Christian Neoplatonic accounts of subjectivity the beginning of the western Christian dialectic which makes modernity, but the alternative judgment may have its reasons.

If the scholars who keep the texts by which we have access to the thought of the past, and the historians whose labour must be to prevent our only finding mirrors of our own faces therein, were to work in a non polemical way with the philosophers and theologians who bring them in relation to our present questions, we might both have more certain answers than mine, and they might, at the same time, be answers to actual questions. [235]

Wayne J. Hankey