

AUGUSTINE, ACADEMIC SKEPTICISM, AND ZENO'S DEFINITION

As is well known, but often ignored, Augustine's concern with skepticism was not a concern over some generic form of skepticism, whatever that would be, but with the skeptical tradition that arose in Plato's Academy and that was transmitted to him through the writings of Cicero. As is also well known, and even more often ignored, Augustine took a highly idiosyncratic view of this tradition. He believed that the skeptical stance taken by members of the Academy was assumed merely for the purpose of combating certain objectionable views propagated by those outside of it, particularly the Stoics. In private, these skeptical Academics were orthodox Platonists.¹ Because Augustine too found Stoic views to be objectionable and was himself in many respects a committed Platonist, he naturally had a degree of sympathy with this enterprise. Nevertheless, however laudable he considered their motives to have been, he found the skepticism of the Academics to be disturbing in its own right and came to view it as antithetical to the Catholic faith. In particular, he found it antithetical both to the hope that the faith engenders that we might attain the truth and to the demand that the faith issues that we believe in that truth. As

ABBREVIATIONS

Works of Cicero:

<i>Ac. pr.</i> – <i>Academica Priora</i>	<i>De nat. deor.</i> – <i>De natura deorum</i>
<i>Ac. post.</i> – <i>Academica Posteriora</i>	<i>De fin.</i> – <i>De finibus</i>

Works of Augustine:

<i>C. Acad.</i> – <i>Contra Academicos</i>	<i>De Trin.</i> – <i>De Trinitate</i>
<i>De mag.</i> – <i>De magistro</i>	<i>De divers. quest.</i> –
	<i>De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII</i>
<i>De civ. Dei</i> – <i>De civitate Dei</i>	<i>Conf.</i> – <i>Confessiones</i>
<i>Ep.</i> – <i>Epistulae</i>	

¹ Augustine develops this interpretation at the end of Book Three of *Contra Academicos* (see *C. Acad.* 3.17.37-20.43) and reaffirms it in his Letter to Hermogenianus (*Ep.* 1), though he there admits that "it is perhaps more of a suspicion than a certainty (*suspiciosius fortasse quam certius*)" (*Ep.* 1). While these early writings depict the skeptical practice of the Academics as being almost exclusively directed against the Stoics, years later, in his Letter to Dioscorus (*Ep.* 118), he identifies the Epicureans as a target as well. These two schools, despite their differences, are grouped together on account of their common materialism, something anathema to Platonists.

a fresh convert to Catholicism, fashioning a response to the Academics was high on his list of priorities.²

Doing this would not be easy. Augustine took the Academic denial of the possibility of knowledge to be directed primarily against Stoic knowledge claims and the empiricist epistemology on which they were based. In this he was correct. Many Academic arguments were in fact *ad hominem* in character and are unintelligible apart from the Stoic framework against which they were directed. In setting out to counter these arguments, Augustine thus ran the risk of endorsing empiricism, something anathema to anyone with serious Platonic commitments. His problem, then, was to defeat the Academics without thereby vindicating the Stoics. Defeating skepticism at the price of endorsing empiricism would be nothing more than a pyrrhic victory.

In view of this, a thorough study of Augustine's treatment of Zeno's definition of a cognitive impression is in order. As we shall see, much of the debate between the Stoics and the Academics rested on the question of whether there is a class of impressions that are cognitive, which was really a question of whether the conditions set forth by Zeno's definition are satisfiable. Augustine understood this, and he worked out the heart of his response to the Academics in the course of his treatment of this definition. This unfolds in three stages. First, he employs the definition in a series of dilemmas designed to wrest damaging concessions from the Academics. Second, he argues that the Academics cannot reasonably deny the truth of the definition and must admit that it is itself an item of knowledge. Finally, he enumerates a series of truths that, to his mind, incontestably satisfy the conditions of the definition.

In what follows, after an initial discussion of the Academic/Stoic debate over the possibility of knowledge, I track the stages of Augustine's treatment of Zeno's definition and assess the arguments he marshals in each. I then pass to a discussion of the strategy he employs in order to forestall a Stoic victory, particularly his attempt to turn the definition against the Stoics and press it into the service of his own Platonism. I conclude that the results of Augustine's efforts are

² For a treatment of the nature of Augustine's concern with Academic skepticism and the role that his encounter with it had in his own intellectual and spiritual development, see: Prosper ALFARIC, *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin, I: Du Manichéisme au Néoplatonisme* (Paris: Nourry, 1918) 270-358; John O'MEARA, *The Young Augustine* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954) 106-115; and Ragnar HOLTE, *Béatitude et Sagesse: Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1962) 73-96.

mixed and identify some problems in need of resolution if his case against the Academics is to succeed.

I. CICERO ON ARCESILAUS AND THE ORIGINS OF ACADEMIC SKEPTICISM

Augustine may have been familiar with Academic skepticism from a variety of sources, but the primary conduit was surely Cicero, who himself studied under Philo of Larissa, the last head of the Academy before its abandonment of skepticism under Antiochus.³ In agreement with other ancient sources, Cicero traces the skeptical turn of the Academy to its sixth head, Arcesilaus, whom he depicts as reviving the method of Socratic inquiry after the Academy had been dominated by dogmatic speculation. Certifying the Socratic nature of Arcesilaus's skepticism, he writes:

By thorough investigation and interrogation, Socrates was in the habit of eliciting the opinions of those with whom he was discussing so that he might state his own views in response to their answers. This practice was not retained by those who succeeded him. Arcesilaus revived it and prescribed that those who wished to hear him should not ask him questions but should state their own opinions. And when they had done so, he argued against them. But those who heard him would defend their opinions as far as they were able. (*De fin.* 2.1.2)

Arcesilaus's practice is thus characterized as a reinstatement and development of the Socratic elenchus, an open-ended search for

³ My presentation of Academic skepticism is thus based on Cicero's account of it, primarily as it appears in the two books of his *Academica*. A full assessment of the nature of Academic skepticism would have to take into account a variety of other sources, most importantly, the writings of Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius and Sextus Empiricus. For a useful collection of source material with accompanying commentary pertaining to Academic skepticism, see A. A. LONG & D. N. SEDLY, eds., *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols: I. Translations of the principal sources with philosophical commentary; II. Greek and Latin texts with notes and bibliography (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Authoritative general discussions of Academic skepticism can be found in the following: A. A. LONG, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974) 75-106; R.J. HANKINSON, *The Sceptics* (London: Routledge, 1995) 74-115; Malcolm SCHOFIELD, "Academic Epistemology," in Keimpe ALGRA, Jonathan BARNES, Jaap Mansfeild & Malcolm SCHOFIELD, eds., *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 323-351; and Michael FREDE, "The Sceptics," in David Furley, ed., *From Aristotle to Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1999) 253-286.

truth that proceeds dialectically through the questioning of positions held by others. A prominent feature of the *elenchus* – one that explains its attraction to the skeptically inclined – is that its practitioners are themselves freed from making claims to knowledge. Though Socrates disavowed knowledge of everything except the fact of his own ignorance, he could still subject the views of his interlocutors to withering scrutiny.⁴ Arcesilaus, Cicero reports, took up this practice from an even more radical posture, claiming that “there is nothing that can be known, not even this very thing, which Socrates had left for himself [to know]” (*Ac. post* 1.12.45).

As Cicero recounts it, Arcesilaus was driven to this stance by contemplating the obscurity of truth, the limitations of the senses and the weakness of the mind. He adds, however, that “it was with Zeno that Arcesilaus undertook every dispute” (*Ac. post.* 1.12.44). From this it appears that Arcesilaus’s skepticism was motivated by quite general considerations – considerations that had impressed a long line of eminent philosophers before him – but that he took up his dialectical practice primarily against the dogmatic claims of his elder contemporary, the founder of Stoicism, Zeno of Citium.⁵

What may have motivated Arcesilaus in this was that Zeno was no garden-variety dogmatist, but a philosopher who had thought long and hard about how the wisdom that Socrates had sought but did not

⁴ On this, see *Ac. post.* 1.4.15–16.

⁵ In saying this, I am not committing myself to a purely dialectical interpretation of either Arcesilaus or Academic skepticism. Nor am I attributing this interpretation to Cicero. With regard to Cicero, my own view is that he presents Arcesilaus and those who followed him in the Academy as denying that knowledge is possible and yet as disavowing any knowledge of its impossibility. This need not be inconsistent if that denial was regarded as something less than a claim to know that knowledge is impossible. This is how Cicero presents it. In any case, the issue is enormously complex and falls outside of the scope of this paper. For the dialectical interpretation, the place to begin is Pierre COUJSSIN, “Le Stoïcisme de la Nouvelle Académie,” in *Revue d’histoire de la philosophie*, 3 (1929) 241–276, translated by Jonathan BARNES and Myles BURNYEAT as “The Stoicism of the New Academy,” in Myles BURNYEAT, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 31–63. For a more recent defense of the dialectical interpretation, see Michael FREDE, “The Skeptic’s Two Kinds of Assent,” in Michael FREDE, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 201–222. Interestingly, Frede blames Augustine for (what he considers to be) the longstanding misinterpretation of classical skepticism as committed to denial of the possibility of knowledge. On this, see 218–219. There have been numerous challenges to the dialectical interpretation over the last decade or so, but the most relevant for interpreting Cicero is: Harald THORSRUD, “Cicero on his Academic Predecessors: the Fallibilism of Arcesilaus and Carneades,” in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 40:1 (2002) 1–18.

attain might indeed be acquired. Sharing Socrates's disdain for ungrounded belief, Zeno dedicated himself to identifying the proper basis of knowledge in an effort to clear a path that would lead away from mere opinion and towards wisdom. He came to identify this basis as a state of cognition (*katalipsis*) that is brought about by way of assent to a special kind of perceptual act, what he called a 'cognitive impression' (*phantasia kataliptiki*), and what Cicero (and Augustine following him) translated alternately as an 'impression that can be perceived' (*visum quod possit percipi*) or an 'impression that can be apprehended' (*visum quod possit comprehendere*).⁶ The seriousness of his effort in this direction called forth an equally serious response from Arcesilaus. The challenge Arcesilaus faced was not merely to raise doubts about this or that dogmatic claim, but to question the basis of any and all dogmatic claims as Zeno had identified it. As we shall see, he did this by focusing his attack on the possibility of an impression being cognitive. Much of the history of Academic skepticism can be traced by following the ensuing dialectic of criticism and response over this very issue.

⁶ In the passages I cite from Cicero and Augustine, I follow their Latin in making my translation. However, throughout my analysis, I fall back on the more familiar 'cognitive impression'. We should note here that the Stoics did not make a simple identification between the state of cognition (*katalipsis*), brought about by assent to a cognitive impression (*phantasia kataliptiki*), and the state of knowledge (*epistēmē*). The former, though necessary for the latter, was not sufficient. According to the Stoics, to be in a state of knowledge requires that one's cognition be so secure that one's confidence in the truth of what one apprehends cannot be shaken by any conceivable argument to the contrary. Cicero recounts a well-known simile employed by Zeno to make the point: cognition is like a tightly clinched fist that grasps its object, whereas knowledge is like that same clinched fist with the other hand wrapped around it, adding extra pressure. See *Ac. pr.* 2.47.145. Although the Stoics granted that cognition is available to those who are not Sages, only Sages were thought to possess knowledge. How one gets from cognition to knowledge is a matter of some controversy, which we need not enter into here. However, we should keep two points in mind. First, although cognition does not of itself constitute knowledge, it is clearly the necessary basis of knowledge. Thus, by attacking the possibility of cognition, the Academics were thereby attacking the possibility of knowledge. Second, though Augustine is aware of the Stoic stipulation that the kind of assent involved in knowledge must be unwavering and incapable of being overturned (see *C. Acad.* 1.7.19), the distinction between cognition and knowledge is for the most part blurred and plays no role in his discussion of Zeno's definition.

II. THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE STOICS AND SKEPTICS

Just what a cognitive impression is and how it came to be the subject of such intense dispute can be seen by examining an extended passage from Cicero in which he constructs an imaginative dialogue between Arcesilaus and Zeno. Understanding what is at issue in this passage is crucial for understanding where fault line dividing the Academics and Stoics lay.⁷ For the purpose of analysis I break it into five sections:

[I] Perhaps Arcesilaus asked Zeno what would happen if the wise man could not perceive anything and if it were the mark of a wise man not to form opinions. Zeno, I suppose, replied that he would not form opinions since there was something that could be perceived.

The point of Arcesilaus's question is to force Zeno to concede that, in the event that there is nothing that the Sage is able to cognize, he or she will suspend all judgment. The alternative is to attribute opinions to the Sage, something the Stoics were loath to do. With this concession in place, Arcesilaus could then attack the possibility of cognition in the hope of driving Zeno to the conclusion that the Sage must be a skeptic. Not taking the bait, Zeno counters that the Sage can indeed cognize something. As this provides a basis for reliable judgment, he or she can avoid lapsing into opinion without having to suspend all judgment.

[II] 'What, then, was this?' Zeno, I suppose, replied: 'An impression.'

Here Zeno identifies the object of cognition as an impression. Now an impression, according to standard Stoic analysis, is simply an affection of the soul that brings it into a state of awareness with respect to both an object and itself. The paradigm case is that of a sense impression. Impressions, however, do not merely effect states of awareness; they also carry with them informational content that can be articulated in the form of propositions. Because of this, they are of such a nature that the mind can give or withhold its assent in response to them. Ideally, one should assent only to those impressions that are

⁷ In addition to the literature cited in Note 2, the reader may profitably consult the following two studies on the Stoic/Academic debate over Zeno's definition of a cognitive impression: Michael FREDE, "Stoics and Skeptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions," in Myles BURNYEAT, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition*, 65-93; and Julia ANNAS, "Stoic Epistemology," in Stephen EVERSON, ed., *Epistemology, Companions to Ancient Thought 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 184-203.

apprehended or perceived as true – cognitive impressions. To do otherwise is to run the risk of error.

[III] 'What kind of impression?' Zeno then defined it as an impression that is impressed and sealed and molded from what is, in accordance with what is.

Under pressure from Arcesilaus for further specification, Zeno now formulates his definition of a cognitive impression. It states that a cognitive impression is one that satisfies two conditions:

(C1) it has its causal origin in what is.

(C2) it represents that in which it has its causal origin exactly as it is.

(C1) is typically taken as distinguishing cognitive impressions from the products of the mind's activity alone, for example, imaginative impressions arising in dreams, hallucinations, etc. But it may also be taken broadly as distinguishing cognitive impressions from any impression that is not causally determined by the object it presents. (C2) specifies that the impression reveals its object without distortion. This is particularly important since it is the clarity with which cognitive impressions reveal their objects that enable them to be apprehended as true and to be recognized as cognitive. Referring to this feature Cicero writes that Zeno "did not judge all impressions to be trustworthy, but only those that through themselves disclose the things that are perceived. But since this impression is discerned through itself, he called it 'apprehensible' (*comprendibile*)" (*Ac. post.* 1.11.41).

[IV] Next, Arcesilaus asked whether this was the case even if a true impression were of the same form as a false impression. Here Zeno was sharp enough to realize that if an impression arising from what is were such that an impression arising from what is not could be of the same form, no impression could be perceived. Arcesilaus agreed that this addition to the definition was correct, since neither a false impression nor a true impression could be perceived if the true one were such as even a false one could be.

Under pressure from Arcesilaus Zeno added a third condition. A cognitive impression is such that:

(C3) it could not have arisen from what is not.

As with (C1), this condition may be construed narrowly or broadly. Construed narrowly, it specifies that an impression is cognitive only if it could not have arisen from the mind's activity alone, as do the imaginative impressions that arise in dreams, hallucinations, etc. Construed broadly, it specifies that an impression is cognitive only if it could not have arisen from anything other than the object it

presents. It is this broad construal that Cicero has in mind when he elsewhere writes that a cognitive impression is one that is "impressed and molded from what it comes from in such a way that it could not have come from something other than what it actually did come from." (*Ac. pr.* 2.6.18) It is not difficult to see why this condition was added. Say I have an impression of an object that both arose from that object and presents that object without distortion. This impression satisfies (C1) and (C2). But if it could just as well have been produced by the activity of my mind in a dream or by some object outside of my mind other than the one it presents, it can neither be apprehended as true nor counted as cognitive.

[V] Arcesilaus applied himself to these disputes in order to show that no impression arising from what is true is such that an impression arising from what is false could not also be of the same form. This is the one point of contention that has remained up to the present. (*Ac. pr.* 2.24.77)

With the definition in place, the debate turned to whether the third condition is satisfiable. Zeno and the Stoics maintained that it is, claiming that there are certain impressions whose clarity is such that they could only have arisen from the objects they present. Arcesilaus and the Academics denied this and produced example after example of impressions that do not arise from the objects they present and whose clarity they alleged to match that of any true impression. These were generally of two types: impressions having their origin in the mind's activity alone, such as impressions occurring in dreams, and impressions of objects having their origin in other, nearly identical objects, such as the impression of one of a pair of twins that is caused by the other of the pair.⁸ The lesson they drew from these examples is that the clarity of an impression provides no guarantee of its truth. Nor, for that matter, does any other feature of an impression. Cicero could thus summarize the Academic position as follows: "Indeed, we do not hold that nothing is true, but assert that all true impressions are conjoined with false impressions having such a likeness to them that they possess no sure signs on the basis of which we may exercise judgment and give our assent" (*De nat. deor.* 1.5.12). In this way the debate over the satisfiability of the Zeno's definition came to rest largely on whether there can be true impressions that are distinguishable from those that are false, and hence, that are apprehensible

⁸ For a discussion of impressions having their origin in the activity of the mind alone, see *Ac. pr.* 2.27.88-28.90. For a discussion of impressions arising from nearly identical objects, see *Ac. pr.* 2.26.84-27.87.

as true. It was on the denial of this possibility that the Academics rested their case against the possibility of knowledge.

III. THREE FORMULATIONS OF ZENO'S DEFINITION

Though we cannot be certain that Augustine read this precise passage, he unquestionably recognized the importance of the debate it records for understanding the Academic's denial of the possibility of knowledge.⁹ Accordingly, in his most direct response to that denial, the extended monologue of Book Three of *Contra Academicos*, a discussion of Zeno's definition occupies the central place. Before looking at that discussion, we may begin with the way in which Augustine formulates the definition.¹⁰

When we turn to the *Contra Academicos* we find not one, but three, formulations of Zeno's definition. The first, occurring in Augustine's summary statement of the Academic position in Book Two, is as follows:

(F1) The truth that can be perceived is impressed on the mind by what it comes from in such a way that it could not be from something other than what it actually did come from. (*C. Acad.* 2.5.11)

Early on in the monologue of Book Three, Augustine reformulates this as follows:

(F2) An impression that can be apprehended and perceived is such that it does not have signs in common with what is false. (*C. Acad.* 3.9.18)

A few paragraphs later, he reformulates it yet again:

(F3) An impression that can be apprehended is one that appears in such a way that it could not appear as what is false. (*C. Acad.* 3.9.21)

The first thing to notice about these formulations is that each confines itself to a restatement of (C3). Why this is so is not clear. Perhaps Augustine took (C3) to be sufficient, or perhaps he simply wanted to address what he knew to be the locus of the controversy.

⁹ For example, when pressed to recount the views of the Academics, he highlights their general denial of the possibility of knowledge and notes that "they seem to have appropriated their claim that the truth can not be apprehended from the definition of Zeno the Stoic" (*C. Acad.* 3.5.11).

¹⁰ For an excellent discussion of Augustine's formulations of Zeno's definition and their relation to Cicero's, see Christopher KIRWAN, *Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1989) 24-28.

More puzzling still is whether Augustine took these formulations to be equivalent. If he did, there is a problem with him having done so. Immediately after presenting (F1), he offers this as its paraphrase: "The truth can be apprehended by means of these signs, and what is false cannot have these signs" (*C. Acad.* 2.5.11). Let us take this as stipulating that a cognitive impression has at least one sign that cannot be a sign of a false impression. This would make the most sense as a paraphrase, for having at least one such sign would seem to be both necessary and sufficient for an impression not being able to come from something other than what it actually did come from. Moreover, since having one such sign would also seem to be necessary and sufficient for an impression not being able to appear as what is false, this renders (F1) and (F3) equivalent. The problem is that, taken this way, the paraphrase is not equivalent to (F2), which stipulates not that a cognitive impression have at least one sign that cannot be a sign of a false impression, but that it have no sign that is also a sign of a false impression. What's worse, having no such sign, while perhaps sufficient both for an impression not being able to come from something other than what it actually did come from, (F1), and for an impression not being able to appear as what is false, (F3), is necessary for neither.¹¹ Thus, if it was Augustine's intention to present equivalent formulations, he would have done better to have brought (F2) in line with the paraphrase and have replaced it with the following:

(F2') An impression that can be apprehended and perceived is such that it has at least one sign that cannot be a sign of what is false.

As we shall see, Augustine's reliance upon (F2) as opposed to (F2') will weaken the effectiveness of his response to the Academics.

IV. ZENO'S DEFINITION AND AUGUSTINE'S RESPONSE TO THE ACADEMICS

Having so formulated Zeno's definition, Augustine sets out to challenge the Academic denial of the possibility of knowledge. He

¹¹ I have added the qualifier 'perhaps' because, in order for having no signs in common with what is false to be sufficient, Augustine needs to assume both that the impression *has* signs and that none of these signs *can be* a sign of a false impression. Since there is no indication that anyone – Stoics, Academics, or Augustine – considered the possibility of an impression with no signs at all, Augustine, in all likelihood, made the first assumption. That he made the second assumption – that none of these signs *can be* a sign of a false impression – is unclear.

does this in three stages. First, he employs the definition in a series of dilemmas that he poses to the Academics. Second, he argues that the Academics must concede that the definition is true and can be known to be so. Third, he enumerates a set of truths that he claims satisfy the conditions of the definition. We may now examine each of these stages in order.

IV.1 – Stage One: Three Dilemmas

Augustine begins by employing the definition in a set of dilemmas with the intention of forcing the Academics to admit that something can be known or, at the very least, to abandon their claim that nothing can be known. Success here would obviate the need to enter into debate over either the acceptability of the definition or the satisfiability of its conditions. He formulates the first of these dilemmas as follows:

[Dilemma I] The Academics deny that anything can be known. On what basis did you come to accept this, you scholarly and learned men? 'Zeno's definition has taught this to us,' they reply. Why? I ask. If it is true, anyone who knows it knows something that is true. If it is false, it should not move men who are so very self-assured. (*C. Acad.* 3.9.18)

While this is not stated as clearly as one would wish, Augustine seems to have something like the following in mind:

- (1) Zeno's definition is either true or false.
- (2) If it is true, then anyone who knows it knows something that is true.
- (3) If it is false, then the alleged unsatisfiability of its conditions counts neither against the possibility of an impression being cognitive nor against the possibility of knowledge.
- (4) Thus, either anyone who knows Zeno's definition knows something that is true or the alleged unsatisfiability of its conditions counts neither against the possibility of an impression being cognitive nor against the possibility of knowledge.

If this is correct, it is not clear why Augustine thought this dilemma to have force against the Academics. Admittedly, insofar as the Academics based their denial of the possibility of knowledge on the alleged unsatisfiability of the third condition, the second disjunct of (4) poses a problem for them. Such, however, is not the case with the first disjunct. The Academics could freely admit that, assuming the definition to be true, anyone who knows it knows something that is true. But they could then challenge anyone's claim to know it. Against this challenge it does no good to protest that even Arcesilaus knew the definition, for the sense of 'know' that Augustine needs here

is not the mere ability to recite or recall the definition, but the unwavering apprehension of its truth. Since the Academics would think it questionable that anyone has this, they can affirm the first disjunct of (4), and hence (4) itself, without any damage to their position. As a challenge to the Academics, the dilemma fails.

A few paragraphs later, Augustine formulates a second dilemma. This time he casts it in the form of a challenge to Arcesilaus. He writes:

[Dilemma II] I think that nothing can be said in reply to a fool who tells you, Arcesilaus, to use your remarkable acumen to refute (*refellas*) Zeno's definition and show that it too can be false (*ostendas eam etiam falsam esse posse*). If you are unable to do so, then you have something that you perceive, namely, this very definition. But if you are able to do so, there is nothing to keep you from perceiving. (*C. Acad.* 3.9.21)

This may be formulated as follows:

- (5) Zeno's definition either can or cannot be shown to be false.
- (6) If it can be shown to be false, then the alleged unsatisfiability of its conditions counts neither against the possibility of an impression being cognitive nor against the possibility of knowledge.
- (7) If it cannot be shown to be false, then it is true and can be known to be so.
- (8) Thus, either the alleged unsatisfiability of the conditions of Zeno's definition counts neither against the possibility of an impression being cognitive nor against the possibility of knowledge or Zeno's definition is true and can be known to be so.

Here again there is problem. There is no reason for the Academics to accept (7). From the mere fact that something cannot be shown to be false, it does not follow that it is true or can be known to be so. For example, we may not be able to show it false that the number of stars in the universe is odd, but this by no means establishes that it is true or that it can be known to be so. This is an elementary point, and it is surprising that Augustine did not see it. Dilemma II fails against the Academics as well.

Now to be fair to Augustine, this may not be the way to interpret Dilemma II. Perhaps we should take his challenge to refute Zeno's definition not as a challenge to show that it is false, but as a challenge to show that it can be false. After all, what he asks Arcesilaus to do is "to refute Zeno's definition *and show that it too can be false*." Though non-standard, the conjunctive clause may be explanatory of 'refute'. On this interpretation the argument may be reformulated as follows:

(5') Either it can be shown that Zeno's definition can be false or it cannot be shown that Zeno's definition can be false.

(6') If it can be shown that Zeno's definition can be false, then the alleged unsatisfiability of its conditions counts neither against the possibility of an impression being cognitive nor against the possibility of knowledge.

(7') If it cannot be shown that Zeno's definition can be false, then it is true and can be known to be so.

(8) Thus, either the alleged unsatisfiability of the conditions of Zeno's definition counts neither against the possibility of an impression being cognitive nor against the possibility of knowledge or Zeno's definition is true and can be known to be so.

Taken this way, Augustine is on firmer ground with respect to the third premise, which is to say that (7') is an advance over (7). This is because the Academic denial of the possibility of knowledge rests on the contention, loosely stated, that whatever is true is such that it can be false.¹² If the Academics cannot show that Zeno's definition can be false, then their denial looks, at the very least, in need of qualification or restriction.

Unfortunately, while this interpretation strengthens Augustine's hand with respect to the third premise, it weakens it with respect to the second. This is to say that the Academics, though hard pressed to reject (6), may easily reject (6'). The reason is simple. Unless we are willing to attribute gross confusion to the Academics, we cannot take their appeal to the unsatisfiability of the conditions of Zeno's definition to be based on a claim to know or apprehend its truth. It had to be based on something weaker.¹³ Thus, there is no inconsistency in them making this appeal while at the same time admitting that the definition can be false. If Augustine wishes to block this appeal, what he needs to show is that anything less than knowledge or apprehension of the truth of the definition is an insufficient basis from which to make it. Because he does not do so, he gives the Academics no reason to accept (6'). Dilemma II, even when reformulated, still fails.

¹² More precisely, the claim is that every true impression is such that it could have originated otherwise than from the object it presents. Hence, every true impression could be false. Alternately stated, every true impression is such that there might be a false impression that is indistinguishable from it.

¹³ Even Augustine recognized this. At one point he has Arcesilaus say: "I do not know whether [the definition] is true. But I follow it because it is plausible (*probabilis*)" (*C. Acad.* 3.9.21). Though the attribution of a doctrine of plausibility to Arcesilaus is anachronistic – it originated later, with Carneades – Augustine's point that Arcesilaus would not have claimed to know the definition to be true is correct.

The third dilemma can be dispensed with quickly, though it raises a point that we shall consider at length in the next section:

[Dilemma III] Zeno's definition is either true or false. If it is true, I am correct to grasp it (*bene teneo*). If it is false, something can be perceived though it has signs in common with what is false. (*C. Acad.* 3.9.21)

We may formulate this dilemma as follows:

(9) Zeno's definition is either true or false.

(10) If it is true, then anyone who grasps it is correct to do so.

(11) If it is false, then something can be perceived though it has signs in common with what is false.

(12) Thus, either anyone who grasps Zeno's definition is correct to do so or something can be perceived though it has signs in common with what is false.

Augustine here draws out the respective consequences of the truth and falsity of the definition. The objectionable nature of the consequence of its falsity – that something can be perceived though it has signs in common with what is false – is presumably a function of some sort of absurdity involved with it. Augustine signals this by having Arcesilaus respond in astonishment: "How can that be?" The problem is that this consequence is far from absurd and there is no reason to think that the Academics would have viewed it to be so. Distinguishability requires difference in at least one, recognizable, respect; it does not require difference in every respect. Thus, the fact that an impression has signs in common with the false does not rule it out as being cognitive.

This problem could have been avoided had Augustine employed (F2') instead of (F2). Had he done so, he could have replaced (11) with the following:

(11') If it is false, then something can be perceived though it has no signs that cannot belong to what is false.

(12) would then have to be replaced with the following:

(12') Thus, either anyone who grasps Zeno's definition is correct to do so or something can be perceived though it has no signs that cannot belong to what is false.

As the second disjunct of (12') would surely be unacceptable to the Academics, this fixes the problem.

Even so, (12') does not threaten the Academics, since there is still a problem with the first disjunct – the same problem that we encountered with Dilemma I. To affirm that anyone who grasps the definition is correct to do so does not entitle one to affirm that anyone

does or even can grasp the definition. Because of this, the Academics may happily affirm the first disjunct, and thus (12') itself. Dilemma III, like its two predecessors, has no force against them. This stage of Augustine's treatment of Zeno's definition must thus be judged ineffective.

IV.2 – Stage Two: Augustine's Defense of Zeno's Definition

Though Dilemma III, as a dilemma, fails to do damage to the Academic's position, it raises the prospect of another, more promising, line of attack against it. Simply put, this is to show that the definition cannot, without absurdity, be taken to be false. If Augustine is able to show this, then the Academics must not only concede that the definition is true, but, insofar as it satisfies its own conditions, concede that it can be known to be so as well.¹⁴ As we have seen, the start that is made in this direction by the third dilemma is unpromising. However, Augustine has an independent argument to this effect, which he produces immediately after his presentation of the three dilemmas. The argument is exceedingly brief and will require some commentary. It runs as follows:

I judge Zeno's definition to be absolutely true. Either what is false can be perceived – of which the Academics have a great fear and which is in fact absurd – or neither can those things that are like what is false. Hence, this definition is true. (*C. Acad.* 3.9.21)

Here Augustine lays out a pair of (ostensibly) exhaustive disjuncts: (i) what is false can be perceived or (ii) those things that are like what is false cannot be perceived. Since (i) is clearly absurd, the Academics will have to affirm (ii). But by affirming (ii) they will have thereby affirmed the truth of Zeno's definition. Why? Though Augustine does not spell it out, the reason would seem to be that the definition, (F2), specifies that a cognitive impression does not have signs in common with a false impression. Any impression that does have signs in common with a false impression, i.e., any impression that is *like* a false impression, is by definition incognitive and cannot be perceived.

All of this is well and good, but the Academics will surely not concede defeat without at least challenging the assumption that the disjuncts Augustine has presented are exhaustive. Why, they would ask, should anyone accept that unless what is false can be perceived

¹⁴ In Augustine's words, "while it indicates what kind of thing can be perceived, it shows itself to be that very kind of thing. So, in relation to what is apprehensible, it is both a definition and an example" (*C. Acad.* 3.9.21).

then those things that are like what is false cannot be perceived? This is by no means obvious, and Augustine's argument goes nowhere without it. Unfortunately, Augustine does not explain himself, but we may look back to Cicero for guidance as to what he most likely was thinking.

Presenting a kind of analytical summary of the controversy between the Stoics and the Academics, Cicero writes:

There are four headings to prove that there is nothing that can be known, perceived or apprehended, which is the subject of this entire debate. The first, that there exists a false impression. The second, that this impression cannot be perceived. The third, that among impressions that do not differ, it cannot be the case that some can be perceived and others cannot. The fourth, that there is no true impression arising from sensation that does not have alongside it another impression from which it does not differ and that cannot be perceived. Everyone accepts the second and the third of these four headings. Epicurus does not grant the first, but you [Stoics] with whom we are dealing grant that one too. The entire battle is about the fourth. (*Ac. pr.* 2.26.83)

Cicero here locates the crux of the debate at the fourth heading, the Academic allegation that for every true impression there exists an incognitive impression that does not differ from it.¹⁵ Our concern, however, lies elsewhere, with the first three headings. The third heading states that if two impressions do not differ either they will both be cognitive or they will both be incognitive. Now if we grant the second heading, that every false impression is incognitive, the consequence will be that any impression from which a false impression does not differ is incognitive. This is the case, even if the impression happens to be true. So, unless we are willing to affirm that what is false can be perceived, we will have to affirm that an impression from which a false impression does not differ cannot be perceived.

Have we now arrived at Augustine's disjunction? We are certainly in the neighbourhood. Augustine tells us that either what is false can be perceived or *things that are like what is false* cannot be perceived, whereas we can derive from Cicero that either what is false can be perceived or *things from which what is false does not differ*

¹⁵ Note that Cicero does not refer here to a false impression, but to an incognitive impression (an impression that cannot be perceived). The reasoning would seem to be that a false impression is incognitive, and if it is indistinguishable from a true impression, then the true impression will likewise be incognitive.

cannot be perceived. To get Augustine's disjunction, one needs only substitute likeness for non-difference in the third heading. Unfortunately, this substitution weakens the plausibility of the third heading and renders it such that the Academics would have no reason to accept it. As a result, Augustine's disjunction is not only less plausibly exhaustive than the one derived from Cicero, but it cannot be used against the Academics to force them to concede the truth of Zeno's definition.

Despite this, we must say that Augustine nearly got it right. Had he been aiming at (F2') instead of (F2), he could have done the following. First, he could have accepted the third heading without alteration. Because the Academics could not deny this heading without rejecting a crucial premise in their argument against the possibility of knowledge, this would have allowed him to employ the Ciceronian disjunction against them. Since the Academics would not have affirmed that what is false can be perceived, Augustine could then have forced them to concede that those things from which what is false does not differ cannot be perceived. In doing so he would have forced them to concede the truth of Zeno's definition, taken, however, as (F2') rather than as (F2).¹⁶ It appears, then, that while Augustine missed the mark due to his reliance on (F2), he came extremely close to isolating a genuine difficulty for the Academics. As such, this second stage of his response must be judged a qualified success.

IV.3 – Stage Three: The Satisfiability of Zeno's Definition

In the third and final stage of Augustine's response, we are immediately confronted with an oddity. Instead of making the case that there are certain impressions that satisfy the conditions of Zeno's definition, and hence are cognitive, Augustine identifies a variety of truths that he believes satisfy those conditions. These he groups under the following five classifications:

(T1) Logical Truths – statements having any subject matter whatever that are true by virtue of their logical form: "The world is either one or not one."

(T2) Truths of Logic – laws of logic and basic inference forms, apparently drawn from Stoic logic: "If p then q, p, therefore q."

(T3) Truths of Mathematics – simple propositions taken from arithmetic and geometry: " $2 + 3 = 5$."

¹⁶ To see why, suppose that there is an impression that does not have at least one sign that cannot be a sign of a false impression. There may thus be a false impression that has exactly the signs that this one does, and hence, does not differ from it. Since the latter impression, being false, is incognitive, so is the former. Thus, a cognitive impression, as (F2') states, must have at least one sign that cannot be a sign of what is false.

(T4) Truths of Appearance – claims about how things appear to oneself as a perceiver as opposed to how they are in themselves: “Honey tastes sweet to me.”
 (T5) First Person Truths – truths concerning oneself as a subject about which one cannot be mistaken: “I exist.”¹⁷

Now if we are not to dismiss Augustine’s strategy here as confused, we must be able to translate his repeated claims to the effect that these truths satisfy the conditions of the definition into claims that the impressions that bear these truths satisfy those conditions.¹⁸ The following are a representative sample of such claims:

“Let Carneades teach that this view is like what is false.” (*C. Acad.* 3.10.23)

“No one can confuse them with any likeness to what is false.” (*C. Acad.* 3.10.23)

“Say either that these disjunctions are false or that they have something in common with what is false that renders them completely indistinguishable from what is false.” (*C. Acad.* 3.10.23)

“Explain how this view can be false.” (*C. Acad.* 3.11.25)

“No likeness of what is false confuses what I have said that I know.” (*C. Acad.* 3.11.26)

“You will not find anything false that it is like.” (*C. Acad.* 3.12.27)

“Now with regard to these three things ... we are not confused by any falsity that is like the truth.” (*De civ. Dei*, 11.26)

“In this case, we have no fear that we might perhaps be in error on account of some likeness to the truth.” (*De Trin.* 15.12.21)

We need not translate each of these individually since, taken as a whole, they make a single point: (T1) through (T5) satisfy the conditions of Zeno’s definition because they bear no likeness to any falsehood. This is easily enough rendered as follows: the impressions that bear (T1) through (T5) satisfy the conditions of Zeno’s definition because they bear no likeness to what is false. Whether Augustine would agree that this expresses his intention is unclear, but it does no obvious violence to his position.

¹⁷ We should note that (T5) does not make an appearance in *Contra Academicos*, but is found in a variety of other texts. Two of the most important are *De civ. Dei*, 11.26 and *De Trin.* 15.12.21. Because of its affinities with Descartes’ *cogito*, much attention has understandably been focused on (T5). The classic essay on this is Gareth B. MATTHEWS, “*Si Fallor, Sum*,” in Robert A. MARKUS, ed., *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972) 151–167. See also Matthews’ revised thinking on this subject in Gareth B. MATTHEWS, *Thought’s Ego in Augustine and Descartes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992) 29–38.

¹⁸ I use the qualification ‘to the effect’ since Augustine does not explicitly assert that these truths satisfy Zeno’s definition. However, I think it is clear that this assertion is implicit in the claims I list below.

IV.4 – Assessing Stage Three: Augustine's Solution to the Stoic Problem

In assessing this stage of Augustine's response,¹⁹ we must keep in mind that when Stoics such as Zeno thought about cognitive impressions they were thinking first and foremost about sense impressions whose truth can be apprehended. Although they recognized the existence of non-sensory impressions – in the form of preconceptions and common notions, along with conclusions that could be drawn from these – these were thought to have their origin in sense impressions in such a way as to make the latter the basis of all knowledge.²⁰ In this sense, the Stoics were uncompromising empiricists.

In view of this, Augustine has a problem. His strategy in Stage Three is to show that the conditions of Zeno's definition can be satisfied, but he cannot do so in a way that endorses Stoic empiricism. As I see it, he makes two moves in order to solve this problem. First, against the Stoics, he treats sense impressions as incognitive, thereby undercutting their empiricism at its foundation. Second, against the Academics, he argues that certain impressions do satisfy the conditions of the definition – those that bear (T1) through (T5) – but he treats these both as non-sensory and as independent of sense impressions. Obviously, if this solution is to have any chance of succeeding Augustine must specify what it is about non-sensory impressions that render them cognitive while sense impressions are barred from that status. How might he do this?

Here it will be helpful to begin with a passage from *De diversis quaestionibus* LXXXIII, written in response to the question, *Can Truth Be Perceived by the Bodily Senses?* Predictably, Augustine begins by making the standard Platonic point that the mutability of bodies – the objects of the senses – renders them unsuitable as objects of knowledge. He then raises a consideration that is directly relevant to our inquiry:

¹⁹ In the following assessment, since I am concerned with Augustine's ability to respond to the Academic challenge in a way that does not require him to endorse Stoic empiricism, my line of analysis is very different than that taken by most commentators. For an excellent analysis and assessment of Stage Three, see Christopher KIRWAN, *Augustine*, 24-34.

²⁰ On this, see Cicero *Ac. pr.* 2.7.21-22. For analysis, see F.H. SANDBACH, "Ennoia and Prolepsis in the Stoic Theory of Knowledge," in *Classical Quarterly*, 34 (1930) 45-51. Also helpful is Michael FREDE, "Stoic Epistemology," in Keimpe ALGRA, et alia, eds., *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, 318-321.

Every sensible object is so like what is false as to be indistinguishable from it. For ... with regard to all things that we sense through the body, even when they are not present to the senses, we are nevertheless affected by images of them, whether in sleep or in madness, as if they were really present. When we are affected, we are completely unable to determine whether we are aware of these things by the senses themselves or whether they are images of sensible objects. Therefore, if there are false images of sensible objects that cannot be distinguished by the senses themselves, and if nothing can be perceived except what is distinguished from the false, then the basis (*constitutum*) for judging the truth is not in the senses (*De divers. quaest.*, Q.9)

Augustine's argument is Academic in tone. Because bodies are so like images as to be indistinguishable from them, we cannot differentiate between the sensation of a body and the experience of an image, at least not when the latter arises as part of a dream-state or a condition of madness. Augustine concludes from this that the basis for judging the truth is not in the senses, but he might just as easily have concluded that sense impressions are incognitive. Just as bodies and certain types of images are indistinguishable, so are the sense impressions and imaginative impressions that correspond to them.

Taken this way, Augustine's argument tells us something not only about the incognitivity of sense impressions, but about the cognitivity of non-sensory impressions as well. If the incognitivity of the former is a function of the fact that they cannot be distinguished from certain types of imaginative impression, the cognitivity of the latter will be a function of the fact that they can be distinguished from any and every type. That we are able to distinguish non-sensory impressions from imaginative impressions is explained by the fact that the objects of non-sensory impressions are incorporeal, while the objects of imaginative impressions are corporeal.²¹ Thus, we need never confuse the two and can always recognize non-sensory impressions for what they are. This sets them apart from sense impressions and bestows on them the status of cognitive.²²

²¹ This is because imaginative impressions are themselves derivative from sense impressions. Augustine can thus make the point in the *Confessions* that with regard to the things he knows – the principles of numbers, the rules of grammar, etc. – it is not the images of these things that are in his memory, but the very things themselves. As these things are incorporeal, he did not come to know them by way of the senses. Hence, there can be no images of them in his memory. On this, see *Conf.* 10.8-30.

²² This interpretation receives some confirmation from how the passage cited above concludes: "For this reason it is to our advantage that we are admonished to turn away from this world, which is truly corporeal and sensible, and in all haste towards

If this is indeed what Augustine has in mind it is a move that is well suited to his needs. First, it makes sense of his constant refrain that we cannot be deceived with respect to (T1) through (T5) because of any likeness to what is false. On this interpretation, such a likeness can exist only between sense impressions and imaginative impressions. It cannot exist between non-sensory impressions, which are the bearers of (T1) through (T5), and imaginative impressions. More importantly, it gives Augustine a way to keep the Stoics at bay while fashioning his response to the Academics. On the one hand, it enables him to endorse Zeno's definition and argue, against the Academics, that it is satisfiable by any number of truths, or by the impressions that bear those truths. On the other hand, it enables him to turn the definition against the Stoics by arguing that no sense impression is cognitive. In sum, it enables him to meet the skeptical challenge of the Academics head on without saddling himself with those features of Stoic empiricism that would compromise his own Platonic commitments.

IV.5 – Two Problems

As well suited to Augustine's needs as this solution may be, there are problems with it that potentially limit its effectiveness. Before concluding, I would like to make brief mention of two of these, just enough so as to indicate where Augustine's views need further development.

Problem One – I have maintained that Augustine's claims with respect to (T1) through (T5) must be translated into claims about the impressions that bear them if his strategy is to make sense. I have also maintained that it does no obvious violence to his position to do so. This merits a closer look. Here we should bear two things in mind. First, outside of (F2) and (F3), Augustine's use of the term 'impression' (*visum*) seems reserved always for sensory impressions. Second, he cannot help himself to the Stoic account of non-sensory impressions, since that account treats such impressions as derivative from sense impressions in a way that he would find unacceptable. In view of this, we

God, that is, towards the Truth, which is grasped (*capitur*) by the intellect and the inner mind, which remains always the same, and to which there corresponds no false image from which it is indistinguishable" (*De divers. quaest.*, Q.9). Although matters are complicated by the fact that Augustine is here talking about the Truth (God) rather than about particular truths, the passage is revealing. The feature he points to that differentiates the Truth (God) from sensible objects and renders it apprehensible is that there is no false image from which it is indistinguishable. Hence, when we are aware of the Truth (God), we can recognize this state for what it is.

may wonder whether Augustine has an account of non-sensory impressions that can justify the translations and underwrite his appeal to (T1) through (T5).

Fortunately, Augustine's own doctrine of impressed ideas (*impressae notiones*) is ready-made for this purpose. According to this doctrine, ideas reside in the divine mind as exemplars of creation and are impressed by God directly upon the human mind in an act of illumination.²³ Despite serious questions about its plausibility, it must be acknowledged that this doctrine does provide Augustine with an account of non-sensory impressions that is about as straightforward as one could want. In fact, it would seem to make him even more entitled to appeal to non-sensory impressions than are the Stoics. Because the Stoics treated these impressions as arising out of sense impressions, they were in the uncomfortable position of having to deny that they arise from objects impressing themselves upon us. Augustine faces no such discomfort. Moreover, as the ideas in the divine mind are incorporeal, he can assign to the impressions of these ideas the very feature he needs in order to guarantee their status as cognitive – they are distinguishable from imaginative impressions.

Nevertheless, when we turn to the actual truths that Augustine puts forward to defeat the Academics, the doctrine of impressed ideas appears to have limited utility. While it can productively be invoked to account for (T1) through (T3), it is inapplicable to (T4) and (T5), both of which classify subjective, as opposed to necessary, truths. Truths concerning how things appear, (T4), and truths concerning one's own existence, life, desire, etc., (T5), do not rank among the exemplars in the divine mind. Augustine thus needs a supplementary account of non-sensory impressions to cover those. What that account would look like is unclear.

Problem Two – It is questionable whether the account of the cognitiveness of non-sensory impressions that we have derived from Augustine's writings will accomplish everything he needs it to accomplish. To see

²³ Texts relevant to the doctrines of impressed ideas and illumination are scattered throughout Augustine's corpus. Particularly important for understanding impressed ideas is *De divers. quest.*, Q.46. Particularly important for understanding the doctrine of illumination is *De mag.* 11.36-13.41. For analysis, see Etienne GILSON, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin*, 2 ed. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1943) 87-137; Roland H. NASH, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1969) 90-124; and Gareth B. MATTHEWS, "Knowledge and Illumination," in Eleonore STUMP & Norman KRETZMANN, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 171-185.

why, we may return briefly to (C3). As Cicero states it, an impression is cognitive only if it could not have arisen from what is not. Among other things, this condition disqualifies any impression from being cognitive that could have arisen as a product of the mind's activity alone. However, as I have already indicated, this condition can also be read as disqualifying much more. Namely, it can be read as disqualifying any impression that could have arisen otherwise than from the object it presents.

Now on this less restrictive reading of the third condition there is a problem. Recall that the Stoics, in defending the cognitivity of sense impressions, had to show that at least some of these impressions had features by which they could be distinguished not only from any and every imaginative impression, but also from any and every sense impression arising from a different object. Why should we not expect something of the same from Augustine? Why, in other words, should we not expect him to establish that the relevant non-sensory impressions can be distinguished not only from any and every imaginative impression, but also from any and every non-sensory impression arising from a different object? If he cannot do so, he will not be able to claim that these non-sensory impressions satisfy (C3), at least not on a broad reading of that condition. Accordingly, however intuitively evident (T1) through (T5) may be, he cannot legitimately claim that the impressions that bear them are cognitive. I can find no argument in Augustine that addresses this.

V. CONCLUSION

Taken as a whole, Augustine's treatment of Zeno's definition must be judged neither an unqualified success nor an unqualified failure. Its results are mixed. Stage One employs the definition in a series of dilemmas, but none of these are such as to force the Academics to concede anything damaging to their position. Stage Two holds out the promise of showing that the definition is true and can be known to be so, but this is thwarted by the way in which Augustine formulates its third condition. Stage Three offers up a variety of truths that even the most ardent of skeptics would find difficult to question, and it does so in a way that avoids endorsing Stoic empiricism. But the account of non-sensory impressions that Augustine needs here is inadequately developed. It does not cover all of (T1) through (T5), and it fails to do all that is required in order to establish that non-sensory impressions are cognitive. Furthermore, it assumes an exem-

plarist/illuminationist theory of knowledge that is most certainly not a secure foundation on which to build a response to skepticism. In the end, despite the many fruitful lines of objection that Augustine initiates, there is nothing close to a decisive victory here.

Needless to say, Augustine's treatment of Zeno's definition forms but one piece of a much larger response to the Academics. How we judge the success of that response will depend on much more than how we judge the success of this piece. Even our verdict on this piece must ultimately await an analysis of how it contributes of the aims of the response as a whole. These are broader issues than I have chosen to deal with here. Within the confines of this limited study, however, I hope at least to have shown that any assessment of Augustine's response must be attentive to the way in which he maneuvered within a debate whose terms were set by parties whose positions he found incompatible with his own.

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