

St. Augustine's «notitia sui» Related to Aristotle and the Early Neo-Platonists*

III. NEO-PLATONIST SELF-KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND AUGUSTINE

Neo-Platonism within the Philosophical tradition

E. L. Fortin has very felicitously expressed two of the characteristic teachings of neo-Platonism. Firstly, of its teaching that the soul was divine he wrote that although this idea went back to Plato it took in neo-Platonism, particularly in Plotinus,

«a philosophical power and significance which it had never had before and would never have again. It can be asserted without any exaggeration that at no other time in the history of ancient speculation was the divinity of the soul affirmed in a more absolute and more categorical way»¹).

Secondly, he noted that the high spiritual ideal which it put forward in such purity seemed to make the Incarnation an impossibility.

«We find at the bottom of the debate between Christians and neo-Platonists not in the first place the impossibility of conceiving a way in which the union of the two natures in Christ would be brought about, still less the Manichaean idea of matter being evil in itself and liable to contaminate a being who was united with it, but the idea of a sovereignly perfect God who is able to enter into direct contact with man and become one with him without losing his transcendence (déchoir). It was just because such a

*) Continuation of *Augustiniana* 27 (1977), pp. 70-132. Some of the notes in the following text refer to those pages.

¹) *Christianisme et Culture Philosophique au Cinquième Siècle*, Paris 1959 p. 94. Particularly the introduction of J. PÉPIN 'Idées Grecques sur l'Homme et sur Dieu', Paris 1971, has a rich study of the occurrence in classical and early Christian writings of the idea of the divinisation of man, with ample references to texts; it is deeper but contains nothing so epigrammatic.

notion was given to God higher than ever before, that its incarnation seemed by comparison unbelievable » ²⁾).

In its most spiritual conceptions neo-Platonism differed from its philosophical sources, even though it founded itself on a commentary of Platonist, Aristotelian, Stoic and other texts; though probably its greater similarity to authentic Platonism justifies the use of the title it carries. Philo's philosophical judaism of the first century was a tribute to the early strength of the eclectic spiritual philosophy from which it sprang. The identification of the transcendent *νοῦς* with the Jewish God by Porphyry was a sign of its synthetic power at a later stage. What it could not absorb it attacked: what seemed to be peripheral subversive movements in Christianity and Gnosticism. It took upon itself the task of giving a place to the Graeco-Roman Pantheon, demythologising and enmythologising where appropriate, for its conviction of the transcendent existence of mind was unshakeable.

Whether he intended it or not, the teaching and writing of Plotinus offered an alternative to Christianity which was made to seem by comparison both less spiritual and an intruder into the corpus of Graeco-Roman philosophy, now in process of being organised into a coherent system. With Porphyry, who was more incisive and more tempestuous, neo-Platonist thinking was accompanied with an intellectual onslaught against the Christianity from which he may have apostatised. The evangelists, he said, were not witnesses of Christ but inventors: « criminal sophists » ³⁾, and the religious possibilities of the system were incapable of leading to the desired ecstasy. His concern extended to other religions, either proposing their incorporation or attacking them: clearly he carried out the eclectic dialogue to the limits of its possibilities. In correspondence with an Egyptian priest he proposed a critical purification of the worship which would make it approximate to philosophical contemplation. He made an important *Commentary*, known to Augustine but now lost ⁴⁾, on the

²⁾ *Op. cit.*, p. 125. For a wider survey of the points of neo-Platonist anti-Christian polemic see R. T. WALLIS, 'Neo-Platonism', London 1972, especially pp. 100-105.

³⁾ W. DEN BOER, 'A Historian and his enemies: Porphyry and the Christians'. Lecture given at Cambridge on 14th November, 1972. cf. *eiusd. auct.* 'Porphyrios als historicus in zijn strijd tegen het Christendom', in: '*Varia Historica*' offered to A.W. Byvanck, Assen 1954, p. 89.

⁴⁾ The basic works on the corpus of Porphyry's writings are BIDEZ and BEUTLER. cf. *supra* p. 76 (n. 18).

Chaldaean oracles — themselves, as far as appears from their fragmentary remains, a fusion of Chaldaean Mazdaism, Stoicism and middle-Platonist conceptions. He was more concessive than Plotinus towards religious practices, and accepted theurgy as a means of purification of body.

Porphry died probably in the first decade of the fourth century, about sixty years before Augustine was born. The neo-Platonist movement, after Iamblichus more and more drifting into a predominantly theurgic rather than philosophic form, continued until after Augustine's death. Julian the Apostate had made theurgy fashionable. When he died and Christianity was restored, theurgy was carried on only secretly, handed down in certain families ⁵).

The neo-Platonism against which Augustine wrote comes out of the unsettled religious state of the fourth century Roman Empire. In his three years reign (360-3) the Emperor Julian had given personal encouragement to the old paganism, particularly among the upper classes, on the defensive against Christianity which they considered barbarian and often morally corrupt. The arguments of Porphyry were used again against Christianity ⁶). With the demise of Julian paganism was not completely repressed. Under the liberal régime of his successor pagans still remained in the highest office ⁷), and they were characterised by the development of a « more ardent, more mystical » piety ⁸), showing itself in the mystery cults and at least the secret practices of the former Roman religion ⁹). Intellectually alien to them were the neo-Platonist thinkers in the Plotinus-Porphyry tradition who yet considered themselves as the intellectual apologists of the Roman tradition : occasionally theurgist, but above mystagogic

⁵) 'In the fifth century it was again openly taught and practised by the Athenian neo-Platonists : Proklos not only composed a *Περὶ ἀγωγῆς* and a further commentary on the Chaldaean oracles, but also enjoyed personal visions (*αὐτοπρουμύνοις*) of luminous' Hecate phantasms and was, like the founder of the cult, great at rain making', E. R. DODDS, 'Theurgy and its Relation to neo-Platonism', *Journal of Roman Studies* XXXVII, 1947, p. 59.

⁶) See P. DE LABRIOLLE, 'La Réaction Païenne', new edition, Paris 1942, p. 421. For this period see Part IV of this work : « L'opposition intellectuelle sous l'Empire Chrétien », summarised in *auct. cit.* 'Histoire de l'Église', edited A. FLICHE and V. MARTIN, III, Paris 1936, pp. 196 ff.

⁷) DE LABRIOLLE, 'La Réaction...', p. 341.

⁸) *auct. cit.*, 'L'Histoire...', p. 196.

⁹) DE LABRIOLLE gives concrete examples, 'La Réaction...', pp. 348 ff.

excesses. Dedication to Cybele and Attis by being drenched in the blood of a bull immolated above them would have been alien to their conceptions; occasionally they might come together in a meeting room ¹⁰). The arrival of neo-Platonist minded refugees in North Africa after the Vandal capture of Rome in 410 could have been the occasion for the seeming change in orientation of *De Trinitate* VIII-XV ¹¹). The preoccupation with neo-Platonism of a large part of the *De Civitate Dei* is easily shown. The earliest books are concerned to counter the arguments that neglect of the old gods was responsible for the debacle of 410. A great deal of the second half is concerned with refuting pagan arguments taken from at least three works of Porphyry. Thus from popular practice to its most intellectual justification: the whole spectrum of paganism is covered. The *De Trinitate* was also composed over a long period; the publication is dated by Brown in 414, with 419 as a late date. On Brown's dating the sections of the *De Civitate Dei* referring to Porphyry (Book VII onwards) would have been gestating in Augustine's mind at precisely the time in which the second part of the *De Trinitate* would have been written and published. In catering for his newly arrived disputants he would inevitably have found himself arguing against the contention that neo-Platonism was the most intellectual and perfect form of philosophy ¹²). The two concerns of the apologist are both present in Augustine: defence — against attack and the prevention of apostasy, and offence — the winning of converts; and Augustine made a critique of both Plotinus and the more incisive Porphyry with that in view. For the capacities of the latter he had a wary but profound respect. And as in the sphere

¹⁰) Contrast Prudentius's description of baptism in bull's blood (DE LABRIOLLE, 'La Réaction...', pp. 348 (and n. 5)-9 with the kind of worship meant for a supposed meeting house for neo-Platonists excavated at Ostia (R. MEIGGS, 'Roman Ostia', Oxford 1960, p. 393).

¹¹) The circle for whom Augustine wrote the *De Civitate Dei*, reconstructed by P. BROWN, *Augustine of Hippo*, London 1967, chapter 26, could well fit the recipients for whom the *De Trinitate* was intended: the refugees came to North Africa after the Vandal capture of Rome in 410. « A new generation has come to demand a new approach: for the cultured pagan noblemen of Rome had begun to make their presence felt, as refugees, in the salons of Carthage » (*ib.* p. 300). So many of the circumstances of the writing of the *De Civitate Dei* which BROWN has worked out could be applied to the writing of the *De Trinitate* (to which, given its importance, he devotes unbelievably little attention).

¹²) Cf. p. 103, n. 105.

of world history the City of God was shown to be that to which all previous epochs were leading as to the eschatological phase of humanity, in parallel way the *De Trinitate* may be regarded a statement of divine-human philosophy, a synthesis of Judaeo-Christian and pagan philosophic traditions, a statement of the pre-eschatological stage of humanity's intimacy with God through likeness and cult, the 'temple' of the human soul analysed timelessly — whilst the *De Civitate Dei* viewed the epochs of history under the single unchanging providence of God. In both historical tradition and introspective analysis it was necessary to come to terms with neo-Platonism, to point out the « vestigia Dei » both in history and in the mind, to contravert it in its self and in its flaws where it seemed to propose itself presumptuously against the Church or against the revealed data of the Godhead and its image in man.

H. Dörrie has written about what is in fact the other side of this picture : the tradition-consciousness of Graeco-Roman philosophy, with Porphyry as a kind of judge of this tradition ¹³). Likening the situation to the discerning of a new Gospel kerygma, he supposes that there must have been a judgement at work to keep tradition and truth together and in terms of them, to control the incorporation of a new element. And the basic nature for this was that philosophy of all schools had a sense of there being one λόγος behind the different forms of thought, and therefore thinkers must try to discern this same single, ultimate truth. Therefore, « If the Logos is single then must philosophy also... be one » ¹⁴). More than Plotinus, wrote Dörrie, was Porphyry concerned to ensure that nothing which might not be drawn legitimately out of Plato should be tolerated.

But it was in just this spirit that Augustine, with a belief in the single « Veritas », made use of some and rejected other neo-Platonist ideas. He asserted constantly the greater potential coherence of the Christian position ¹⁵), and its ability to fulfil the aspirations of those outside its tradition and to enfold them within it. The Christian sacramental, cultic, biblical and preached means of 'Seelsorge'

¹³) See 'Die Schultradition in Mittelplatonismus und Porphyrios' in: *Fondation Hardt, Entretiens XII, 'Porphyre'*, Geneva 1966.

¹⁴) *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁵) Cf. *De Trinitate* XV 27 49: 'Quantum vero attinet summam... naturam, per intelligentiam utcumque cernendam, nusquam se melius, regente duntaxat fidei regula, acies humanae mentis exercet...'

were far superior to the use of corporeal theurgy and the search for intellectual ecstasy. That the Christian experience demanded faith was not in question. Rist has shown that πίστις in Plotinus could mean a firm conviction in the invisible but real noetic cosmos ¹⁶). Porphyry had found in the Chaldaean oracles a triad Faith-Truth-Love ¹⁷), and gave an explanation of it which « rests on a Platonic reinterpretation of a Chaldaean doctrine » ¹⁸); and a Platonic interpretation of πίστις with relation to the Gods would have commended it ¹⁹). Later Proklos made πίστις 'the highest degree of knowledge' superior even to γνώσις : through πίστις, ἀλήθεια and ἔρως, everything is conjoined to this divine. Lewy comments « Thus, Platonism, in its ultimate stage, professes the superiority of illumined Faith over Knowledge, ending with the same doctrine with which Christian theology had started » ²⁰).

Triadic and Enneadic Structures in the Graeco-Roman Philosophical Tradition and the Christian Trinity

The philosophical world into which the Christian trinitarian conception came was disposed to receive it by virtue of the rich content of its own triadic thinking, and Christian apologists were ready to point out this triadicity as so much foreshadowing of revelation and so many « vestigia Dei ». Broadly speaking, this triadic thinking was in four areas :

- a) triads in the divine nature;
- b) cosmological triads in Platonism especially the noetic hypothesis structures of neo-Platonism;
- c) creational or divine relational structures;
- d) epistemic structures ²¹)

¹⁶) See chapter 17 of 'Plotinus : The Road to Reality', Cambridge 1967, especially pp. 235-7.

¹⁷) Πίστις καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἔρως.

¹⁸) H. LEWY, 'Chaldaean Cracles and Theurgy', Cairo 1956 (Recherches d'Archéologie de Philosophie et d'Histoire, XIII), p. 456.

¹⁹) For a brief appreciation of πίστις in Plato with relation to Christian belief, see article 'πίστις', in : 'Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament', edited by G. FRIEDRICH, translated by G. W. BROMILEY, Grand Rapids 1968, vol. VI p. 176-7, v. especially Laws XII 966 C and D for belief in the Gods.

²⁰) LEWY, p. 145 n (h).

²¹) A locus classicus for triadicity is in Aristotle's *De Coelo* I 1 : 'It is just as the

a) The first type is conspicuously found in Aristotle's divinity of *Metaphysics* XII ²²): « Therefore νοῦς thinks itself, if it is that which is best; and its thinking is a thinking of thinking ». He argues for this triadic structure systematically: there must be a subject thinking, an act of thought and an object.

According to the *Chaldaean Oracles*, there is a triad of faculties of mind and will and source in the Supreme Being: « The action of the transcendent God is thought, consequently the first entity that issues from Him is His Intellect, the πατρικὸς νοῦς. His will (βουλή) acts in harmony with this entity; for His volition is thought, and his thought is action. Intellect, Will and Power constitute the immediate faculties of the 'Father'; the 'Paternal Monad' » ²³). Other Chaldaean triads include Hecate and the world-soul; and here Lewy's account passes on an impression of imprecision in which triadic schemas are almost submerged in imagery ²⁴). The same can be said for a subordinated triad in which the Ideas come from « the Father's Intellect, thinking with his vigorous will » ²⁵).

b) A passage in Plato's *second Letter* ²⁶ is quoted by Plotinus as an authority for the three hypostases Supreme God — νοῦς — ψυχὴ ²⁷): « All things are around the King of all, and that is the cause of all good and beautiful things and all things belong to that, and the second things are around the Second and the third around the Third ». But far more important is a subordinated triad that can

Pythagoreans say, for the whole world and all things in it are summed up in the number three; for *end. middle and beginning* give the number of the whole, and their number is the triad. Hence it is that we have taken this number from nature, as it were one of her laws, and make use of it even for the worship of the Gods' (268 a 10-15). For the whole background v. R. MEHRLEIN, article « Drei » in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* IV, Stuttgart 1959.

²²) Ch. 9 1074 b 34-35.

²³) So LEWY, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80: there are two triads here — the first includes the source which the latter ignores, substituting 'power'. The likeness to Augustine's human triad of mens (or memoria) — intelligere — velle (which he finds he cannot project back into God) should not go by unnoticed.

²⁴) *Ib.* pp. 82 ff.

²⁵) *Ib.* p. 109 ff.

²⁶) 312 E. A passage alluded to in Numenius: cf. *supra* p. 93. Described by BRÉHIER as 'the model of neo-Platonist triads', See Plotin, *'Ennéades* I' (translation) p. 116 n. 1.

²⁷) *Ennead* I, 8, 2.

be read into a number of texts in the *Philebus* and *Timaeus* ²⁸), which can be systematically related with texts from the *Letters* ²⁹), to produce an ordered triad of which the elements are firstly the originating principle, secondly either νοῦς or the demiurge, and thirdly ψυχή. To complete the neo-Platonist exegesis of Plato, it is necessary to see some further elements in the *Parmenides*: not only the paradoxical 'one and many' in which Plotinus makes a distinction between one-many and one-and-many ³⁰), but also the same dialogue's reflection that if One is, it would be a composition of itself and being ³¹). This seemed to be in accord with the teaching of the *Republic* that the Good was 'Beyond thought and beyond being' ³²). The composition of itself and being could not, according to Plotinus, belong to the One, though it might belong to νοῦς, and even more so to ψυχή. A rigid triad of three subordinated hypostases of increasing multiplicity is thus formed. Then further, the one-many characteristics of the lower two were given an extension such as Aristotle had proposed for νοῦς alone, that it was one in itself but embodied in individual man — together with a lesser one-in-manyness of ψυχή, in conformity with the *Timaeus*'s description of a residue of lesser purity making up the soul of the universe ³³).

²⁸) *Philebus* 26 D, 28 C, 30 C; *Timaeus* 41 D.

²⁹) In addition to *Letter two* (supra cit.), *Letter six* with its 'Father of the Cause'. See *Ennead* V, 1, 8, and cf. W. NEUMANN and J. KIRCHENSTEINER, 'Platon: Briefe', Munich 1967, pp. 169-70.

³⁰) *Parmenides* 156 B. See *Ennead* V, 1, 8: ἐν πολλά and ἐν καὶ πολλά.

³¹) 142 B ff.

³²) *Republic* 509 B.

³³) *Timaeus* loc. cit. cf. J. TROUILLARD, 'L'Âme du Timée et l'Un du Parménide dans la perspective néoplatonicienne', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 92, 1970. « When neo-Platonists read the *Timaeus* they find there the *Parmenides*... They project a dialectical conflict on to the myth about the creation... Beginning with Plotinus these neo-Platonists are the thinkers who expect to find the secret of Platonism in the *Parmenides*. Plotinus expresses the multiplication and distribution of souls, as that of the powers of the soul in different parts of its own body, by contradictory formulas which recall both the *Timaeus* and the third hypothesis.... In gathering together the extremes, (soul) makes of our universe a single unity living in sympathy with itself (*Ennead* IV 4 32)... That the highest harmony comes about from the connection of opposites is a frequent theme in the *Enneads*. Unity is the relationship which transcends conflict (IV 4 38, III 3 6)... these extremes are interior to soul (III 4 3)'.

c) Creational and divine relational structures can be found more frequently. They do not have the paradoxical unity of the divine triads nor the problem of interconnection by emanation and return of the neo-Platonic hypostases; they straddle the distance in kind and degree between creator and creation.

For example, St. Ambrose's *Hexameron* begins ³⁴) (I. 1. 1-4) with a reduction to three factors of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, and these are both triads of this kind. Plato has the triad, so St. Ambrose wrote, 'Deum, exemplar et materia': (Deum) « tamquam artificem ad exemplar, hoc est, ideam intendentem, fecisse mundum de materia »; Aristotle has « materia, species, et tertium... operatorium ». In a long and masterful analysis arising out of this small text and going through a vast number of related writings, J. Pépin comes to the conclusion that it bears traces of the largely lost dialogue *De Philosophia* of Aristotle and lost works of Origen and Porphyry ³⁵). In the case of the Aristotelian triad, which seems in itself to refer to particular actions, Ambrose has put it in a setting of creation. We may think then that the same principles are seen at both a macrocosmic and an immediate and detailed level — as the triad of the ps. - Archytian fragment noted in the previous chapter ³⁶).

d) The triadic structure within the Plotinian *voûs* (Being-life-thought) derives from a well-known passage in Plato's *Sophist* ³⁷) in a context more epistemological than noetic - cosmological ³⁸).

³⁴) I, 1, 1-4. PL 14, 123.

³⁵) '*Théologie Cosmique et Théologie Chrétienne*', Paris 1964, pp. 11, 392 ff, 525 ff. The book is a model of literary scholarship in discovering the situation of ideas in transmission from Plato and Aristotle through the mazes of eclecticism until the time of Augustine.

³⁶) See *supra* p. 94, n. 80. Pépin gives this triad in turn an Aristotelian origin: *ib.* pp. 61-3.

³⁷) 248 E — 249 A.

³⁸) P. HADOT has traced the history of the idea in 'Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin', in: *Fondation Hardt, Entretiens V 'Les Sources de Plotin'*, Geneva 1960.

He proposed that Plotinus brought the *Sophist* text into relation with Aristotle's *Metaphysica* XII where the 'life of intelligence' is described as 'the best life' (ζωὴ ἀπλοῦς: 1072 b 28): 'when Plotinus was inspired by the *Sophist*, life appeared as the act of being. Now under the influence of Aristotle, it is identified with the act of intellection...' (*op. cit.* pp. 112-3).

It should be remembered that here 'being' is precisely the intelligible being of the ideas, and that the stranger proposes that they have movement and life in order to explain how they can move an intellect in the act of knowing. With Plato the need

Triadicity in human epistemic structures, seen already in general terms, will be found highly developed in Augustine ³⁹).

In a way parallel to the Christian search for trinitarian « *vestigia Dei* » in other triadic structures, Porphyry found parallels to the eclectic-derived neo-Platonist triadic conceptions in the *Chaldaean Oracles*. « He was the first to identify Father-Power-Intellect with Being-Life-Intellect; above all he identified the Father of the *Oracles*, that is to say the Supreme God with existence and pure being, and also with the One of Plotinus » ⁴⁰).

Porphyry and later Proclus moved on to make enneadic structures in which the vertical triad of being-life-intelligence was linked horizontally to triads of Father-Power-Intellect. Triadic and enneadic structures were clearly regarded by neo-Platonists as the means of understanding the laws according to which the noetic cosmos was constituted. Here Augustine followed Porphyry and constructed his own ennead, but the discussion of this must be left until later ⁴¹).

Besides these there are other significant triads in Plotinus where willing is involved in the knowledge of an object ⁴²), where a triad is

for this absolute being, 'awful and holy', to have these qualities is not argued by means of a dissecting analysis; his argument is *a fortiori*: because they cause to know they must also know. But neo-Platonism's method was the induction of a necessary structural pattern into often fugitive philosophical reflections; and here, as so often, it is a triadic pattern. It is at such moments that the hermeneutical transformation which it worked stands out at its clearest. With Porphyry the schematised triad is interpreted as the three moments of *νοῦς* in the act of motionless self-knowing. 'But (*νοῦς*) is neither one nor simple with relationship to the distinction of being, life and thought. Thinking (*το νοοῦν*) and the intelligible exist in identity. But when *νοῦς* goes from being to become thinking, in order to come back towards the intelligible and to see itself, thinking is then life', (*Commentary on the Parmenides* fr. XIV lines 15-21; See HADOT, 'Porphyre...' II pp. 110-111). Hadot proposes that whereas the relation between the elements of the triad in Plotinus is only noetic, in Porphyry it becomes 'théogonique': 'Being is the Father of life and thought' (*ib.* I pp. 277-8).

³⁹) See *supra* p. 94 and *infra*, chapter 5.

⁴⁰) HADOT, I, p. 272.

⁴¹) See *infra*, chapter 5.

⁴²) *Ennead* III, 8, 6: 'For, again, when they reach what they *want*, the thing which they *wished* to exist, not so that they should not know it but so that they should know it and see it present in their soul...'

described in the act of self-knowing of νοῦς ⁴³) and the One ⁴⁴), and the self-love of the One ⁴⁵). Of their appearing in the thought of Augustine, transferred to the human « mens », we shall be speaking later ⁴⁶).

Neo-Platonism : the Maximal Expression of the Eclectic Spirit

A critical and systematic synthesis of inherited principally Greek philosophical traditions was the aim of neo-Platonist speculation; a personal search for a full discovery of the self and noetic reality at the same time was the aim of neo-Platonist life : so the structures of the system would come to life : would turn out to be, when correctly conceptualised, the structure of the noetic world itself. Aperçus from the Platonic dialogues and thoughts from Aristotle on the divine nature of mind and thinking were brought together in critical union with other ideas originating from a wider field and given a systematic development and rigorous coherence which in their sources they had not had.

At the centre of the system was the One of Plato's *Parmenides*, identified with the Good of the *Republic*, the source of reality and the object of desire and love from everything which it created. In Plotinus it was usually described, in conformity with statements in both dialogues, as « above being and above thought », though it is sometimes attributed with a superior kind of reflection ⁴⁷), for any act of knowledge implies that there is some ignorance which is being satisfied ⁴⁸) which would introduce the imperfection of duality (or triplicity) even into its self-knowing. Yet Porphyry rejected this

⁴³) *Ib.* V, 3, 5 : 'Given its intellection identical with its intellectual object and the object identical with the principle itself, it cannot but have self-knowledge'. It is a reformulation of νόησις νοήσεως νόησις. It follows on a dyadic version of the idea.

⁴⁴) *Ib.* VI, 7, 41 : '...since knower, knowing and known are identical, all merges into a unity'.

⁴⁵) *Ib.* VI, 8, 5 : 'He is at the same time object loved, love and self-love' (following BRÉHIER).

⁴⁶) See *infra*, chapter 4 and 5.

⁴⁷) *Ib.* V, 4, 2; also VI, 7, 38 (translating with BRÉHIER, 'And nothing belongs to him, except a certain simple intuition relative to himself').

⁴⁸) *Ib.* VI, 9, 6.

paradoxical position and attributed to the One an unambivalent, if superior, kind of knowledge ⁴⁹).

According to Plotinus, from the One comes the hypostasis of *νοῦς* which 'has had the audacity to separate itself from the One' ⁵⁰). In the *Parmenides*, Plato made Parmenides himself derive the many from the One, of which it was a necessary condition. The movement of the dialogue depends on the introduction of the genus of 'other', for 'many' turns out to be the 'other' of One ⁵¹). Neo-Platonic interpretation proposed that the conception of pluralising in this part of the dialogue described the movement of *νοῦς* itself, which was the source of everything manifold. The self-thinking of *νοῦς* represents the radical otherness which coincides with its own oneness ⁵²). Its self-thinking was both the originating division into otherness and the means of bringing all otherness into unity. It was at one and the same time epistemological and ontological: creating the binding force for everything which had been smitten with the fact of division which derived from its own separation from the One. It was the highest expression of a principle from which the One alone can be excepted: that 'everything seeks itself' ⁵³).

Though related to multiplicity *νοῦς* always remains the same ⁵⁴); but having fallen away from the unity of the One it is under a necessity of knowing itself to gather itself together ⁵⁵). In *νοῦς*'s

⁴⁹) See fr. 12-14 of the commentary on the *Parmenides* (HADOT, 'Porphyre...' II, pp. 103 ff) which speaks of a second 'One' participating in the first, and two states of 'mind'. For Porphyry's syncretism with Chaldaean notions, which make 'paternal intellect' and 'being' as characteristics of the first hypostasis, see *ib.* I, pp. 266 ff.

⁵⁰) *Ennead* VI, 9, 5 — following BRÉHIER's translation. Cf. III, 7, 15: 'it could not sustain the power poured upon it and therefore broke it up'.

⁵¹) 'Same' and 'other' are included with the other supreme genera in *Sophist* 254 D ff. In the *Parmenides* 'other' is introduced at 143 B, when the being of the One is found to be other than the One. For K. H. VOLKMANN-SCHLÜCK, the *Parmenides* represents Plato's latest position ('Plotin als Interpret der Ontologie Platons', p. 149).

⁵²) W. BEIERWALTES, 'Andersheit, zur neoplatonischen Struktur einer Problemgeschichte' (in: '*Le Néoplatonisme: Colloques Internationaux, Royaumont, June 1969*', Paris 1971, p. 366). cf. H. R. SCHWYZER, 'The quaestio vexata of Plotinus' system is this: why didn't the One remain in its own loneliness? Why did the manifold come into existence?' (Review of J. KATZ, 'Plotinus' Search for the Good', in: *American Journal of Philology* 74, 1953, p. 200).

⁵³) *Ennead* VI, 6, 1.

⁵⁴) *Ennead* VI, 7, 13.

⁵⁵) *Ib.* V, 3, 10.

knowledge of intelligibles other than itself Plotinus fused together the Aristotelian notion of the unity of thought and thinker with his own conception of the triad being-life-intelligence, taken from the *Sophist* ⁵⁶): if « perfect being » is not devoid of life and mind, every idea should therefore be the act of thinking. Any doubt in Plato about the existence of a distinction between the idea thought and the thinker is ended by the Aristotle-derived identity. This is the basis of Plotinus's notion that each idea is νοῦς ⁵⁷); for in thinking, νοῦς is the intelligible itself ⁵⁸). So νοῦς is a « single simultaneous whole of multiple things » ⁵⁹). The paradoxes of the One and the Many in νοῦς are best described thus by Plotinus: « every notion (ἐκαστον [εἶδος ?]) is what it is itself in act, and potentially everything else... particular minds are comprised in the universal mind and the universal mind in the particulars » ⁶⁰). The triad being-life-thought, in which the components are in one sense equal and the same and at the same time different, is the characteristic perfection of the noetic world, which, bound together in self-knowledge and in its contemplation of the One, was the most assimilable hypostasis to the Christian idea of the divine, in which the ideas were its thoughts, yet were identical with itself.

« In thinking the Good, νοῦς also thinks itself by accident » ⁶¹). But also in thinking the Good, from the power which it receives and inevitably fragments in order to support it part by part ⁶²), everything else is created, but principally ψυχή which is its image and expressed

⁵⁶) No doubt prepared for by Albinus's identification of the intelligibles as thoughts of God. But the material for this construction lay at hand in Aristotle: in the complete unity of νοῦς and νοητά and the divine activity of νόησις νοήσεως. And if the embodied mind thought itself in its νοητά (See *supra*, pp. 122-123), and the embodied mind and divine mind were one, why need divine thinking to be only of itself? cf. C. J. DE VOGEL, 'La Méthode en Métaphysique d'après Métaphysique A 1-2', in: 'Aristote et les Problèmes de Méthode', Louvain-Paris 1961: 'But the divine spirit which appears to know in the highest way the form-essences of natural things must so to speak be near to them' (p. 168).

⁵⁷) *Ib.* V, 9, 8.

⁵⁸) *Ib.* III, 9, 1.

⁵⁹) *Ib.* IV, 4, 1, following BRÉHIER's translation.

⁶⁰) *Ib.* VI, 2, 20, again following BRÉHIER.

⁶¹) *Ib.* V, 6, 5, following BRÉHIER.

⁶²) *Ib.* VI, 7, 15.

word ⁶³). $\Psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ is the intermediary between $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ which is unchangeable and the changing world. It too knows itself as separate from the One and from $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, and in its higher part seeks to gather itself together in self-knowledge and knowledge of $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ and the One ⁶⁴). Its multiplicity is more fault-smitten than the audacity of $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$: « we may imagine that it cannot bear to be a single existence when it has the power to be all it is » ⁶⁵). In its human embodiments it is drawn to the relative unreality of material things. With soul comes the existence of time, a looser multiplicity than that of the $\nu\omicron\eta\tau\acute{\alpha}$ within $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ⁶⁶), and below it again the manifold of bodies in space. Plotinus's judgement is part moral, part metaphysical: with the distance of the lesser realities from their principle imperfections are not surprising ⁶⁷). $\Psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ in its human embodiments is the principle of life and discursive thinking ⁶⁸), but it is not the $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\epsilon\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\chi\epsilon\iota\alpha$ of the body ⁶⁹). Part turned to $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ and part turned to bodies ⁷⁰), its union with self-knowing $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ prevents it from dissipating itself ⁷¹). Between the unchanging $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ and the changeable cosmos it is not only the setting of the soul-drama of fall and return ⁷²): it is through its relative imperfection the ultimate reason for the existence of motion and time in the cosmos over which it presides.

In this schema, a man, with his normal and usual place in $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$

⁶³) *Ib.* V, 1, 3.

⁶⁴) *Ib.* v. especially V, 3, 6 and VI, 9, 3.

⁶⁵) *Ennead* VI, 2, 6 — following BRÉHIER's translation.

⁶⁶) cf. J. TROUILLARD, 'The Logic of Attribution in Plotinus', *International Philosophical Quarterly* I 1961, pp. 130-1: 'The act which gives birth to time is the act by which... soul, abandoning its search for the necessary being in itself, projects itself outwards toward new things and new states. The act from which time arises is thus very much an ecstasy in the etymological sense of the word... Time is a process of continual alteration through which the simultaneous totality of the Nous is decomposed into successive states'.

⁶⁷) *Ennead* III, 3, 3. But cf. TROUILLARD, 'L'Impeccabilité de l'esprit selon Plotin', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 143, 1953, p. 260: 'the soul which falls is more without power than a rebel'.

⁶⁸) *Ib.* VI, 7, 17.

⁶⁹) *Ib.* IV, 2, 1.

⁷⁰) *Ib.* IV, 8, 8.

⁷¹) *Ib.* V, 3, 8.

⁷²) *Ib.* IV, 8, 4.

at the higher level of rationality ⁷³), guided by his daimon ⁷⁴) (for good or for evil: the choice is our own), drawn by desire for the Good and love for his engenderer ⁷⁵), must gather himself together ⁷⁶) and come to know himself. This means the control of the passions by the will and the development of the intellectual virtues — in which will and desire are both sublimated into the pure intelligence of *νοῦς* (which 'is ours when we use it' ⁷⁷). By this unity of himself with the universal *νοῦς* he will discover that he is all things ⁷⁸), and awake to his true self ⁷⁹). So reduced to unity ⁸⁰) he sees himself to be not distinct from God his object, his centre coinciding with the universal centre ⁸¹), and 'alone with the alone' ⁸²) becomes, in ecstasy, an object seen — no longer a separate seer ⁸³).

Without changing the basic principles which he learnt from Plotinus, Porphyry developed his theories, though very often viewing them from a more human standpoint. The *means* of purification were

⁷³) *Ib.* I, 1, 7. There seems to be a polarising of interpretation about what constitutes the personality. At one end are those who regard the individual personality as unimportant compared with the One in which it is to be absorbed, so the individual is no more than a shadow. (v. G. P. J. O'DALY, 'Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self, Shannon 1973, p. 28.) At the other end is a reluctance to abandon the individual's importance. So, A. H. ARMSTRONG wrote 'if pushed to its logical extreme (this) would destroy all possibility of a cosmology, or any sort of philosophical thinking... (union with the One) is a temporary unification' ('The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus', Cambridge 1940, p. 110). HADOT ('Plotin, ou la Simplicité du Regard' Paris 1963, pp. 21 ff) writes of 'levels of the self'. In all strictness the first position (of O'DALY) seems the correct one.

⁷⁴) *Ennead* III, 4, especially 3. Plotinus had «spiritualised and rationalised» ideas from Stoic, Platonic and Pythagorean sources. See article by ANDRES, 'Daimon', *Pauly-Wissowa RE* Supplement III, col. 313-4.

⁷⁵) *Ennead* V, 1, 6.

⁷⁶) *Ib.* IV, 4, 44.

⁷⁷) *Ib.* V, 3, 3.

⁷⁸) *Ib.* IV, 4, 2. McKENNA, fights shy of this identification. Following BRÉHIER: 'since he is in himself all things (*πάντα εἶναι*), in thinking himself, he thinks at the same time all things'.

⁷⁹) *Ib.* VI, 7, 15.

⁸⁰) *Ib.* VI, 9, 4.

⁸¹) *Ib.* VI, 9, 10.

⁸²) *Ib.* VI, 9, 11.

⁸³) *Ib.* VI, 9, 10.

important to him, and so the philosopher became a « Soul doctor » ⁸⁴). Yet the noetic remained the same: its cosmos is single in itself, ubiquitous but not spatially so. And he proposed a way in which the material world was present to it: « For the undivided and by nature unmultiplied, on the contrary, the divided and multiplied is undivided and unmultiplied, and thus is present to it; that is to say, it is present without division or multiplication or position, according to its own nature, to that which is divided and multiplied and in space » ⁸⁵). He repeats Plotinus's injunction to the individual, to discover in νοῦς that he is an all ⁸⁶). Similarly ψυχὴ is one and potentially many, though not by division ⁸⁷). His teaching on the virtues resumes and summarises that which Plotinus took from the *Theaetetus*, which equated virtue with becoming divine, and from the *Republic*, which gave a place for 'civil' virtues, which were learnt partly by instruction but primarily through contemplation of the Good ⁸⁸). Porphyry tersely divides the virtues into political and purgative degrees, and these latter, which belong to the contemplative life, further into three degrees: at a purification level, in which man is led by his δαίμων; at an intellectual level in which the man is subsumed into νοῦς; and at the level at which they exist as exemplars ⁸⁹). For Porphyry these are the stages of progressive divinisation, for « he who acts according to the intellectual virtues is God, and he who acts according to the exemplar virtues is the father of the Gods ». This four-degree characterisation of virtue was passed on in Latin form by Macrobius in his commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis* ⁹⁰),

⁸⁴) See BEUTLER, 'Porphyrios', col. 301-2. Porphyry did not fundamentally alter the absolute principles of Plotinus, but the need to answer subjective questions led to fill out gaps in his exposition. The view conflicts with W. THEILER: 'Porphyry has made this cosmos really anthropocentric... the basic orientation of his metaphysics is human and ethical' ('Porphyrios und Augustin', in: 'Forschungen zum Neo-Platonismus', Berlin 1966, p. 171. Originally published among 'Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft', Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse 10, 1933.

⁸⁵) 'Sententiae ad Intelligibilia Ducentes', published together with Enneads, edited by F. CREUZER and H. MOSER, Paris 1855. See *Sent.* XXXV. (An English translation is in *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* III, St. Louis 1869).

⁸⁶) *Ib.* XLI '...having put away all limitation, you have become an all. Notwithstanding you were all even before...'

⁸⁷) *Ib.* XXXIX.

⁸⁸) *Theaetetus* 176 A. *Republic*, particularly II and VII. *Ennead* I, 2.

⁸⁹) *Sent.* XXXIV.

⁹⁰) *Op. cit.*, I, 8, 5 — where it is attributed to Plotinus.

and become an important element in later scholastic systematisation⁹¹). Yet he did differ from Plotinus in unambiguously attributing knowledge to God⁹²), regarding *vous* as a second One⁹³) and accepting the transmigration of soul from man to animal⁹⁴).

The Place of Self-Knowledge in Neo-Platonism

We must see briefly how the question of self-knowledge arises in Plato, who described in *Alcibiades I* the process by which a friend helped it to come about, and in the *Charmides* how it arose without assistance.

Pépin has summarised the passage in *Alcibiades I*⁹⁵).

« ... a characteristic of this dialogue is to regard self-knowledge not as direct introspection but as a complex operation which passes through the knowledge of someone else : in the same way that the eye can only see itself if it is reflected in another eye, as in a mirror, to be precise in its pupil, so the soul, to know itself must look at another soul, and that means at its intellectual part ».

And he points out the presence of the same idea in the questionably authentic *Magna Moralia* of Aristotle.

« The astonishing relationship of a page of this work to *Alcibiades I* must be pointed out, not only for its definition of man but for the idea that self-knowledge comes about through the mediation of the soul of another : incapable of seeing our own face by ourselves... we do so by looking at it in a mirror ; in the same way when we want to know ourselves, we must come to it by looking at our friend, since he is, as it is said, our « other ego » ...⁹⁶).

It is significant that when Plotinus considers that men are capable of self-knowledge, he does not turn to the possibility of

⁹¹) See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, II, 61, 5.

⁹²) Fr. 5, see HADOT, 'Porphyre...' II, p. 81.

⁹³) Fr. 12, *ib.* pp. 103-107.

⁹⁴) See BEUTLER, *op. cit.*, col. 311.

⁹⁵) 132 D — 133 B. See 'Idées...' p. 15. For Augustine's knowledge of this idea see *De Trinitate* IX, 3, 3. (See below, chapter 4)

⁹⁶) *Op. cit.*, p. 83. See II, 15, 1213 a 10-26. For an account of the divergent views over the authenticity of the *Magna Moralia*, see A.-H. CHROUST, 'Some Comments on Aristotle's Major Works on Ethics', in : *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 21, 1965, p. 63 ff.

knowledge of oneself through a friend, but to knowledge of God :

« this conversion brings gain : at the first stage, that of separation, a man is aware of self; but retreating inwards, he becomes possessor of all »⁹⁷⁾.

The Plotinian mode of self-knowledge certainly lies behind Augustine's «noverim me, noverim te»⁹⁸⁾. Perhaps also the individualism of Augustine's search for self-knowledge independent of friends also derives from Plotinus; it can also be found in Plato's *Charmides*.

In this dialogue Critias equates the Delphic Oracle's injunction to 'know thyself' with the practice of temperance⁹⁹⁾. Hesitantly the dialogue proceeds to investigate the possibility that this self-reflecting knowledge, analogous to the self-reflecting power of the senses¹⁰⁰⁾, will in fact turn out to be a superior knowledge — a knowledge of knowledge —¹⁰¹⁾ in which the subject being identical with its object, it would be true wisdom. Given the later utilisation of this idea by Aristotle and its significance particularly for Hegel, the resemblance to modern idealisms is not fortuitous.

The problem over what the content of this knowledge would be is left on one side in consideration of the greater one: how could this self-referential self-knowledge, the knowledge of knowledge, be really absorbed by the self? Socrates cannot see how they can be identified :

« I do not dispute, I said, that when a man has that which knows itself he will know himself; but having that, how is he bound to know what he knows and what he does not know »?

« Because, Socrates, the two things are the same ».

« I daresay, I said; but I am afraid I am still my old self :

⁹⁷⁾ *Ennead* V, 8, 11.

⁹⁸⁾ *Soliloquia* II, 1, 1 (PL 32, 885): itself a hardly altered repetition of *Ennead* V, I, 1: '... to ignore at once themselves and (God)'. W. THIMME wrongly supposed that Augustine's brief response was 'widely distinct from following Plotinus and his phantastically abstract speculation on *νοῦς* and world-soul, etc' ('Augustins erster Entwurf einer Metaphysischer Seelenlehre', Dissertation, Berlin 1908).

⁹⁹⁾ 164 D cf. the etymological derivation of Porphyry of 'be temperate' (*σωφρόνει*) from 'conserve wisdom' (*σῶζει τὴν φρόνησιν*) in his treatise on the *Know Thyself* (fr. 2, Book I. See J. STOBÆUS, *Anthologium* III, Berlin 1894, p. 580).

¹⁰⁰⁾ *Charmides* 167 D — 168 A.

¹⁰¹⁾ 169 B *ἐπιστήμης ἐπιστήμη*.

I still do not see how knowing what one knows and does not know is the same as (knowledge of the self) » ¹⁰²).

Attractive as the notion is, Socrates rejects it somewhat curiously on the grounds that it would not possibly have the omniscience which, were it the highest wisdom, it ought to have : it ought not to be a separate kind of knowledge, but a knowledge which contained within itself the knowledge of the separate sciences over which it was presuming to judge. In fact, says Socrates, it may involve some kind of a habit, but it would not possess those insights and habitual familiarity with the subject matter which experts in the particular sciences should have. For far from being a kind of super-wisdom it would be unable to distinguish between a façade of knowledge and real knowledge : the kind of discernment which the professionally competent have in their dealings with others. And so Socrates concludes :

« ... now, I went on, you see that nowhere can any such science be found ».

« I see », he said. ¹⁰³)

Aristotle saw an intuition of enormous value in this discarded Platonic aperçu : for him it was in the nature of thought to be primarily self-thinking, and this in fact was the divine. As we have seen ¹⁰⁴) he was willing to accept an unbridgeable divide in human subjectivity between pure thinking and everything else in order to preserve intact the valuable insight of the *Charmides*. The parallelism is most striking — even to his facing up in *Metaphysics* XII to the same problem as Plato in the passage : what else would self-thinking know in knowing itself? Aristotle's reasoned answer is that there is nothing else which it need know, for it is completely absorbed by and completely satisfied in itself; there is therefore no dissatisfaction which would lead to the arising within it of further desire ¹⁰⁵). It is worth pausing to reflect that perhaps in the characterisation of

¹⁰²) 169 E - 170 A. Not 'the demonstration of a vicious circle', as COURCELLE supposes, but that over which all idealist and anti-idealist philosophy divides : how the knowledge of other things enters into the knowledge of the self. See 'Le 'connais-toi toi-même' chez les néo-platoniciens grecs', in : 'Le Néoplatonisme...', p. 153.

¹⁰³) *Charmides* 172 A.

¹⁰⁴) See chapter 2.

¹⁰⁵) See *Metaphysics* XII, 9. It could be argued that in knowing *νοητά, νοῦς* is not knowing something other than itself because of its unity with them.

thought in itself as divine and self-thinking, and yet as temporarily embodied, we have the coping stone or beginning (depending on whether the synthetic or analytic approach is used) of a projected complete system of knowledge, in which thought — self-thinking thought — is not only the unifying point of the system, but illuminates and holds the whole together. It might embrace the subjectivity structure of the *Parva Naturalia* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and relate the transcendent structure of the *De Anima* III to the aberrant structure found in scattered unrelated hints. But it would have been no more than a project, depending on the aperçu recovered from the *Charmides*, full of promise because of the splendour of thought in itself which Plato appeared to have missed, but frustrated by the very distinctness that it seemed necessary to give it.

The neo-Platonists proposed an answer to the problem of relating transcendent thinking to any other content and other activity which must have been abundantly clear to them according to the best eclectic traditions. Leaving aside any relevance to self-knowledge of friendship Plotinus rejected self-thinking thought as ultimate¹⁰⁶) and proposed that the eternal self-thinking $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, which thought itself as a consequence of its contemplation of the ultimate One¹⁰⁷), knew its objects — the intelligible ideas, with which it was identified — through identity with them in a paradoxical one-in-manyness. This eternal self-thinking $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ may be attained by the human soul which then shares its contemplation of the Good, its self-thinking and its object-thinking. But if $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ is transcendent in the sense that it is transpersonal, it is really immanent as it is attained in the interiority of individual souls: $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ «is ours when we use it, not ours when we do not» and the act of intelligence always comes from above¹⁰⁸). In the transcendent knowledge of $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ is the first presence of multiplicity and its explanation: that the simplicity of its contemplation

¹⁰⁶) *Ennead* V, 1, 9 and 10; also V, 6, 6: 'that primal activity, then, is not an intellection, for there is nothing upon which it would exercise intellection since it is the first'.

¹⁰⁷) *Ib.* V, 6, 5.

¹⁰⁸) *Ib.* V, 3, 3: translation follows BRÉHIER. The use of the dual approach transcendence/immanence as a means of analysis is fraught with dangers. Plotinus's noetic world, and therefore its values, are found 'within' and so transcendence is by definition innerness. Yet it remains true that within this innerness are found realities which are greater than the personality of the looker-within.

becomes pluralised with the loss of intensity when it comes from its source. Without any question of temporal priority because its act is timeless, its consciousness of objects is within a consciousness of itself: « For knowledge knows itself in the intelligibles and every intelligible is the act of knowing itself »¹⁰⁹). The reason behind Socrates' doubt in the *Charmides* is in this way given an answer in a coherent account of a self-knowing νοῦς whose origin from Aristotle is clear: the passivity of νοῦς in *De Anima* III is rejected but the identity of the intelligible object with νοῦς is accepted, and the virtual simultaneity of one to the other allows this to be set in νοῦς more like that of *Metaphysics* XII — though desire has been displaced from νοητά to the One itself. Against the simplicity of the self-thinking thought of *Metaphysics* XII the consequent multiplicity is in conformity with the One-Many paradox of the hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides*; whilst the fact of multiplicity adds a positive need for containment through self-knowledge: since νοῦς has multiplicity it has a need to know itself: « 'Know yourself' is a precept for those who, being manifold, have the task of appraising themselves »¹¹⁰). Νοῦς is unchangeable; it is so structured that it is made one through its contemplation of the One and through its own self-knowledge. The fact of multiplicity which its dependence and otherness from the One has brought into being makes it need to see itself¹¹¹), to find the complete self-conformity which is a law of the cosmos of Plotinus. The One has no need to search for itself in any way, for the presence of knowledge in general, including self-knowledge, implies that there has been or is the weakness of ignorance which is having to be satisfied. Though the One's being above thought is sometimes qualified in terms of its having a higher kind of unified self-knowing, the usual teaching of Plotinus is that it has no need of self-knowledge¹¹²).

As the intermediary between the changeless νοῦς and the changing world, in which all change is a demonstration of falling short and imperfection, ψυχή even more needs to know itself: to

¹⁰⁹) *Ennead* IV, 6, 2 (following BRÉHIER).

¹¹⁰) Cf. *supra*, p. 371. See *Ennead* VI, 7, 41.

¹¹¹) *Ennead* V, 3, 10.

¹¹²) As in III, 8, 11; V, 3, 13; V, 4, 2; V, 6, 6; VI, 7, 41; VI, 9, 6. But a number of texts do attribute some kind of knowledge to the One: certainly V, 4, 2; and VI, 8 is entitled 'On Free Will and the Will of the One'. See particularly VI, 8, 15 on its self-love. Will and love cannot be without knowledge.

gather itself together from the greater multiplicity in which it is distended. As νοῦς knows itself in the One, so ψυχή knows itself in νοῦς : « it is because it is a word which seizes things from and adapts them to traces of νοῦς which it has in itself that it knows itself by accident » ¹¹³).

So self-knowledge is present in the noetic cosmos of Plotinus, with the duality of νοῦς denying it the right to be the ultimate reality, but its unity of mind with its proper object as conceived in *De Anima* III, making up not only its structure but its substance. The self-knowledge of ψυχή as well as that of νοῦς is always linked to the dependence of each on a superior principle, which binds the emanation together in a joint knowledge of self and source, not only bringing about its existence but also making the way for it to return to itself from its multiplicity, and thus to bring as near as possible to a conclusion the divisions and flaws in the original unity.

« It would be already absurd enough to deny (self-knowledge) to the Soul..., but the very height of absurdity to deny it to the nature of the Intellectual-Principle, presented thus as knowing the rest of things but not attaining to knowledge, or even awareness, of itself » ¹¹⁴).

Plotinus saw two polarities of thinking in νοῦς as humanly embodied. There was the discursive thinking (διάνοια) ¹¹⁵ which was properly human, and « that which surpasses it (when) one knows oneself as being conformed to νοῦς; then one knows oneself no longer as a man but as a being quite different from man, raised on high, taking there only the superior part of the soul, which alone can go out to thought, to bring below the ideas one has experienced there » ¹¹⁶).

The problem of the *Charmides* is re-opened and given a solution wherein the self-thinking thought of Aristotle is epistemologically united with the ideas that it thinks in a paradoxical one-in-manyness. Man can make self-knowing knowledge coincide with the knowledge of everything else and absorb it as true self-knowledge — but he thereby ceases to be a man. A rigorous neo-Platonist development and integration of partial Aristotelian solutions on the lines of an abandoned Platonic aperçu !

¹¹³) *Ib.* V, 3, 6.

¹¹⁴) *Ib.* V, 3, 1.

¹¹⁵) *Ib.* V, 3, 6.

¹¹⁶) *Ib.* V, 3, 4 (following BRÉHIER).

Aristotle related object-consciousness to self-consciousness of νοῦς in *De Anima* III with reference to time. Νοῦς may always be self-conscious and self-thinking in a stage of separation, but in its condition of non-separation from a human personality it needed to know other things in order to know itself, or to turn deliberately on itself¹¹⁷). Only in a timeless condition would it 'always' know itself. In the material world it was in some ways dependent on its condition. And this fact connected with the textual question which puzzled the commentators: was it the object or the creative agent intellect which started off thinking? Plotinus made it one of his main criticisms of Aristotle that νοῦς was always active, never potential¹¹⁸), since its activity was essentially in the transcendent-immanent νοῦς, which was always self-knowing, and always knowing all intelligibles. So this self-knowing presence became what it was neither in Plato nor in Aristotle: the necessary condition of consciousness of any thought-object, because self-knowledge is the binding principle of noetic structures and without it the unity of subject thinking and object thought would disintegrate, the pluralising of its activity into many νοητά necessitating its unification in self-knowledge. This conception, at once simple and immensely powerful, became the normal subjectivity structure of neo-Platonism: continuing self-knowing as a condition of knowledge of anything else so far as it alone allowed the coming together of disparate elements — even knower and known in self-knowledge. The structures from *De Anima* III 4 and 5 and *Metaphysics* XII certainly had their influence on shaping the thought of Plotinus, but to unite them together into a system as they stood was even more impossible to Plotinus than it was to Aristotle. However it was possible to take the structure from the *Parva Naturalia*: the continuing consciousness which makes possible the interrelationship of diverse sense data from the same object, strengthened with the presence of thinking as in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the scattered

¹¹⁷) In which case it is knowing itself, for the νοητά have become νοῦς. See *supra*, pp. 112-113, 122-123 (the latter showing that what was implicit in the *De Anima* is explicit in *Metaphysics* XII: 'thought thinks itself through participation in the object of thought').

¹¹⁸) See *Enneads* II, 5, 1, II, 9, 1, IV, 6, 2 ('contrary to sensations (intellectual knowledge) springs out from within, whilst sense knowledge comes from without'), V, 9, 5; VI, 6, 6; VI, 7, 40 ('if thought is... united to the essence and makes it exist, it cannot be the principle from which it comes'). Yet a hint of this arises in *Metaphysics* XII, 9: 1074 b 19-20.

references to an aberrant structure in *De Anima* III ¹¹⁹). If the activity of νοῦς could be shown to be essentially in a single timeless transcendence, and that all multiplicity, including the manifold in time, derived from it, the obstacle of its intermittency ¹²⁰) in making it the centre of subjectivity would be removed. This provided the possibility of system-building for which the Commentators had long searched. Thus Plotinus wrote :

« Thought takes place when a multiplicity of elements is united together and when there is a consciousness of their being together : that is true of the thought of oneself », ¹²¹) and

« It is necessary that νοῦς should be linked to thought, that it should have unceasing knowledge of itself, that it should know that it is this thought, and that the two make up only one » ¹²²).

The explanation is troubled by the fact that νοῦς is already multiple, and that only the One is truly simple. However, the common sense, as analysed by Aristotle, provided an exemplar of epistemological system-making : « if one impression comes from the eye and another through the ear, there must be something single where these two impressions come together. How would we say that these impressions are different if they did not arrive together in the same reality? There must be this one reality, which is a kind of centre, and that sensations coming from everywhere end in it like rays from the circumference of a circle; such is the perceiving being, truly one » ¹²³). Hadot interprets fragment XIII of Porphyry's commentary on the *Parmenides* in this sense. The important passage is :

« What is this mind which affirms that the thinking differs from the thought » ¹²⁴) ?

He links it to the passage in the *De Anima* about the discriminatory power of the common sense ¹²⁵), and he comments, « It is this indi-

¹¹⁹) See *supra*, pp. 124-128.

¹²⁰) See *supra*, pp. 129-130.

¹²¹) *Ennead* V, 3, 13 (following BRÉHIER).

¹²²) *Ib.* VI, 7, 41 (following BRÉHIER).

¹²³ *Ennead* IV, 7, 6. Porphyry takes up the same image and makes an analogy within intelligence in his *Commentary on the Parmenides*. Fr. XIV, see HADOT 'Porphyre...', II, p. 109.

¹²⁴) *Ib.* 'Porphyre...', II, p. 107.

¹²⁵) *Ib.* I, p. 136, n. 4. References are to *De Anima* III, 2 426 b 8-427 a 14. Plotinus draws his notion of a centre from the idea of a point in 427 a 9-14: 'The fact

visible act — this point, as Aristotle has said, — which is the basis of the possibility of perception». And continuing about the noetic of Porphyry: «The mind which cannot return into itself is also the indivisible act which is the basis of the possibility of movement by which mind, in its second state, grasps itself as both mind and an intelligible»¹²⁶).

Even if self-knowing in neo-Platonism involved an extraneous knowing of the source of being at the same time, it was a most fruitful means of a wholesale systematisation: the condition became the nexus of knowledge of everything else. It was a workable relationship, even if it had as a system-builder to make do with the less elegant, even less perceptive, personality structures of Aristotle. It also provided — from the Aristotelian elements it brought over with it — a way out of the impasse of the *Charmides* and the hesitations of Socrates: the self need not hesitate to accept into itself the knowing of knowing as true self-knowledge, because all thinking stems from the united hypostasis of *νοῦς*, shareable by all men, and shared when they authentically think, a thinking held together by the self-thinking of *νοῦς* itself. But the aperçu of Plato and the fragmentary solutions of Aristotle have more value than the all-purpose solution of Plotinus, which entailed that when a man has become aware of this unification he has ceased to be a man. And it may not have been the intractability of the problem which discouraged Plato and Aristotle from proceeding to a complete systematisation. They were aware that man was a unity in diversity; that in accordance with his nature he needed to vary his activities, if not by much. Plotinus sought a unity in unity: and from both of their points of view it would have been a fault that transcendent thinking could become so completely dissociated from everything else. Further, the neo-Platonist subjectivity structure was little more than a hardly adorned statement from a number metaphysics: the passage from the One to the Dyad and further multiplicity. It proposed neither a definition nor a description of

is that just as what some thinkers describe as a point is, as being both one and two, in this sense divisible, so too in so far as the judging faculty is indivisible, it is one and instantaneous in action; but in so far as it is divisible, it uses the same symbol twice at the same time. In so far, then, as it treats the limit as two, it passes judgement on two distinct things, as being in itself in a sense distinct, but in so far as it judges of it as only one, it judges by one faculty and at one time'.

¹²⁶) *Op. cit.*, I, p. 134.

consciousness, but only a very bare and simple statement of a basic condition of consciousness.

The transposition of this teaching in Porphyry was partly in the direction of clearer systematisation, but it did have certain changes. A kind of knowledge was less ambiguously given to the One ¹²⁷). Very significantly, and giving a possibility for the development of a less rigorously transcendent system is the idea that « by adverting to love (*φιλία*) of ourselves, we recover ourselves and are united to God » ¹²⁸). Plotinus had seen the place of *ἔρως* in uniting the soul to the One: it was the desire of the creature for its creating 'Father'; but self-love or friendship had not entered into his system. It may be indicative of the fact that though the noetic realm of Porphyry was essentially the same as Plotinus's and quite as transcendent, it did have a greater respect for human individuality ¹²⁹). Courcelle finds a thought in Porphyry which would take us straight into the equation of self-knowledge and the knowledge of everything else: « By the true knowledge of our essence (the soul) attains to the knowledge of the real essence of things, and comes to the Good in which its well-being consists », but disappointingly his reference is defective ¹³⁰).

¹²⁷) Plotinus's difficulty of there being a lack of simplicity in *νοῦς* also appears in Porphyry. *Sent.* XV says that *νοῦς* is not the source (*ἀρχή*) of all things, though *Sent.* XXXI says that *νοῦς* is in God. Fragments XIII and XIV of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* say that the One is a *νοῦς* which cannot return to itself, and fr. V (considering Plotinus's objection to there being understanding in the One, that this would imply the satisfaction of ignorance) speaks of his having a kind of knowledge transcending knowledge and ignorance.

¹²⁸) *Sententia* XLI. Cf. 'amor sui' in Augustine's *De Trinitate* IX, 2, 2. The conception was embraceable in Christian terms: 'Si autem nondum nosti diligere te; timeo ne decipias proximum tuum sicut te' (*Sermo* 128, 5, PL 38 715). Cf. friendship (*φιλότης*) and hatred as cosmic principles in Empedocles. Further, Porphyry would have known the *Chaldaean oracle* according to which 'all things are governed and subsist' through the triad faith — truth — love (cf. LEWY, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-5); and here *ἔρως* would be very much like the Empedoclean *φιλότης*, and even more like the Platonic *ἔρως*.

¹²⁹) *Sententia* XV may be considered as a speculative attempt to unify a position on *νοῦς* which included, as in Aristotle, its human embodiment. It speaks of intellect being many, and relates the powers of perception, imagination and intellect.

The Bibliographical Position over the Relationship between Augustine and the neo-Platonists

Augustine's own statement of how he was influenced by the reading of certain Platonist books ¹³¹) — which were undoubtedly neo-Platonist ¹³²) — is the starting point of several centuries of study of his relationship with Plotinus in particular. Scholars were able to work on this aspect particularly because the text of the *Enneads* were made available through the edition of Ficino, first published in 1492. Knowledge of Porphyry was almost entirely confined to his *Life of Plotinus* and his *Isagoge* ¹³³). The impression was created that although Augustine was of some philosophical interest he was not a thinker of the first rank, but that he was overshadowed by Plotinus on whom he seemed to draw so heavily. Some nineteenth century Protestant criticism became increasingly unfriendly towards Augustine, as it thought it found in him a considerable number of deviations from the truths of Christianity. It turned a displeased attention on what it thought was a man of predominantly neo-Platonist conceptions (who, for good measure, could also be accused of docetism, ebionitism and adoptionism). Later, other Protestant critics took the completely opposite view finding like Harnack, as we have seen, that Augustine was more the man of a new personalist psychological outlook, concerned essentially with the religion of the heart. C. van Crombrugghe summarised these controversies in 1904 ¹³⁴).

¹³⁰) 'Le Connais-toi...', p. 156 and n. 15. However this idea does occur in a life of Pythagoras sometime published with Porphyry's life where it is based on the relatively trivial ground that man is a microcosmos. It originates from Photius's '*Bibliotheca*', codex 249 (sometimes wrongly numbered, through an early compositor's error, as 259). Cf. BEKKER edition (of *Bibliotheca*) 440 b.)

¹³¹) *Confessions* VII, 9, 13.

¹³²) See P. HENRY, 'Plotin et l'Occident', Louvain 1934, pp. 78 ff. This account is now accepted as authoritative.

¹³³) I.e. 'Introduction (*Εἰσαγωγή*) to the Categories of Aristotle'.

¹³⁴) In the first part of his 'La Doctrine christologique et sotériologique de St. Augustin et ses rapports avec le néo-Platonisme' (*Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 5, 1904, pp. 237 ff). The point at issue was whether the sotériology of an exchange of natures — God became man so that man might become divine — was not really neo-Platonist, and not Christian. Van Crombrugghe put forward a perspective very much like that elaborated by Dörrie about the significance of Porphyry in the classical tradition, and his summary of the Christian apologetic attitude coincides with the lines of this present study: 'Neo-Platonism could not only pass itself off as the heir of Hellenism,

The culmination of the original line of nineteenth century criticism was P. Alfarc's « L'Évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin » of which a single volume appeared in Paris in 1918. Whilst admitting that Augustine had to make some considerable modifications to Plotinus's thinking, it concluded

« For Augustine, Christ is the Plato of the masses »¹³⁵), « ... for educated people he borrows the language of the *Enneads*. In him the Christian disappears behind the disciple of Plotinus... it has been believed incorrectly that his neo-Platonism was a simple covering of his Catholic faith »¹³⁶).

Partly as an answer to this, C. Boyer, S.J., insisted on Augustine's moral conversion being completely Christian, but proposed that later the neo-Platonist writings provided the assistance he needed, as a man become very materially minded, in his search for a way of contemplation: « He had the faith; he lacked knowledge (science) »¹³⁷). However Boyer limits his attention to the early writings.

In *Plotin et l'Occident*, to which reference has already been made, P. Henry had to take into account a recently published work of very great importance by W. Theiler, *Porphyrrios und Augustin*¹³⁸): a densely compact essay which made Porphyry rather than Plotinus the source of Augustine's neo-Platonism. Henry showed the inadequacy of the matching of passages from Augustine with those of Plotinus and Porphyry and arguing for an 'influence' in these cases. It was discerning to criticise the principle of interpretation presupposed in this superficial inspection of evidence, and to the point to state that it was quite possible that Plotinian ideas had come to Augustine through Porphyry. He asked for a greater use of external criteria: quotation and undoubted allusion, to bring about some discipline into what was becoming a considerable debate. But he did not explore in

but could also assume the pretensions of becoming the religious philosophy of the future... at the same time as combating these pretensions, it was necessary to show the points of contact and agreement of the two rival conceptions, and in this way to make it easy for neo-Platonists to come to Christianity' (p. 238).

¹³⁵) *Op. cit.*, p. 525.

¹³⁶) *Ib.* p. 527.

¹³⁷) 'Christianisme et néo-platonisme dans la formation de saint Augustin', Paris 1920, p. 73.

¹³⁸) *Op. cit.* See *supra*, n. 84.

depth the kind of use which Augustine could be supposed to have made of neo-Platonist thinking.

The clarification of the relationship between Plotinus and Augustine has continued more in the line of interest in the exact textual sources of Augustine's thinking than in the more vital question of an interpretation of the real significance to Augustine of neo-Platonist speculation. Courcelle has proposed that such a source was Ambrose's preaching at the time, in which he had meditated out the connections between Christianity and neo-Platonist thinking, but the general conclusion from his research is that in Augustine's conversion period there are many possible influences working together, and also that he could have read Plotinus and Porphyry at this period ¹³⁹). J.J. O'Meara has provided an accessible survey of the work on the relation between neo-Platonism and Augustine which covers the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century ¹⁴⁰).

Recent historical-literary work has given an increasing amount of attention to points of contact with Porphyry. The task is more difficult because so much of Porphyry's work exists now only in quoted fragments. Among other proposals, Theiler's article, recently republished ¹⁴¹), proposes that *De Trinitate* X I — 16 is in effect an interpretation of the injunction 'know thyself' ¹⁴²) on which Porphyry himself wrote a treatise of which only a few fragments remain ¹⁴³). This very valuable suggestion turns attention away from the Arian pre-occupation of the earlier books and the much studied triads of the later books to the middle and neglected part of this work where Augustine goes very deeply into the epistemological question. Theiler also finds in Porphyry a weight of evidence from a number of places which suggest that he was Augustine's source for much of his triadic conceptions ¹⁴⁴). Impressive and perceptive as Theiler's discovery of

¹³⁹) See chapters 1-3 of Section I Part I, 'Les Confessions de saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire', Paris 1963.

¹⁴⁰) In: 'Augustinism and neo-Platonism' (Recherches Augustiniennes I, 1958, pp. 91 ff; and indications of more recent writings can be found in his 'Plotinus and Augustine: Exegesis of Contra Academicos II, 5' (*Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 24, 1970, pp. 321 ff).

¹⁴¹) See *supra*, n. 84.

¹⁴²) *Op. cit.*, p. 220.

¹⁴³) *Περὶ τοῦ γνωθι σαυτόν*. Collected in J. STOBÆUS, 'Anthologium' III, Berlin 1894, pp. 579 ff. French translation in 'Les Ennéades de Plotin', translated and edited by M. N. BOUILLET, II, Paris 1859 and Frankfurt 1968, pp. 615 ff.

parallels is his conclusions fall back on the convention of «influence»: his whole life long Augustine was attached to Porphyrian neo-Platonism ¹⁴⁵).

As the study of the texts of Porphyry progresses, so does the establishment of relationships between him and Augustine. Since Theiler's article a number of important studies have appeared and some dependable conclusions are beginning to emerge ¹⁴⁶).

Two studies which most particularly provide an insight into this relationship which is relatively easy to see but difficult to reconstruct

¹⁴⁴) *Op. cit.*, pp. 223-5: including the triad *esse — se nosse — se diligere*.

¹⁴⁵) *Ib.* pp. 230 and 248.

¹⁴⁶) Besides the review of HADOT and the note of MADEC cited in the text, the following contribute to the discernment of traces of Porphyrian ideas in Augustine. COURCELLE, 'Les Lettres...', pp. 166-176 has a rich survey of the position as it remained after THEILER's article and HENRY's critique of it. A. SOLIGNAC, 'Reminiscences plotiniennes et porphyriennes dans le début du *de Ordine* de saint Augustin', *Archives de la Philosophie* 20, 1957, pp. 446 ff, draws parallels between the *Sententiae* and the *De Ordine*. J. J. O'MEARA 'Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine', Paris 1953, identifies Porphyry's *De Philosophia ex Oraculis Haurienda* with his *De Regressu Animae* (known only from Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* X). This thesis was vigorously and lengthily attacked by HADOT in the article referred to in the text. PÉPIN considers *Sermons* 240-242 a 'digest of Porphyrian philosophy' ('Theologie cosmique...' pp. 433 ff). In the same work he considers it is Porphyry's objections against the resurrection as stated in the *Contra Christianos* which provoked Augustine's counter-arguments in the *De Civitate Dei* X, not as in the *De Regressu Animae*, as is usually thought (*Ib.* pp. 443 ff). Based on H. DÖRRIE, «'Porphyrios' 'Symmiktá Zetemata'» (*Zetemata* 20, Munich 1959), which proposes parallels with Augustine's *Soliloquium* II and *De Immortalitate Animae* (v. pp. 153-4), PÉPIN proposes further traces in the *De Quantitate Animae*, *Soliloquium* I and *De Civitate Dei* XIX, also in *De Trinitate* IX ('Une Nouvelle Source de saint Augustin: le ζήτημα de Porphyre sur l'Union de l'âme et du corps, in: *Revue des Études Anciennes* 66, 1964, pp. 53-107: the last part (pp. 92 ff) is a rewriting of «Les 'Symmiktá Zetemata' de Porphyre et le De Trinitate de saint Augustin», in: *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter: Vorträge des II internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie* Cologne 1961', ed. P. WILPERT, Berlin 1963 pp. 249-254). The images for the union of mens, notitia sui and amor sui which Augustine rejects had also been rejected by Porphyry for the union of body and soul, but both accepted as an image of the union of mind and intelligibles. His suggested parallels between *Sententia* XV (= MOMMERT ed. XLIII) and *De Trinitate* IX, 3, 3 do not really show Porphyry as prompting Augustine's teaching that the soul can know itself through its presence to itself: the *Sententia* text is too brief to permit a detailed comparison with his teaching of a 'conversion' in self-knowledge in his *Commentary on the Parmenides* (cf. HADOT, 'Porphyre...', I, pp. 326-370; II, pp. 110-113). B. Voss in 'Spuren von Porphyrios 'De Regressu Animae' bei Augustin 'De Vera Religione'» (*Museum Helveticum* 20, 1963, pp. 237-9) has noted a parallel conception of intellectual purification.

are a long review by Hadot of O'Meara's *Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles*, entitled *Citations de Porphyre chez Augustin* ¹⁴⁷) and a short note by G. Madec : *Augustin : Disciple et adversaire de Porphyre* ¹⁴⁸).

Hadot writes of Augustine's allusions to Porphyry in the *De Civitate Dei* « Three stages can be distinguished in Augustine's use of Porphyry. Chapters 9 to 10 use the *De Regressu*. Chapters 11 to 22 are under the influence of the *Letter to Anebon*. Chapters 23 to 32 return to the *De Regressu* but without completely forgetting the *Letter to Anebon* » ¹⁴⁹). In other words, the structure of a great part of the second half of one of Augustine's major works is built round the examination of certain books of Porphyry : sometimes to bring out inconsistencies, sometimes to incorporate his ideas, sometimes to oppose them. With Porphyry so much in his mind it would not be surprising that a great deal of the matter in the latter part of the *De Trinitate* should, with its related lines of thought, and which was being written at the same time, be related to him as well ¹⁵⁰). The seeming silence of the *De Trinitate* text in this respect is as much explained as it is in its relation to Plotinus by the style of anonymous allusion, and the disappearance of so much of Porphyry's writing makes more difficult than with Plotinus, the identification of references to his thought.

Against an article of H. Dörrie which seemed to look upon Augustine too easily as only the inheritor and passer-on of Porphyrian logic and practical theology, G. Madec emphasises the critical use which Augustine made of Porphyry : Augustine uses Porphyry's works « not only to put himself in his school but also to oppose his doctrine of salvation » ¹⁵¹). And to put the matter into theological perspective, he says that Augustine « did not cease to set against the false meditations put forward by Porphyry the doctrine of the unique mediator, the incarnate Word, in *Confessions* VII, in the *De Consensu Evangelii* ».

¹⁴⁷) *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 6, 1960, pp. 205 ff.

¹⁴⁸) *Ib.* 10, 1964, pp. 365 ff.

¹⁴⁹) *Op. cit.*, p. 224.

¹⁵⁰) Cf. *supra*, p. 367.

¹⁵¹) *Op. cit.*, p. 369. DÖRRIE's article is 'Porphyrios als Mittler zwischen Plotin und Augustinus' (*Antike und Orient in Mittelalter* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia I) Berlin 1962, pp. 26-47). Also, in 'Platonismus in der Philosophie des Mittelalters', edited W. BEIER-WALTES, (Darmstadt 1969).

starum I, 35, 53, in the *De Trinitate* IV and above all in the *De Civitate Dei* X » ¹⁵²).

It begins to be clear that Augustine is a critical user of the noetic themes of Porphyry as well as Plotinus. Judicious acceptance of an observation here or there does not mean acceptance of the whole. Besides which the philosophy of the neo-Platonists would have had a significance for Augustine and his contemporaries which is rather lost on us. Not only history but geography seemed to make the Graeco-Roman world the only significant part of humanity; the Indian yogis and black Africans of whom he had heard were remote and unimportant: their isolation and supposed fewness merited for them only the briefest mentions. Total truth was to be found imperfectly discovered in Graeco-Roman philosophy but totally in Christian doctrine — the noetic triads of the most important philosophers pointing clearly, if imperfectly, to the Christian triune Godhead.

In the *De Trinitate*, Augustine's most important philosophical work, it would be altogether appropriate to find that he had in mind at many points the neo-Platonist theories of Plotinus and Porphyry, that he showed a judicious handling of their ideas with complete familiarity and complete understanding of their value and limitations; and therefore that he had in mind, in the critical utilisation and rejection of their themes, an apologetic intention, and also a permanent memorialisation in the Graeco-Roman-Christian tradition of Christian belief in a triune Godhead and man made in its image, supported from Sacred Scripture and expressed in relation to philosophical works which had reached a stage in which their own search for perfection of expression was relatable to Christianity's own. In some respects the thought of the neo-Platonists was near to Christian thinking. But no more is the distance of Augustine's own thinking greater from them than in the place which he declines to give to self-knowing. But here the critique was not entirely his own. He would have had in mind the significance of self-knowledge in Cicero ¹⁵³): not the binding force of transcendent hypostases, but primarily the moral need of the individual. And there he would have found the thought expressed not in the fugitive allusiveness of Greek

¹⁵²) MADEC, *op. cit.*, p. 368. This present study insists that Augustine had not so much Book IV in mind in the later part of the *De Trinitate*.

¹⁵³) See TESTARD, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 349 ff.

thinking mediated through Latin translations, and therefore rendered doubly difficult to comprehend, but in the idiom of Romanitas which was nearer to his own spirit.

Augustine's Critique of Neo-Platonism

The critique which Augustine made of neo-Platonism, whether explicit or by implication, covers the following points.

i) He explicitly rejected the idea that the highest principle was beyond thought and beyond being. « Are we to think that the wisdom which God is, knows other things and does not know itself, or loves other things and does not love itself » ¹⁵⁴) ?

It was a cardinal principle of Augustine that in true being there could be no non-being ¹⁵⁵), and that in the divine essence there was no distinction between it and divine knowledge ¹⁵⁶).

ii) He explicitly rejected Plotinus's view of the mode of dependence of all things on the One, and its perfect remoteness. According to this all things turn to their source, the intellectual beings by way of contemplation, to such a degree that there was no providence watching over the world, only the contemplative gaze of everything else turned towards the One. (This was in fidelity to some of Aristotle's texts, but others are not so decisive) ¹⁵⁷). So Augustine wrote

« There has been no lack of such doctrine among philosophers, no dearth of men to assert that there is no God to create and

¹⁵⁴) *De Trinitate* XV, 6, 10 : 'Aut vero putandum est, sapientiam quae Deus est, scire alia et nescire se ipsam, vel diligere alia nec diligere se ipsam?' cf. *ib.* VI, 10, 11 : 'primus ac summus intellectus, cui non est, aliud vivere et aliud intelligere, sed id quod est intelligere, hoc vivere, hoc esse est, unum omnia'. Also, *ib.* IX, 11, 16 : 'quia nec tantum eum novimus, quantum ipse se'.

¹⁵⁵) *In Joannis evangelium tr.* XXXVIII, 10 : 'non enim est ibi verum esse, ubi est et non esse' (as a commentary on *Jn.* 8 24, where Christ applies the divine name to himself).

¹⁵⁶) *Ib.* XL, 5 : 'simplici... naturae veritatis esse et nosse non est aliud atque aliud, sed hoc ipsum'. *Ib.* XCIX, 4 : 'per hoc non sic habet scientiam, ut aliud illi sit scientia qua scit, aliud essentia qua est, sed utcumque unum'. Cf. *De Trinitate* VIII, 1, 2 : 'in essentia veritatis, hoc est verum esse quod est esse'.

¹⁵⁷) W. J. VERDENIUS has pointed out the existence of another unresolved problematic. 'In Aristotle's system... there is no real synthesis of divine transcendence and divine providence'. See 'Traditional and Personal Elements in Aristotle's Religion', in : *Phronesis* 5, 1960, p. 64. Cf. L. ELDERS, 'Aristotle's Cosmology. A Commentary on the *de Coelo*', Assen 1966, pp. 33 ff.

rule all things, but numbers of Gods attending to their own affairs apart from the world and taking no heed of what passes below » ¹⁵⁸).

Perhaps he had in mind a passage from Plotinus :

« the law does not warrant... that the gods should lay aside the divine life in order to direct (man's) daily concerns » ¹⁵⁹).

iii) Augustine found the subordination of the three hypostases impossible to accept, even with an inter-dependence given to the self-knowing of *νοῦς* and *ψυχή* through their being contained in the knowledge they had of their source.

With *νοῦς* O. Perler goes as far as he can in proposing a similarity between the noetic world of ideas in Plotinus and ideas in the mind of God in Augustine ¹⁶⁰), but he has to admit that for Augustine, God, to whom the Word is consubstantial, is the source of all truth and reality whilst being the highest essence and the fullness of being, but that in the *νοῦς* of Plotinus the 'being' — in the true sense — which exists there comes from the Not-being of the principle of being — the One ¹⁶¹). The unity of the Plotinian triad breaks down at this point.

J. Ritter approaches the question from the way in which *νοῦς* and *νοητά* are united, and notes that Plotinus's ontology makes the whole noetic world correspond with *νοῦς* — which he identifies with God ¹⁶²). Augustine, without diminishing divine knowledge, keeps God and the external objects of his knowledge apart.

But the principle difference — which is the thesis of this part of the paper — is that for Augustine the divine self-knowledge of the

¹⁵⁸) *Enarratio 2 in psalmum 31*, 25: 'Non defuit talis doctrina philosophorum, non defuerunt qui dicerent non esse Deum, qui gubernat omnia et condidit omnia, sed esse multos deos vacantes sibi praeter mundum, non curantes ista'. This text is considered to have the Epicureans in mind, but it could as well be applied to Plotinus.

¹⁵⁹) *Ennead III*, 2, 9. Cf. *ib. VI*, 8, 16: '(All things) stand before (the One) looking upon him, not he upon them'.

¹⁶⁰) In particular comparing the teaching on ideas in *Ennead V*, 9, 5 with that in Augustine's *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, 46, 2. (PL 40, 29 — 31). In 'Der Nus bei Plotin und das Verbum bei Augustinus als vorbildliche Ursache der Welt', Freiburg and Paderborn 1931 (*Studia Friburgensia*).

¹⁶¹) *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹⁶²) 'Mundus Intelligibilis. Eine Untersuchung zur Aufnahme und Umwandlung der Neuplatonischen Ontologie bei Augustinus', Frankfurt 1937, pp. 13, 363.

Word of God is not a sign of inadequacy, of falling short, of having to return to itself in order to maintain itself in unity. Self-consciousness is not in Augustine — nor is it in Aristotle — a weakness, a means of compensating for or stopping a dissipation of energy. As with Aristotle, full self-knowledge is for an intellectual creature an expression of perfection. As $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ does not appear in the Augustinian noetic cosmos ¹⁶³) its self-knowledge finds no place. What remains of neo-Platonist self-knowing is in the more ethical imperative to look within and to return to oneself; it is dissociated from the articulate noetic world structure of Plotinus where it is not only knowledge but the containing structure. Whilst the expression of this imperative as in *Soliloquium* II, 'Noverim me, noverim te', can be matched with statements from the *Enneads* ¹⁶⁴), in so far as it is a speculative philosophical reflection it is linked more with the individual human need for self-knowledge as found in Plato and more empirical structures of Aristotle, as also with Cicero, for whom Augustine had such enormous respect ¹⁶⁵).

iv) In Plotinus the falling short of $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ from the perfection of the One, and the further falling short of $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ from this relative imperfection are the beginnings of a gradation of being stretching out at its limit to material and to evil. Whilst a strong element remained in Augustine's thinking that evil was a falling away from the fullness of being and corresponding goodness to (relative) not-being and badness ¹⁶⁶) he emphasises the sharing in goodness of the created

¹⁶³) Its equivalent, the 'anima mundi', to which he alluded very briefly in the *De Immortalitate Animae* and the *De Musica*, is the subject of a later retraction (*Retractiones* I, 11, 3, PL 32, 602), but even this was not, in Augustine's mind, the equivalent of $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ in all its extensiveness and intellectual quality, but rather as a 'spiritalis, vitalis virtus'.

¹⁶⁴) Cf. *supra*, n. 98.

¹⁶⁵) TESTARD's view on the corrective which the reading of Cicero gave to Augustine's attempts at ecstasy are interesting: 'Cicero, by the recognition of his limitations, recalled the truth of Christ to Augustine... Plotinus, in the ignorance of his limitations proposed to the rhetor that he should pass Christ by, worse still, that he should replace him' (*op. cit.*, p. 169). COURCELLE notes the significance of 'duce te' in Augustine's account of his return to himself (*Confessiones* VII, 10, 16); setting himself apart from Plotinian pride. (See 'Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin', new edition, Paris 1968, p. 128).

¹⁶⁶) This theme has been the subject of a number of studies by E. ZUM BRUNN: «'Être' ou 'ne pas être' d'après saint Augustin», in: *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 14, 1968, pp. 91 ff.; «L'Expression Ontologique de la Vie et de la Mort de l'Âme,

world, alluding to, expanding and correcting in *Confessions* X, a text from *Ennead* III ¹⁶⁷). And in the question of time, which, as has already been seen, for Plotinus is a consequence of this cosmos falling short from the timelessness of the One and of *νοῦς*, whilst he will accept it as being, with some parallelism to *ψυχή*'s dominations over multiplicity, subjectively a distension of the soul, he will not accept it as having the same illusory nature. With Plotinus the self-consciousness of *ψυχή* is of a piece with its presiding over temporal succession, and the unconsciousness of the One follows from its eternity. With Augustine the self-consciousness of *mens* provides the condition of thinking anything else, and thinking of all kinds, including deliberate self-thinking, occurs in the timebound memory ¹⁶⁸).

v) Augustine points out the contradictions of neo-Platonism in proposing the re-incarnation of a soul worthy of and enjoying beatitude into the miseries of this world, and of believing in the eternity of the world, and at the same time in an eternal escape into beatitude ¹⁶⁹) which meant each soul would be created anew, and would not have the eternal existence which other parts of neo-Platonist doctrine taught.

In the *De Trinitate* ¹⁷⁰) Augustine speaks with great scorn of (neo-Platonist) philosophers who have such powerful minds and abundant leisure and are familiar with the most subtle teachings, who can come to such contradictory conclusions.

d'après saint Augustin', in : *Augustinus* 13, 1968, pp. 443 ff.; 'Le Dilemme de l'Être et du néant chez saint Augustin', Paris 1969; 'La Dialectique du 'magis esse' et du 'minus esse' chez saint Augustin', in : 'Le Néoplatonisme...', pp. 371 ff.

¹⁶⁷) See *Confessiones* X, 6, 9 ff. and *Ennead* III, 2, 3 : the parallelism is quite clear from the dialogue form (cf. Plotinus, 'Do but survey (the cosmos), and surely this is the pleading you will hear : ...'), as by the key expression — 'I am made by a God' in Plotinus, and 'ipse fecit nos' in Augustine. But in Plotinus the cosmos says of itself 'I suffice to myself', whereas in Augustine it acknowledges its total dependence on God.

The same contrast shows in the difference of their two attitudes to time. As expressed by GUITTON, time is for Plotinus 'this eternal disquiet' (ce trouble éternel) ('Le Temps...', p. 59), whereas for Augustine 'these delays, these checks, these slowings down, these distances, these desires and all this bitterness which has its occasion and matter in time, become for the interior man the condition of despoiling himself, by which his true nature returns to him' (pp. 388-9).

¹⁶⁸) That Aristotle can be the ultimate source of the subjective aspects of time-consciousness in them both, see *supra*, p. 378, n. 73.

¹⁶⁹) See *De Civitate Dei* XII, 21; *De Trinitate* XIII, 9, 12.

¹⁷⁰) *Ib.*

vi) It is more than as a mere dialectician that Augustine argues against Porphyry's denial of the possibility of the Incarnation that it is reasonable on neo-Platonist grounds — for if a man could become God, why could not God become man?

« You Platonists have, at any rate, so lofty a conception of the intellectual soul (which must be identified with the human soul) that you assert that it is capable of becoming consubstantial with the mind of the Father which is, on your admission, the Son of God. Why then is it incredible that one intellectual soul should have been assumed, for the salvation of many, in some unique and ineffable manner » ¹⁷¹) ?

And if Plotinus asserted at the same time that « we must flee to our beloved country... by becoming like God » and that there can be no direct contact between the purity of the divine and mortal uncleanness, that should necessitate — triad-wise — a Mediator between the two ¹⁷²).

vii) The question of mediation of salvation was important to Plotinus and Porphyry as it was central to Augustine. All three accepted the place of 'faith' in an unseen. Augustine thought that the whole process of coming to self-knowledge and to ecstasy in neo-Platonism might involve an authentic experience ¹⁷³), but it was the highest pride to try to achieve it. Salvation was only possible through faith in Christ ¹⁷⁴) which alone could make a man have that union with the divine, which was the true, but perverted, object of the search for ecstasy in neo-Platonism.

It will be seen that these points are central points to the structure of neo-Platonist thinking. All of them required substantial modification or partial rejection. Yet there were also for Augustine many points of contact: not surprisingly in the providential meeting of philosophic and judaeo-Christian traditions. Augustine could see a number of important problems in neo-Platonist terms: in the area of the One and the Many, particularly in connection with the divine in-dwelling

¹⁷¹) *De Civitate Dei* X, 29 (translation by H. BETTENSON).

¹⁷²) *Ib.* IX, 17.

¹⁷³) *Ib.* IX, 16.

¹⁷⁴) Cf. *De Trinitate* XIII, 19, 24: 'Ille autem praecipui gentium philosophi, qui invisibilia Dei, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciere potuerunt, tamen quia sine Mediatore, id est sine homine Christo, philosophati sunt...'

of the One God in many souls — being 'all in all' ¹⁷⁵); in the pursuit of spiritual perfection; in the mind's sharing in the light of truth and the participation of all good things in the supreme good. He could accept some aspects of the neo-Platonist conception of purification : the removing of what was alien, the progression in virtue, the departing from unlikeness to one's true self. All of these themes arise out of the neo-Platonist quest for self-knowledge, to find in one's innerness the transcendent God. The need to return to oneself and to find God there at the same time was a frequent theme in Augustine's *Sermons* as in the *Confessions*. The relationship of this moral search to the philosophical structure of neo-Platonism could not have been far from Augustine's mind in these works. In the *De Trinitate* he set up their precise philosophical counterpart.

(to be continued)

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¹⁷⁵) See in particular *De Trinitate* XV, 28, 51 : 'Cum ergo perveniremus ad te, cessabunt 'multa' ista quae 'dicimus et non pervenimus'; et manebis unus omnia in omnibus (*I Cor.* 15, 28) : et sine fine dicemus unum laudantes te in unum, et in te facti etiam nos unum. Domine Deus une, Deus trinitas'.

An apologetic which had neo-Platonism principally in mind would very appropriately use an expression of the ineffable one-in-many, carefully relating it to a text of scripture.