The Neoplatonic Prehistory of
Augustine's Doctrine of the Trinity

by

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In Memoriam Natalie Butorac

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Neoplatonic philosophical history of the first principle which leads up to and includes Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity. While contemporary scholarship of this history shows how scholars often read their own contemporary philosophical problems into the past, which thereby inhibits a true understanding of the text or doctrine involved, the most current scholarship reveals a correction to these anachronisms. Plotinus is shown to have placed the Nous close below, but still separate from, the One. While Porphyry brings the two together to a degree, he is reluctant to do so and so is ambiguous about how exactly the two are related. This ambiguity maintains the difference between the hypostases. Victorinus, in turn, continues this Porphyrian interpretation of Plotinus: what is ambiguous in Porphyry is transformed and said clearly in the service of orthodox Christian doctrine against Arianism. Because Victorinus must bring the two hypostases together fully and clearly, he also attempts to give a logic of the production of the Son and Holy Spirit by the Father which would maintain the Trinitarian diversity within unity. In so doing, his method of predication -- often aided by Scripture -- undermines the difference itself and therefore his Trinitarianism. The task is left to Augustine to complete this Porphyrian strand of Plotinus' thought and reconcile the diversity within a unity, predicating the divine substance without undermining either the unity or diversity. This Augustine achieves, but importantly, it is arrived at using Scripture as a mirror for the mind to form the categories by which the mind could predicate the divine. Augustine not only discovers a rationally coherent doctrine of the Trinity, it is achieved solely through a conversion of philosophy *in principle*, whereby only the divine can predicate itself due to the weakness of man's intellect.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

The current undertstanding of Augustine's contribution to the history of philosophy, generally, and of his doctrine of the Trinity relative to that history, specifically, is deficient. Problems concerning contemporary philosophy have too often clouded our understanding of this period. This is compounded by another anachronism of reading the distinction between faith and reason into this period. The result is that we have frequently and unwittingly read our own problems and prejudices into those of the past. While much work has been done to correct this, no work has been done on Augustine's philosophical predecessors with regard to his doctrine of the Trinity.

Take, for instance, our understanding of Plotinus. In the last quarter millenium, he has been used to champion both Hegelianism, which would see the One as absolute self-consciousness, and French phenomenology, which would emphasize the insuperable abyss between the self-consciousness of Nous and the One. Determined by what they thought the nature and goal of philosophy to be, their interpretation of Plotinus would also largely determine their understanding of the subsequent history and Augustine's own contribution. Recently, Plotinan scholarship has given a more nuanced interpretation, faithful to the text and conscious of not reading their own philosophical presuppositions into the words of Plotinus. The result has found a new middle way, one which sees Nous close to, but still separate from, the One. This research has had a definite impact on our understanding of the subsequent history, especially the Porphyrian interpretation which capitalises and develops

the closeness between the two hypostases.

The discovery of a commentary on Plato's <u>Parmenides</u> attributed to Porphyry by Pierre Hadot in particular has brought into relief this Plotinian biographer's contribution to the history of philosophy. Because Plotinus is now seen to have placed Nous daringly close to the One, the bringing together of the first two hypostases, of the One and Nous, by Porphyry does not seem to be as much of a radical depature from Plotinus, even though it is a development beyond Plotinus himself. Porphyry's distinction between infinite and finite being, and their attribution to the One and Nous will prove to be determinative for the Latin West.

A new problem appears in Porphyry, however, with the attribution of being to the One. In Plotinus, the One is above the realm of logic and so no logic or reason had to be or could be given of the One's production of Nous. Porphyry, because of his attribution of being to the One, had to show how it was that the One is productive of what is other than it. This problem proved to be too much for Porphyry: the location of the predicate, *hyparxis*, which would form the beginning of a logic of that production, is unclear as to whether it is in or outside of the One. This reveals a certain fidelity to his master because he too wished to protect the august repose of the One and the attribution of such predicates in the One might disturb its freedom and unity. Porphyry begins to show *that* and *how* Nous has its prior unity in the One, but cannot do so in any detail.

Doctrinal conflicts around Arianism, which would deny the substantial identity of

the Father and Son, force Victorinus to continue what Porphyry began. The second hypostasis, or the Son, is in the Father and is God. The Porphyrian distinction between forms of being allows this unity and the Porphyrian explanation of the production of Nous in its moments of *hyparxis* and *energia* seems to enable the distinction among the persons of the Trinity. It is one of the greater ironies of history that Porphyry, who dedicated so much of his time to anti-Christian polemics, provides Christianity with a means to defend its Trinitarian doctrine. While Porphyry's theological developments are determinative for Victorinus, the Scriptures provide the framework within which Victorinus can move beyond Porphyry himself. For Porphyry, wherever the first moment of Nous is located, it certainly unfolds outside of the One, but this is not the case for Victorinus. Scripture determines what can and cannot be said. This also forces Victorinus to give a logic of this production and of how these distinctions can be maintained within the unity of the Trinity.

Where Victorinus fails in his attempt to provide this logic, Augustine succeeds. If there were to be one criticism of Victorinus by Augustine, it would be that Victorinus inconsistently used Scripture to determine the categories to predicate the Trinity. Augustine's critique is directed at the nature of philosophy itself and of its ability to understand God adequately. For Augustine, only God can predicate God. This is why only the Scriptures, as God's self-disclosure, can determine how we understand him. The Augustinian doctrine of the Trinity of three relations in substance in act is and could only be attained through such a radical understanding of philosophy and the Scriptures and it is from the Scriptures that the

distinction between the divine substance and its relations and the logic of how they are related in a unity is discovered.

Chapter One:

What others said

Introduction

The question of finding the sources of a given author is often determined as much by the author in question as by the philosophical assumptions of the person searching. Since the purpose of this thesis is to trace the philosophical lineage leading to Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity, the assumptions of those modern interpreters who have attempted to trace this lineage as a whole, or who have discussed the various discrete parts of it, must be made clear first. For instance, in P. Hadot's account of the history before him and in his own writing, we see the influence of French phenomenology and its reaction against German idealism. Hadot rejects any attempt to make Plotinus' One into absolute self-consciousness, bringing the One and Intelligence closer together, for Hadot rightly sees this as an anachronism and misinterpretation of Plotinus. Yet what allows this critique, Hadot's concern for French phenomenology, also obscures his own interpretation of the history[1]. For example, Hadot only sees Augustine's work as constituting a turn toward the subjective modern self and away from traditional metaphysics and ontology. Because of this, he can see no continuity between Augustine and those who have gone before him. However much this might be the effect of Augustine for later philosophy (and it is not the purpose of the thesis to discuss this), for us to discern Augustine's contribution to the history of philosophy, we

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[1] For an account of the centrality of Neoplatonism to French phenomenology, *cf.* W. J. Hankey, "French Neoplatonism in the 20th Century", <u>Animus</u>(1999), Vol. 4, an online journal at http://www.mun.ca/animus.

must understand his contribution relative to the history *before* and *after* him and too often the only Augustine heard of is the one of his effects. For the purpose of this thesis, we are to look at Augustine within his immediate historical philosophical context. When this is done, we will see that Augustine is dealing with precisely the same philosophical problems with which Plotinus, Porphyry and Victorinus were working.

Another problem in the interpretation of this history is the question of the relationship between philosophy and theology or reason and faith. The scholarship leading up to and including Hadot emphasises in this history either a purely philosophical dialectic going on between Plotinus and Augustine or that the only things which distinguish Victorinus and Augustine from Plotinus and Porphyry are merely their Christianity and the Scriptures. As with reading French phenomenology or German idealism back into this period, reading such a scholastic distinction between philosophy and theology back into this history also allows a misinterpretation of it. For this time period, theology and philosophy, philosophy and religion were not separate. Keeping this in mind, we will be better able to understand this history as it unfolds.

Finally, there is the most recent scholarship. The best way to describe the character of this scholarship is that it has begun to sift carefully and slowly through both the original texts and the modern interpretation of them. This sifting has allowed them to distinguish what can properly be said about an ancient author (for example, one cannot make Plotinus say that the One is absolute self-consciousness); this in turn has allowed the recent

scholarship to bring out more clearly the interpreting going on from one ancient author to another. From this, we can see with ever more clarity the similarities and differences or developments from one author to another. Added to this is a clearer understanding of the interpreting going on in modern scholarship of ancient thought! This is a daunting task and one which is taken slowly, for this scholarship is ever mindful of the trespasses and temptations of their scholarly forefathers. This thesis is an attempt to bring together the first fruits of the contemporary scholarship's treatment of this area of the history of philosophy.

Hadot's Account of Modern Interpreters[2]

E. Benz in his book *Marius Victorinus und die Entwicklung der abendländischen Willensmetaphysik*[3] sees the metaphysics of the will, so clearly present in Augustine, as an obvious development of both Plotinus and Victorinus. The absolute freedom of the inner-life of the Trinity found in Augustine, claims Benz, is already found in Victorinus' own doctrine of the Trinity. To understand Augustine, however, we must not stop at Victorinus: that Victorine Trinitarian doctrine has its roots in Plotinus' treatise, On the Freedom of the One (VI, 8). As Hadot puts it, "E. Benz finds in [Victorinus] the completion of the profound tendencies of Plotinus: Victorinus reveals the true Plotinus". Further, "thus, Victorinus and Plotinus have a fundamental idea in common: There is a self-deployment of absolute Being and this self-deployment is effected on the model of the interior dialectic in

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[2] I will follow Hadot's account of interpreters prior to him as found in his *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 2 vols., Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968. Hadot's account of the history before him tells us much about his own position. Unless otherwise indicated, I will always refer to the first volume.

[3] Stuttgart, 1932.

the process of knowing"[4]. The outcome of this metaphysical transformation is, in turn, for Benz a "anthropological revolution". "By conceiving the Trinity as the inner life of the absolute spirit which wills itself and thinks itself, Augustine discovers, in the human person an image of the Trinity, the unity of spirit which remains identical in its totality, in the three relations of being, willing and knowing"[5]. "For E. Benz," Hadot writes,

> the God of Victorinus is absolute freedom, absolute freedom to put itself in Being (in the first place his own Being) and hypostasizing itself as Being by a voluntary act. The heart of the divine Being is therefore will and freedom, to be able to be self-determined.[6]

Further, "the consubstantiality between these three hypostases - the essential element of all orthodox theology - is therefore assured by the definition of the substance as will"[7]. All this, argues Benz, is found in Plotinus. For Benz, to conceive of the One as freedom and will, as Plotinus does in that treatise, is to close the gap between the One and Intelligence. "In this new perspective, Intelligence represents a moment of the inner life of the One. The One places itself as substance, as form, as knowledge of oneself, otherwise put, as Intelligence"[8].

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[4] P. Hadot, _Porphyre_, "E. Benz trouve en ce dernier [Victorinus] l'aboutissement des tendances profondes du plotinisme: Victorinus révèle le vrai Plotin", p. 19 & "Ainsi Victorinus et Plotin ont en commun une idée fondamentale: il y a un autodéploiement de l'Être absolu et cet autodéploiement s'effectue sur le modèle de la dialectique intérieure au processus de connaissance.", p. 20.

[5] _Ibid._, "En concevant la Trinité comme la vie intérieure de l'Esprit absolu que se veut et se pense, Augustine découvre, dans la personne humaine image de la Trinité, l'unité d'un esprit qui reste identique en sa totalité, dans les trois relations de l'être, du vouloir et du penser.", p. 16.

[6] _Ibid._, "Pour E. Benz, le Dieu de Victorinus est liberté absolue, liberté absolue de poser l'Être (en premier lieu, son Être propre) et de s'hypostasier comme Étant, par un acte volontaire. Le fond de l'Être divin est donc bien volonté et liberté, pouvoir d'autodétermination.", p. 17.

[7] _Ibid._, "La consubstantialité entre ces trois hypostases – pièce essentielle de toute théologie orthodoxe – est donc assure par définition de la substance comme volunté.", p. 17-18.

[8] _Ibid._, "Dans cette nouvelle perspective, l'Intelligence représente un moment de la vie intérieure de l'Un. L'Un se pose lui-même comme substance, comme forme, comme connaissance de soi, autrement dit, comme Intelligence.", p. 19.

Hadot sees Benz as interpreting this history anachronistically through the eyes of German Idealism[9]. Although there is much truth in Benz's observations, to see Plotinus' identification of the One and its freedom as the appearance of consciousness is wrong. Hadot quotes J. Trouillard on what can actually be said about Plotinus' doctrine in <u>Ennead</u> VI, 8: "the treatise VI, 8 ends by *identifying the freedom of the one with its metaphysical simplicity*"[10] or as Hadot puts it, "to reveal the metaphysical gulf of the radical origin." Such an error occurred on Benz's part because

> he believes that Victorinus attempted to give an account of the generation of the Son from God, by the methods which Plotinus described the autocreation of the One. He believed, therefore, that Plotinus was able to be understood in the light of Victorinus.[11]

The impossibility of assimilating the One's self-creation in Plotinus' <u>Ennead</u> VI, 8 to the generation of the Son by the Father in Victorinus is evident because there is no doubt about the clear distinction of the hypostases in Plotinus. Hadot writes:

> That is to say that [Benz] unduly assimilates the methods by which Plotinus tried to express *the immediate and original simplicity of the One* and those Victorinus used to describe the process by which the Son places himself in his autogeneration. Otherwise put, E. Benz has not seen the distance which separates Plotinus from Victorinus. Thus, he brings to Plotinus perspectives which are properly post-Plotinian.[12]

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[9] Cf. G. Leroux, <u>*Plotin: Traité sur la liberté*</u>. With trans., intro and commentary. Paris: Vrin, 1990: "L'erreur de l'interprétation proposée par Ernst Benz est d'avoir projeté sur l'Un plotinien les concepts de la subjectivité romantique, surtout schellingiens.", p. 30-21, n., 12.

[10] <u>*La Purification plotinienne*</u> quoted in *ibid.*, "le traité VI, 8 se termine en identifiant la liberté de l'Un à sa simplicité métaphysique.", p. 21. Importantly, Hadot quotes Troulliard here. He is also a central character in French phenomenology's appropriation of Neoplatonism. *Cf.* W. J. Hankey, "French".

[11] *Ibid.*, "entrevoir l'âbime métaphysique de l'origine radical" & "il croit que Victorinus a mis en oeuvre pour rendre compte de la génération du Fils de Dieu, les formules par lesquelles Plotin décrivait l'autocréation de l'Un. Il a donc cru pouvoir comprendre Plotin à lumière de Victorinus.", p. 22.

[12] *Ibid.*, "[C]'est-à-dire qu'il assimile indûment les formules par lesquelles Plotin essaie d'exprimer *la simplicité immédiate et originelle de l'Un* et celles que Victorinus emploie pour décrire le procès par lequel le Fils se pose lui-

In sum, Hadot wishes to keep Benz from making Plotinus say what he could not properly say. He identifies the problem of reading Plotinus both through the thought of Victorinus and through the assertions of German Idealism. Hadot provides a more historically accurate portrait of this unfolding history. This also reveals Hadot's French phenomenological stance against German idealism.

Paul Henry also asserts the lineage of Plotinus – Victorinus - Augustine, but one which allows Plotinus to be rescued from his would-be German Idealist captors. The *"libri platonicorum"*, for Henry, are those of Plotinus[13]. Henry closely analysises Plotinus and Victorinus to show actual textual and doctrinal similarities[14]. Among others, he finds that

> the generation of the Son from God, as form, in Victorinus, is accomplished according to a mechanism completely analogous to the one through which Intelligence hypostasises itself in its distinction from the Plotinian One: the hypostasis makes itself by turning itself towards its principle, after a distinctive phase and indetermination.

As well, "there is equally the identity between intelligence and will, since knowledge is, in Plotinus and Victorinus, the desire of the object"[15]. Henry departs from Benz in pointing towards Victorinus' *movement beyond* Plotinus in the attempt to remain faithful to

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même en son autogénération. Autrement dit, E. Benz n'a pas vu la distance qui sépare Plotin de Victorinus. Il transporte ainsi en Plotin des perspectives qui sont proprement postplotiniennes.", p. 22; italics mine.

[13] *Cf.*, "The 'Adversus Arium' of Marius Victorinus, the first systematic exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity", Journal of Theological Studies, N.S., t. I, 1950, p. 42-55.

[14] Of note, Henry found a literal citation of Plotinus in Victorinus, yet this was found to be a Porphyrian paraphrase of Ennead V, 2, 1 by P. Hadot in *Porphyre*, p. 418.

[15] P. Hadot, *Porphyre*,, "la génération du Fils de Dieu, comme forme, chez Victorinus, s'accomplit selon un mécanisme tout à fait analogue à celui par lequelle l'Intelligence s'hypostasie en se distinguant de l'Un plotinien: l'hypostase se constitue en se convertissant vers son principe, après une phase de distinction et d'indétermination. Il y a également l'identité entre l'intelligence et la volonté, la connaissance étant, chez Plotin et chez Victorinus, désir de l'objet.", p. 23.

consubstantiality. For Henry, the difference between Plotinus and Porphyry is Victorinus' Christianity. Victorinus' reflection on Scripture gives him a proper Christian theological perspective. In particular, Henry sees that Victorinus finds the concept of the One as Being and the mutual implication of the proper characters of the three hypostases (of Being, Life and Thought) in Scriptures.

Victorinus' use of philosophy in the service of orthodoxy, whereby there is not merely a rephrasing of philosophical thought in Christian jargon, but rather an incipient rethinking of philosophy itself, prepares Augustine to write his *De Trinitate*. Victorinus' influence on Augustine can also be seen in the understanding that everything in God is substance and that the soul is the image of the Trinity. Most importantly, Hadot sees in Henry a corrective to Benz's position. Henry's position would see both the distance between Plotinus and Victorinus and the determinative influence of the Scriptures in Victorinus to formulate theological conceptions. This will be important in our consideration of Augustine in chapter four. The problem of tracing Augustine's predecessors is not solely concerned with profound philosophical similarities (for Benz) or differences (for Henry); it also involves the vexed problem of revelation which Benz overlooks. In showing the difference between Plotinus and Victorinus, Henry also allows Plotinus to be Plotinus by not seeing Victorinus as simply revealing the true Plotinus. Victorinus both depends on Plotinus and develops what he found there, but is also different from him.

I agree with Hadot's assessment of Henry. However, in Henry's attempt to show,

correctly, the role of faith and revelation in Victorinus, Henry oversimplifies the question of influence and sources. Although a necessary corrective of Benz, Henry carries a Scholastic distinction between faith and reason back into the late 4th Century. Henry writes:

> But while dozens of books and innumerable essays stress the influence of Neoplatonism on Christian Trinitarian thought and on Augustine's religious philosophy, it does not seem to have been noticed that in his exposition of the central and characteristic doctrines of Christianity, those concerning God and Christ, he either explicitly contrasts Christianity and Neoplatonism – as in the dogma of the Incarnation; or – as in the doctrine of the Trinity – *he builds up a theological system which owes nothing to Neoplatonism*, its two essential elements being the relations theory, which is derived from Aristotle, and the psychological processions theory which appears to be a product of Augustine's own reflections. *Thus the first philosophical exposition of the Trinity would owe practically nothing to the then prevailing philosophy?*[16]

Such an independence from and conscious relation to the philosophy of the time would be impossible for both Victorinus and Augustine. The problems central to a "philosophical exposition of the Trinity" and those of the "then prevailing philosophy" are not as different as Henry would make them.

Not surprisingly, Henry proceeds to explain that Augustine owes much, if not all, to Victorinus. For Henry to call Victorinus (and Augustine, by implication,) a Christian and *not* a Neoplatonist is problematic and reductive. As noted above, such a clear distinction between faith and reason, that is, *either* as a Christian *or* a Neoplatonist, would be impossible to make, so far as philosophic and doctrinal development is concerned. Further, although it is true that the category of relation is Aristotelian, that this is essential to Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity and what distinguishes it from all previous Neoplatonic conceptions

of the divine hypostases, Augustine's system is thoroughly and entirely Neoplatonic. In Henry's attempt to emphasise Augustine's difference from pagan philosophy and dependence on the "Christian" Victorinus, he over-corrects certain tendencies of the then current scholarship and therefore oversimplifies the problem.

W. Theiler adds a different star to the constellation of Plotinus, Victorinus and Augustine: Porphyry. Writing on Porphyry's influence on both Victorinus and Augustine, he asserts that Augustine was not influenced by Plotinus. Instead, he was solely influenced by Porphyry. A problem becomes immediately obvious: while we possess the entire corpus of Plotinus' work, as laid out by Porphyry, we have lost a great deal of Porphyry's own work. Since we have so little of Porphyry's own work, Theiler had to work under such an hypothesis:

> If, in the case of a post-Plotinian Neoplatonism, there arises a development which is able to be compared by the content, the form and the structure, with an analogous passage in Augustine, but not or in the same degree with an analogous passage in Plotinus, it can be considered as Porphyrian.[17]

Porphyry is to be the missing link in developments between Plotinus and Augustine. Such an hypothesis corresponds to an ineluctable fact which Hadot points out: post-Plotinian Neoplatonism has fundamental differences from that of Plotinus'[18]. Theiler notes that Plotinus has been interpreted in a way foreign to him, even though we possess his entire corpus. When Theiler points to the determinative influence of Porphyry, he lets Plotinus be

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[16] P. Henry, "The 'Adversus Arium'", p. 42; italics mine

[17] W. Theiler, _Porphyrios und Augustin_, Halle, 1933, as quoted by Hadot in _Porphyre_, "Si, chez un néoplatonicien postplotinien, se présente un développement qui peut se comparer par le contenu, la forme et la structure, avec un passage analogue chez Plotin, on peut le considérer comme porphyrien", p. 25.

Plotinus. No longer do we have to make Plotinus say what we want him to: we can let Plotinus be Plotinus and point to Porphyry for the difference. Anticipating P. Courcelle's thesis in *Les Lettres grecques en Occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore*, Theiler places Porphyry at the forefront of Greek post-Plotinian Neoplatonism.

However, in so emphasising Porphyry's influence on Augustine, he often makes equivocations. Hadot, following Courcelle and Henry, remarks that, "Often, the doctrines which he labels as Porphyrian are traditional common places or they could very well be Plotinian"[19]. Even worse, Theiler argues against what Augustine himself claims he did: read the works of Plotinus. Despite this, Theiler made substantial headway into understanding the Plotinian heritage. Of note, in reviewing Benz's book, he identifies Porphyrian doctrines in Victorinus. Victorinus' "mē on super to on" corresponds exactly to Porphyry's "to huper to on mē on", as does the term "autogonos" - which is not found in Plotinus. Hadot sums up Theiler's contribution well:

> W. Theiler has, therefore, had the merit of showing that the 'non-Plotinian' aspects of Victorinus were able to be explained by a philosophic influence different from that of Plotinus, probably that of Porphyry; *the Christianity of Victorinus, therefore, was not the only factor of evolution*; next to him, closely linked, it is necessary to recognize a precise, philosophic doctrine, technique, the origin of which was not able to be found in Plotinus alone.[20]

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[19] *Ibid.*, "souvent, les doctrines qu'il signale comme porphyriennes sont des lieux communs traditionnels ou peuvent très bien être plotiniennes", p. 25-26.

[20] *Ibid.*, "W. Theiler a donc eu le mérite de montrer que les aspects "non-plotiniens" de Victorinus pouvaient s'expliquer par une influence philosophique différente de celle de Plotin, probablement celle de Porphyre; *le christianisme de Victorinus n'était donc pas le seul facteur d'évolution*; à côté de lui, intimement mêlé à lui, il fallait reconnaître une doctrine philosophique précise, technique, dont on ne pouvait retrouver l'origine chez le seul Plotin.", p. 26; italics mine.

What Hadot notes in Theiler is also a corrective to Henry: it is not simply a matter of Victorinus' Christianity which distinguishes him from his pagan predecessor Plotinus. Theiler finds instead philosophical antecedents of Victorinus in pagan philosophy and therefore brings into relief a greater and more balanced dependence on pagan philosophy for Victorinus.

According to Hadot, G. Huber in his book *Das Sein und das Absolute* follows the same lineage as Benz and Henry: Plotinus - Victorinus - Augustine. Huber sees a radical transformation of being from Plotinus through Victorinus to Augustine. In Plotinus, the One, which escapes all knowing, beyond being and knowing, is separate and distinguished from the level of Being located in Nous which is the proper object of thought. Since the One is to be the ground of Nous - of being and knowing - , to conflate the two levels of the One and Nous would be to undermine the ground of Nous, thereby undermining knowledge. Whereas,

> in Victorinus, who was unfaithful to Plotinus for remaining faithful
> to orthodox consubstantialism, and especially in Augustine, who
> was unfaithful to Victorinus for orthodox concerns again more
> acute, Being tends to be identified with the Absolute.[21]

Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity constitutes, in Huber's eyes, a fatal conflation of the two levels. Hadot follows Huber here.

In this movement from Plotinus through to Augustine, therefore, Huber sees a progression, or better, a regression, wherein the intelligible content is lost: the more one

identifies Being with the Absolute, the more indeterminate, and therefore unknowable, Being becomes. This is because the ground of it, the One, is lost. In Augustine, "In this way, the divine essence, in the Trinity, is what is common and undifferentiated..."[22] The distinction in Victorinus between being, life and thought which, Huber claims, adequately maintains the distinction between the Absolute (Father) and Being (Son) (and therefore the intelligibility of being), while satisfying orthodox demands, "becomes for Augustine an indistinct unity. In this way, being, the proper object of Intelligence, 'no longer opens itself up to thought in an immediate way'"[23].

There are problems here. Firstly, the sense in which Huber thinks the Plotinian individual soul knows Nous immediately, as against Augustine, is wrong. The individual soul is at first lost in material externality, but then must enter into himself and must move through Soul to Nous. This knowledge of Nous is not immediate. On the contrary, those divided, hierarchical selves are collapsed completely in Augustine, whereby the Augustinian soul, at least compared to a Plotinian one, knows the Trinity immediately[24]. Secondly, Huber does not see that Victorinus' doctrine of the Trinity is inadequate and that Augustine's own doctrine addresses these same inadequacies. The distinction between being, life and thought in Victorinus, in the end, does not in fact adequately maintain the distinctions between the

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[21] *Ibid.*, "Chez Victorinus déjà, infidèle à Plotin pour rester fidèle au consubstantialisme orthodoxe, chez Augustin surtout, infidèle à Victorinus par un souci d'orthodoxie encore plus aigu, l'Être tend à s'identifier à l'Absolu.", p. 27-28.

[22] *Ibid.*, "Ainsi, l'essence divine, dans la Trintié, est ce qui est commun et indifférencié...", p. 28.

[23] *Ibid.*, "devient pour Augustin une unité indistincte. Ainsi l'être objet propre de l'intelligence, 'ne s'ouvre plus à la pensée d'une manière immédiate", p. 28, quoting at the end Huber himself.

[24] Of course, there are the problems of the mediation of Jesus Christ and the mediation of Holy Scripture for a complete and accurate knowledge of the Trinity, but so far as this argument is concerned, these are beside the

Absolute and Being. Not the divine essence in Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity, but the divine essence in Victorinus' becomes "what is common and undifferentiated"[25]. The categories of relations in act in Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity provide the differentiation that Huber thinks he finds in Victorinus. Huber misunderstands both the Plotinian, Victorine and Augustinian system and so cannot rightly compare them.

Huber also claims that the Augustinian soul can only know God analogically through God's image in his soul. Firstly, in so far as the Plotinian soul is divided and hierarchical, so too can the soul only know God analogically through the soul as he moves through the levels of his soul. Secondly, for Augustine, the movement of the soul in his knowledge of God is always downwards from God to man[26]. In Augustine, therefore, one can only say that this knowledge is analogical so long as it is *only* in virtue of God's self-disclosure that the Augustinian soul can know God through his soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, in Augustine, man's knowledge of God is not analogical. He even prohibits such knowing in the very opening of his work, *De Trintiate*. That is, the movement is always downward from God. Thirdly, the knowledge of God found through the soul is a deeper form of the same thing[27] as the knowledge attained through Scripture and through a reasoned account of it. That

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point.

[25] How this is so will be discussed in chapters three and four.

[26] We see this in the structure of the entire *Confessiones*, especially as found in his account of his mystical union with God as a pagan Platonist and, more acutely, in his conversion to Christianity: it was God that enabled him to achieve his mystic union with God. For a detailed examination of the structure of the first nine books, see C. J. Starnes, Augustine's Conversion: A Guide to the Argument of Books I-IX, Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1990. This is also seen in the understanding of the principle and of man's relation to the principle in community: they begin with God's movement toward us in the self-disclosure of his nature in Scripture. Cf. *De Trinitate*, books I-IV and *De Civitate Dei*, books XI-XXII.

[27] Cf. St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Book VIII, Prologue: "*modo interiore*" & "*cum eadem sint*".

Huber claims that the Augustinian soul knows God only analogically, therefore, is not without serious problems.

With such a faulty understanding of Augustine, Huber writes that "the knowledge of the subjective soul becomes the way to the knowledge of God; being is interpreted from the horizon of the soul"[28]. In other words, Plotinus, who guards the distance between the One and Nous, would be the pattern on which to escape the modern subjective dangers brought about by Victorinus and Augustine. However, in Victorinus, "the distinction between unformed Being and being still safeguards in part the Plotinian opposition between the rationality of unformed being and the transcendence of the Absolute"[29]. So while Victorinus only cracks the seal of Pandora's Box, "Augustine will do away with this distinction between unformed Being and being"[30] and thereby throws it open. In Augustine, "there will be identification between unformed being and its determination: all determination of the divine being is substantial, that is to say that in future it is dissolved in the indifference of the Absolute; the Intelligible in itself is transformed into unintelligible"[31]. Huber insists on the difference between each person's contribution, for better or worse, to the history of philosophy. At the same time, he also sees the crucial role anti-Arianism plays in the transformation of Plotinus' thought in Victorinus. Hadot writes: "it is the tension between

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[28] *Ibid.*, "Ainsi, la connaissance de l'âme subjective devient le moyen de la connaissance de Dieu, l'être est interprété à partir de l'horizon de l'âme.", p. 28.

[29] *Ibid.*, "La distinction entre l'être et l'étant sauvegarde encore un peu l'opposition plotinienne entre la rationalité de l'être et la transcendance de l'Absolu.", p. 29.

[30] *Ibid.*, "Augustin supprimera cette distinction entre l'être et l'étant.", p. 29.

[31] *Ibid.*, "Il y aura identification entre l'être et sa détermination: toute détermination de l'être divin est substantielle, c'est-à-dire qu'elle se fond désormais dans l'indifférence de l'Absolu; l'Intelligible en soi se transforme en inconcevable.", p. 29, quoting at the end Huber himself.

the consubstantialist faith and Plotinianism which causes, in the case of Victorinus, the transformation of the Plotinian ontology which goes to disrupt - and to mislead - all modern ontology"[32]. Like Benz, Huber sees a crucial and important transformation from Plotinus to Augustine, Victorinus playing no small part in this, which forms the basis for modern subjectivity. While Huber rightly sees the influence of anti-Arianism in Victorinus and Augustine, he also sees that that same influence undoes its own foundation in Neoplatonism: the One ought, as Plotinus explained, to remain Absolute and separate from its determination as Being and Thought in Nous. Importantly, Hadot accepts this view of the history.

Hadot's Assessment

Hadot's most influential and controversial book _Porphyre et Victorinus_ has above all one purpose and thesis: "to recognize the existence of a literary substratum behind certain texts of Victorinus"[33] which he sees as the Anonymous Commentary on Plato's Parmenides as penned by Porphyry. So while he acknowledges definitively the purpose of Victorinus' theological works, "the principle object of defending the 'consubstantial' notion against its opponents"[34], Hadot wishes only to find what he sees as one philosophical source which underlies Victorinus' work. In locating this one philosophical source, Hadot sees two movements in Victorinus. On one hand, Hadot sees in Victorinus elements which are clearly Neoplatonic and which are thoroughly integrated into his system. On the other hand, he also

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[32] _Ibid._, "C'est la tension entre la foi consubstantialiste et le plotinisme qui provoque chez Victorinus la transformation de l'ontologie plotinienne qui va bouleverser – et égarer – toute l'ontologie moderne.", p. 29.
[33] _Ibid._, "reconnaître l'existence de substrat littéraire derrière certains textes de Victorinus.", p. 67.

sees something foreign to Plotinian Neoplatonism and which is "poorly integrated" forcing some "doctrinal incoherencies" in Victorinus' theology. The source underlying *both of these*, argues Hadot, is Porphyry. For Hadot, this thesis is the key which uncovers the Porphyry behind Victorinus and Hadot's misunderstanding of them and the history around them.

In short, there are two simultaneous actions going on in Hadot's understanding of this history. Hadot wishes to identify at once similarities between Victorinus and Plotinus, and also elements which distance and differentiate Victorinus from Plotinus. For instance, while Hadot wishes to ascribe that difference to Porphyry, he is also fully cognisant of the all-crucial role that anti-Arian orthodoxy plays in Victorinus' system. Firstly, Hadot wishes to ascribe weight to the purely philosophical dialectic going on between the time of Plotinus and Victorinus, as in Benz and Huber. Secondly, he also balances that with larger ecclesiastical and dogmatic problems with which Victorinus dealt, as with Henry. For this reason, Hadot grasps the complexity of the problem more completely than all his predecessors. Consequently, each thinker receives his due share of creativity and autonomy of thought and at the same time Hadot allows a progression and development among them.

However, Hadot's interpretation suffers from two things. The first is that he imposes a Scholastic separation between theology and philosophy on his interpretation of Victorinus and the history surrounding him. For Hadot, the Porphyrian commentary on its own represents a purely philosophical inquiry. It is not theology. However, Porphyrian elements in Victorinus which have been well integrated into his system are no longer philosophical,

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[34] *Ibid.,* "object principal de défendre la notion de 'consubstantiel' contre ses adversaires", p. 45.

but theological because they clearly deal with the issue of consubstantiality. The elements of Porphyry's which are not so well integrated in Victorinus' system, therefore, are not theological, but remain philosophical. The division which Hadot sees running through Victorinus' theological works is based upon an alien understanding of philosophy and theology. Such a misunderstaning R. Crouse calls an, "unhistorical and misleading disjunction between philosophy and theology"[35]. The second fault of Hadot is, as was mentioned above, interpreting this history through the assumptions and goals of French phenomenology. While this begins to allow a clearer understanding of Plotinus, it obscures his understanding of this history and the possible influences of one author on another. These faults are untenable. That being said, I will lay out Hadot's plan and take up this deficiency within it as it unfolds in Hadot's work itself.

As an example of well-integrated Neoplatonic elements in Victorinus, following his previous essay, "Being, life, thought in Plotinus and before Plotinus"[36], Hadot cites the use of the triad of being-life-thought:

> in Neoplatonic doctrine, the three terms of this triad become mutually involved and are only distinguished through the predominance of one aspect over the others. Next there is the notion of autogeneration and of self moving movement. Finally, there is the fundamental principle: the superior hypostases remain immobile while they cause the inferior hypostases.

Such Plotinian elements, found everywhere in Victorinus,

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[35] Cf. R. D. Crouse, "Philosophical Method in St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*", <u>Studia Patristica</u>, Vol. XVI(1985), p. 503.
[36] P. Hadot, <u>Plotin, Porphrye: Études Néoplatoniciennes</u>, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1999, p. 127-181, reprinted from <u>Les sources de Plotin</u>, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique, V, Fondation Hardt, Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1960, p. 107-157.

> are completely blended with the dogmatic Christian ideas...Victorinus managed to extract from Neoplatonism what he knew of...schema and general principles to integrate them into his theological synthesis. It is these schema and these principles which make possible this theological synthesis.[37]

However, Hadot notices aberrations from this system. In the system above, the Father is being, the Son is life and the Holy Ghost is intelligence. This clear scheme becomes confused when Victorinus, in book four of _Adversus Arium_, refers to the Father as _esse-vivere-intellegere_ and the Son as _exsistentia-vita-intellegentia_. This is made more confusing when, while the Son can be understood as _vita_ and the Holy Ghost as _intellegentia_, "the function of _exsistentia_ remains unexplained"[38]. Other "manifest incoherencies" occur when "the Father is presented as One, the Son as One-One, or still, the Father is 'Non-Being superior to the Being', the Son is Being[39].

To explain this incongruence, Hadot makes an interesting distinction. He sharply distinguishes between elements which are properly theological and those which are philosophical in Victorinus[40]. Parallel to this is the distinction Hadot makes between "principles" and "texts"[41]. For instance, "the development of the modes of being and non-

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[37] _Ibid._, "dans la doctrine néoplatonicienne, les trois termes de cette triade s'impliquent mutuellement et ne se distinguent que par la prédominance d'un aspect sur les autres. C'est ensuite la notion d'autogénération et de mouvement automoteur. C'est enfin le principe fondamental: les hypostases supérieures restent immobiles lorsqu'elles engendrent les hypostases inférieures. Ces éléments néoplatoniciens sont totalement fondus avec les données dogmatiques chrétiennes...Victorinus a su extraire du néoplatonisme qu'il connaissait...des schèmes et des principes généraux pour les intégrer à sa synthèse théologique. Ce sont ces schèmes et ces principes qui rendent possible cette synthèse théologique.", p. 48.

[38] _Ibid._, "la fonction de l'exsistentia reste inexpliquée", p. 48.

[39] _Ibid._, "le Père est présenté comme Un, le Fils comme Un-Un ou encore le Père est 'Non-Ètant supérieur à l'Ètant', le Fils est 'Ètant'", p. 49.

[40] _Cf. Ibid._, p. 63ff.

[41] _Ibid._, p. 67.

being respond to a desire to classify degrees of reality"[42] which is a *philosophical concern*, and therefore falls outside of the strictly *theological* task at hand which is to confront Arianism. These Hadot calls "the philosophical pieces"[43] which stand out awkwardly and obscurely within Victorinus' system. What is the reason? Hadot claims the ideas are not his and so he has not mastered them. Hadot writes,

> In fact, Victorinus himself did not 'master' these philosophical pieces. He used them for the purpose of such and such important teaching which he found contained there, inserted these texts which remained foreign to him. *When he speaks in his own name*, Victorinus used a small number of formulae and constant schema, but he never made the connection between these formulae and those which are found in such and such a philosophical development.[44]

However, both the theological and philosophical elements, both the well understood and often repeated and the loosely tied in and seldom said[45], which Hadot identifies have a common source: the Porphyrian Commentary on Plato's Parmenides.

> We are, therefore, led to the following hypothesis: if the philosophic developments that we have encountered in the analysis of Victorinus' works introduce some incoherencies, some imbalances in the plan, obscurities, if they are not fully integrated in the doctrinal synthesis of Victorinus, they suppose a literary substratum which Victorinus utilises...Put another way: next to the 'principles', integrated in his theological synthesis, it very well

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[42] *Ibid.*, "le développement sur les modes des étants et des non-étants répond à un désir de classification des degrés de réalité", p. 63.

[43] *Ibid.*, "ces morceaux philosophiques", p. 65.

[44] *Ibid.*, "En fait Victorinus lui-même ne 'domine' pas ces morceaux philosophiques. Il les utilise, à cause de tel ou tel enseignement important qui s'y trouve contenu, mis ces textes lui restent étrangers. *Lorsqu'il parle en son nom propre*, Victorinus emploie un petit nombre de formules et de schème constants, mais il ne fait jamais la liason entre ces formules et celles qui se trouvent dans tel ou tel développement philosphique.", p. 65; italics mine.

[45] *Ibid.*, "Autant Victorinus aime à répéter souvent les doctrines qu'il a assimilées et qui sont intégrées à sa synthèse doctrinale [*scil.* theological], autant il est discret sur les détails de ces développements qui lui restent étranger [*scil.* philosophical].", p. 65.

appears that Victorinus has borrowed 'texts' from Neoplatonism, which he used to write certain of his treatises.[46]

What is called theological and philosophical or "principles" and "texts" by Hadot within Victorinus has the same "literary substratum". Having first separated the philosophical and theological aspects within Victorinus and then asserting that they have a common source, he now says there is no difference between them.

> These [philosophical] doctrinal constants are able to be compared...with the Victorine theological synthesis...first of all, it all clearly appears that the integrated principles in this theological synthesis and the doctrine contained in our groups of philosophical texts are *fundamentally identical*.[47]

However, even more confusingly, Hadot then straightway reasserts their difference.

> But the theological synthesis retains only the common doctrine to our groups of philosophic texts which are sufficient to clarify the notion of consubstantiality between the Father and the Son and the manner of generation of the last. *All which needlessly complicates the synthesis is left aside...*[48]

The result of Hadot's distinction is this:

> "Principles" and "texts" correspond, therefore, to two different degrees of assimilation of the same substratum. The "texts" are satisfied with the literal reproduction *without managing to adapt perfectly* this substratum to the Christian problem. The "principles"

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[46] *Ibid.*, "Nous sommes donc conduits à l'hypothèse suivante: si les développements philosophiques que nous avons recontrés dans l'analyse des oeuvres de Victorinus introduisent des incohérences, des déséquilibres dans le plan, des obscurités, s'ils ne sont pas pleinement intégrés à la synthèse doctrinale de Victorinus, c'est qu'ils supposent un substrat littéraire préexistant que Victorinus utilise...Autrement dit: à côté des "principes", intégrés à sa synthèse théologique, il semble bien que Victorinus ait emprunté au néoplatonisme des "textes", qu'il a employés pour rédiger certains de ses traités.", p. 67.

[47] *Ibid.*, "On peut comparer ces constantes [philosophical] doctrinales...avec la synthèse théologique victorinienne...Il apparaît tout d'abord clairement que les principes intégrés dans cette synthèse théologique et la doctrine contenue dans nos groupes de textes philosophiques sont *fondamontalement identiques*", p. 75; italics mine.

[48] *Ibid.*, "Mais la synthèse théologique ne retient de la doctrine commune à nos groupes de textes philosophiques que ce qui suffit à éclairer la notion de consubstantialité entre le Père et le Fils et le mode de génération de ce dernier. *Tout ce qui peut compliquer inutilement la synthèse est laissé de côté...*", p. 76.

> correspond to what Victorinus managed to draw from the
> substratum to integrate his doctrinal synthesis; they are at the same
> time those which, in this substratum, are compatible with the
> dogma.[49]

Hadot here gives to or makes in Victorinus the ability to use philosophy in the service of

dogma or theology in such a way as would have been impossible for Victorinus himself to

make. Hadot sees in Victorinus the ability to manipulate philosophy as something separate

from and in the service of theology - as if, at this time in history, both philosophy and

theology themselves possessed their own separate autonomy. This is clearly articulated in

Hadot's comparison between Victorinus and Boethius.

> [In Boethius,] this scholar's distinctions between *ousia, ousiosis,*
> *hypostasis*, which he puts at the beginning of his treatise, *Against*
> *Eutichus and Nestorius* are practically useless and are no longer used
> in theological argumentation. It is necessary to emphasize this
> particular characteristic of the use of philosophy in Boethius as in
> Victorinus: put in the service of theology, *philosophy often reduces itself*
> *to very few things*, because it is extremely difficult to integrate to
> theological demonstration. These unassimilated elements remain in
> juxtaposition to the theological synthesis and reveal that the
> philosophical material in question responded to one problematic
> *completely different* from that which is peculiar to theology.[50]

While there can be no doubt that there are various levels of integration of ideas from a

common source in Victorinus (and Boethius), one cannot owe this difference to the

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[49] *Ibid.*, ""Principes" et "textes" correspondent donc à deux degrées différents d'assimilation d'un même substrat. Les "textes" se contentent de le reproduire littéralement *sans parvenir à adapter parfaitement* ce substrat à la problématique chrétienne. Les "principes" correspondent ce que Victorinus a su tirer de ce substrat pour l'intégrer à sa synthèse doctrinal; ils sont en même temps ce qui, dans ce substrat, est compatible avec le dogme.", p. 76; italics mine.

[50] *Ibid.*, "[In Boethius,] les savantes distinctions entre *ousia, ousiosis, hypostasis* qu'il place au début de son traité *Contre Eutychès et Nestorius* sont pratiquement inutiles et ne sont plus utilisées dans l'argumentation théologique. Il faut souligner ce caractère particulier de l'emploi de la philosophie chez Boèce comme chez Victorinus: mise en service de la théologie, *la philosophie se réduit souvent à très peu de chose*, parce qu'il est extrêmement difficile d'intégrer à la démonstration théologique utilisé. Ces éléments non assimilés restent juxtaposés à la synthèse

supposed separate, "different" and even, perhaps, opposed ends of philosophy and theology[51]. For Victorinus and for the next five hundred years or so, there is no such difference. Philosophy is not yet a tool external to theology to be used in the service of it.[52] This confusion, in various degrees and in different forms, runs right through the majority of modern interpreters of this history[53].

Hadot's "*L'image de la Trinité dans l'âme chez Victorinus et chez saint Augustin*"[54] proves to be very revealing as well. Here he claims that the main difference between Victorinus and Augustine is that Victorinus' inquiry into the nature of the Trinity is an ontological one, whereas Augustine's is a psychological one[55]. There are many problems here. Firstly, I think

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théologique et révèlent que le matériel philosophique en question répondait à une problématique *tout à fait différente* de celle qui est propre à la théologie.", p. 67; italics mine.

[51] Against this *cf.* R. D. Crouse, "To ask whether the *Consolation* is philosophy or theology, or whether it is "natural" as distinguished from "revealed" theology, is to ask misleading questions, presupposing distinctions belonging to the later history of philosophy and far from the mind of Boethius", "*Semina Rationum:* St. Augustine and Boethius", <u>Dionysius</u>, Vol. IV(1980), p. 83. We might add that such a distinction which Hadot finds in Victorinus would be far from the mind of Victorinus too.

[52] *Cf.* R. D. Crouse, "'In Aenigmate Trinitas' (*Confessions*, XIII, 5, 6): The Conversion of Philosophy in St. Augustine's *Confessions*", <u>Dionysius</u>, Vol. XI(1987), p. 54, where, on speaking of Augustine's use of philosophy, he writes, "It will not do to say, for instance, that Platonism merely serves as "Denkmittel" for his exposition of Christian doctrine, as though it were some external and essentially indifferent instrument…his expositions of doctrinal points (the Trinity, Creation, Incarnation) are as they are precisely because those points are understood in terms of the achievements and dilemmas of Platonic thinking about mediation between the Absolute One and the multiplicity and mutability of finite beings. Platonic problems about the divine unity and distinct, descending divine hypostases, problems about the nature of the soul and its ways of knowing, problems about the nature and significance of matter, and so on, constantly inform the perspective of the Christian Augustine, and profoundly shape his understanding of the Scriptures and the central points of Christian doctrine. His Platonism is internal to his Christianity, and cannot be dissociated from it." Likewise, such a position is crucial to understand the true contribution that Victorinus brings to the history of philosophy and of doctrine.

[53] For a concise history of modern interpreters of Augustine, their deficiencies and the way forward to understand properly Augustine's (and by implication Victorinus') contribution to the history of philosophy, *cf.* R. D. Crouse, "*Paucis Mutatis Verbis:* St. Augustine's Platonism", in <u>Augustine and His Critics</u>, eds. R. Dodaro and G. Lawless, New York: Routledge, 2000.

[54] P. Hadot, "L'image de la Trinité dans l'âme chez Victorinus et chez saint Augustin", <u>Studia Patristica</u>, Vol.6(1962), p. 409-442.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 429.

this is a false distinction, or at least a drastic overstatement, and one that is based upon both a misunderstanding of Augustine's goals in the _De Trinitate_[56] and of the problematic and goal of Neoplatonism. Secondly, since he sees Augustine and Victorinus pursuing different goals (one psychological, the other ontological), his survey is misleading right from the beginning.

For instance, the way that Hadot sees the Victorine production of the Trinity. At first, life and thought are confounded within being or substance and then being determines itself in life's "consubstantial exit" from and thought's return to itself. This production has an analogous structure in the soul which Hadot understands to be "a dynamic conception of being" which for his part "Augustine eliminates"[57]. For Hadot, the Aristotelian category of relation in Augustine's understanding of the Trinity is deficient. "For [Augustine] _the generation remains itself a pure relation_, without which there was a transition from power to act". To be sure, there is a "transition from implicit to explicit...but pure being never passes to determination, from pure power to its actuality"[58]. Hadot sees this Victorine movement from hidden to revealed, from pure being to its determination, as a solution far superior to Augustine's. This is because Augustine's solution, according to Hadot (and Huber) did not concern itself with being, but with the soul:

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[56] _Cf._ R. D. Crouse, "Philosophical Method" and chapter four below.

[57] _Cf._ P. Hadot, "L'Image", p. 429.

[58] _Cf. ibid._, "Pour [Augustin], _la génération se ramène à une pure relation_, sans qu'il y ait passage de la puissance à l'acte." & "passage de l'implicite à l'explicite...mais on ne passe jamais de l'être pur à la détermination, de la puissance pure à son actuation.", p. 429; italics mine. P. Hadot has Augustine wrong here. For an alternate view see, M. L. Carreker, A Commentary on Books Five, Six, and Seven of the _De Trinitate_ of Saint Augustine of Hippo, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1992, especially p. 304-308 and p. 446, n. 158. For M. Carreker, the role of category of act marks, "the profound difference between Augustine and Victorinus" and is central to "the character of the divine motion or necessity.", p. 306. M. Carreker see

in placing himself in the psychological realm, and not in the ontological realm, like Victorinus, Augustine situates himself in an order where every distinction is only able to be established between terms already existing. But above all, he passes from the consideration of being to that of consciousness of self.[59]

Hadot sees Augustine, whatever one makes of this, *renouncing* "ontological dogmatism"[60]. This is due to Huber's interpretation of Neoplatonism and Augustine and to the concerns of French phenomenology against idealism. For Huber, on account of Augustine's supposed achievements, the knowledge of God is limited to the perspective of the subjective soul: "thus being, the proper object of intelligence, 'no longer immediately opens itself to thought'"[61], and "thus, the knowledge of the subjective soul becomes the way to the knowledge of God; being is interpreted starting from the horizon of the soul"[62]. "Then," Hadot writes, "what Victorinus understands unhesitatingly, the Trinity according to ontological categories, Augustine is not able to think other than looking in the mirror of the

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Augustine as solving what was inadequate in Victorinus. This will be discussed further in chapter four of this thesis.

[59] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 429. That these two can be so easily and sharply distinguished is questionable. *Cf.* E. Booth, Augustine and the Western Tradition of Self-Knowing, Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1986, and the article on "Knowledge" in Saint Augustine Through the Ages: an Encyclopaedia, ed. A. Fitzgerald, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1999, p. 464-466: "'I desire to know God and the soul. Nothing besides? Nothing whatsoever.' (*Soliloquia* 1.2.7) And in pursuit of that objective, the pattern of his thought is always "from the things which are external to the things which are within, and from those inner things to the things above" (*en. Ps.* 145.5). Thus self-knowledge is an essential moment in the ascent to knowledge of God." The author sees this Augustinian pattern as consonant with the entire ancient position.

[60] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 441.

[61] *Cf. ibid.*, "Ainsi l'être, objet propre de l'intelligence, 'ne s'ouvre plus immédiatement à la pensée'", p. 441, quoting Huber at the end.

[62] *Cf. ibid.*, "Ainsi la connaissance de l'âme subjective devient le moyen de la connaissance de Dieu, l'être est interprété à partir de l'horizon de l'âme.", p. 441, quoting Huber.

self"[63]. For Hadot, in Victorinus and Augustine we have two very different and almost irreconcilable outcomes.

Hadot cannot see the direct influence of Victorinus on Augustine[64] because he emphasises too much "a gulf"[65] between them. So while he sees them both as players in the post-Plotinian world and sharing in "a common influence"[66], that is, Porphyry, for Hadot they have very different conclusions and it is this supposed different conclusion that prevents him from seeing an influence of Victorinus on Augustine. This is important for the goal of my thesis for if there is not this "gulf" between the two, then there can be a direct influence. Hadot rightly supposes that one cannot compare apples and oranges. The problem is that they are not a different species. When one understands the problems of Neoplatonism, the Augustinian soul and the structure of Augustine's *De Trinitate* aright, and therefore the importance of his doctrine of relations in being in act, they are far more similar than Hadot would admit.

Hadot is correct that the whole enterprise of the image of the Trinity in the soul is bound up in psychology[67]. Yet, to say Augustine surpasses or differentiates himself from Victorinus only in the extent to which he turns to the "historical" or "existential" self (and

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[63] *Cf. ibid.*, "Alors, que Victorinus conçoit sans hésiter la Trinité selon des catégories ontologiques, Augustine ne peut la penser qu'en la regardant dans le miroir du moi.", p. 441.

[64] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 433.

[65] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 440.

[66] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 433.

[67] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 441: "one does not stray from the true meaning of the Augustinian doctrine if one says with E. Benz...that Augustine's trinitarian theory is metaphysical and not psychological...the return of the soul towards itself has only the goal of approaching God. But Augustine's originality does not consist by an attempt to know God by the irregularities of the highest part of our being (*de trin.* V 1, 2). The theme is traditional...the novelty of Augustine is the existential character, one could say, of this movement of the soul."

therefore a modern psychology) is to put the cart before the horse. It also depreciates or altogether misses the importance and novelty of Augustine's achievements in his conception of the Trinity. Augustine is only able to articulate such an *itinerarium* of the mind to God (that is, psychological) in virtue of *first* finding a rational explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity as found in Holy Scriptures. The possibility of that *itinerarium*, which Hadot sees in the "existential" Augustinian soul, rests solely on his achievement of the doctrine of relations in being in act. While "the theme is traditional ...to try to know God by the irregularity of the highest part of our being", Augustine's outcome is most definitely not. Hadot fails to recognise this. Without this doctrine, there can be no unified individual whose related faculties of memory, understanding and will are maintained, let alone the ability to find such a thing in the soul.

In sum, the anachronisms of the relation and distinction between faith and reason, an anachronistic imposition of phenomenology, and as well as a basic misunderstanding of the method and structure of Augustine's <u>De Trinitate</u> and the doctrine of the Trinity found there obscure Hadot's interpretation of this history. Although it is folly not to recognise Hadot's determinative labour involved in seeing the common ancestry which belongs to Augustine and Victorinus in the Porphyrian <u>Commentary on Plato's Parmenides</u>, there are serious problems involved in his interpretation, which problems help us come closer to an accurate philosophical history of this period[68].

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[68] Cf. M. Clark, "The Neoplatonism of Marius Victorinus", in Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought, eds. H.J. Bluementhal & R.A. Markus, London: Variorum Publications Ltd., 1981. In this article, she repeats Hadot's argument and errors. In her notes to her translation to Victorinus' theological treatises, she merely

Is it possible that the two Porphyrian modes of the One (that is, as *Esse* and *Ens*) found in Victorinus (praised as superior by Hadot), rather, reveal an inadequacy in his (and Porphyry's) thought? Rather, could it not be that neither Porphyry, nor Victorinus, had yet resolved the vexed and ancient problem of the reconciliation of the one and many, or the One and Nous, but were lisping for it? If that is the case, Victorinus and Porphyry will be seen as positively contributing to the solution of this problem, yet not themselves answering it. It would be left for Augustine to complete this Porphyrian strain of post-plotinian Neoplatonism. Further, all that Hadot points to as failings in Augustine would be, in fact, positive accomplishments due to Augustine's solution to the problem. For instance, as quoted above, Hadot claims that in the Augustinian Trinity, there is no "movement of from potentiality to act", neither "does it pass from pure being to determination" and "all distinctions are only able to be established between already existing terms"[69]. These reveal Hadot's preoccupation with French phenomenology because with the movement from potency to act, partially there in Porphyry and more fully developed in Victorinus, the distance of Nous from the One is guarded. This distance, as was said above, is essential to phenomenology and its reaction to German idealism which would seek to close that gap. Hadot allows his concern for contemporary philosophy to colour his historical interpretation.

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translates Hadot's 20 year old analysis.*Cf.*, Victorinus, <u>Theological Treatises on the Trinity</u> in "The Fathers of the Church", vol. 69. Translation with notes and introduction by M. Clark. Washington, D. C.: CUA Press, 1981.

[69] P. Hadot, *Porphyre.*, p. 429.

Post-Hadot Modern Scholarship

N. Cipriani, above all, wishes to correct a false assumption which colours and pervades O. Du Roy's influential book, <u>*L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustin.*</u> <u>*Génèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391*</u>. Du Roy thinks, Cipriani claims, that Augustine found the Christian Trinity in Plotinus[70]. However, "In fact, in no place does Augustine claim to have found the entire Trinity, and in particular the Holy Spirit, in the books of the Neoplatonists" and further on, and that therefore Augustine "would not have been able to identify the Christian Trinity with the Plotinian Triad"[71]. That is to say, Cipriani wishes to see the distance between Augustine's Trinity and the Plotinian triad in order to correct certain "equivocations"[72] of Du Roy which Cipriani bases upon a close analysis of Augustine's own words[73].

Cipriani argues that Augustine was himself aware of the doctrinal disputes of the day from the readings of Victorinus and Ambrose (as well as Ambrose's preaching) and that these would have allowed Augustine to see the deficiencies of pagan Neoplatonism. Because of this, argues Cipriani, such a conflation, as Du Roy argues, between pagan philosophy and Christian Trinitarianism on Augustine's part, would have been unthinkable. The problem once again arises: how does one establish with certainty that Augustine read the works of

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[70] *Cf.* N. Cipriani, "*Le fonti christiane della dottrina trinitaria nei primi dialoghi di S. Augustino*", <u>Augustinianum</u>, Vol. XXXIV(1994); p. 256: Du Roy "afferma che in Plotino [Augustine] ha scoperta la stessa Trinità cristiana e che proprio "this anteriority of the knowledge of a Trinitarian God on the knowledge of the Incarnate Christ constitutes a fundamental articulation of Augustinian theology"", quoting Du Roy at the end.

[71] *Ibid.*, "Di fatto, in nessun luogo Agostino afferma di aver trovato nei libri neoplatonico l'intera Trinità e in particulare le Spirito Santo" & "e che quindi non avesse potuto identificare la Trinità cristiana con la triade plotinianna". p. 257.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

Victorinus or Ambrose, since, as Cipriani points out, Schmid did not find one actual citation of Victorinus in Augustine? Cipriani's method to discover the influence of Ambrose and Victorinus is, on one hand, opposed to that of Hadot (following Henry) who says, "there is only a certain literary dependence if there is a literal citation"[74]. Hadot's method is inadequate for Cipriani because there are nevertheless similarities between Augustine and Victorinus. How then to explain the similarities? On the other hand, Cipriani appeals to Hadot who says that Augustine "has an art of synthesis and of an extremely developed systematization"[75]. Therefore, the result of this "art" is

> a clear proof that the silence or absence of textual citations are not able to prejudge the question of a literary dependence of one author on another as we have exactly in the case of the two Neoplatonic philosophers. [76]

Hadot provides an antidote to his own limitations of interpretation. Seeing this developed faculty of synthesis in Augustine, Cipriani points to a third way to explain certain similarities:

> A series of notable coincidences in the ideas or in the reading of the two authors [Ambrose and Augustine], especially if presented in the same conceptual context, constitutes a sufficient proof to rationally admit a literary dependence of one author on another.[77]

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[73] *Ibid.,* p. 263-308.

[74] *Ibid.,* "il n'y a de dépendance littéraire certaine que s'il y a citation littérale", p. 260-261, citing P. Hadot, Marius Victorinus, Paris, 1971, p. 209.

[75] *Ibid.,* "[Augustine] a un art de la synthèse et de la systématisation extrêmement développé", p. 261, citing Hadot, *Citations de Porphyre chez Augustin, REA* 6(1960), p. 241.

[76] *Ibid.,* "una prova clamorosa che il silenzio o la mancanza di citazioni testuali non possono pregiudicare la questione di una dipendenza letteraria di uno scrittore da un altro l'abbiamo proprio nel caso dei due filosofi neoplatonici.", p. 261.

[77] *Ibid.,* "Una serie notevole di coincidenze nelle idee e nel lessico di due autori [Ambrose and Victorinus], specialmente se presenti nello stesso contesto concettuale, costituisce una prova sufficiente per ammettere ragionevolmente una dipendenza letteraria di un autore da un altro.", p. 262.

Further, whereas most others have limited their investigation of the early Augustine to the Cassiciacum dialogues, Cipriani argues that "The indices of a reading of this work of Ambrose and Victorinus would be without a doubt much more numerous and convincing, if the investigation would comprehend the entire work of Augustine"[78]. However, our author limits himself here to Augustine's early dialogues. Through this method Cipriani is able to show the direct influence of Ambrose and Victorinus on Augustine, something which Hadot said he could not do.

Cipriani concludes that the main point of his article was not to show that Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine was devoid of all alien Neoplatonic influences, but rather "to prove that this influence [of the pagan Neoplatonists] passes through the filter of a Christian source, represented by the work of Victorinus and Ambrose." Any reading of pagan texts would therefore, "allow the new convert to avoid rash affirmations, that is, to identify the Christian Trinity with the Plotinian triad...with the consequence of mistaking the content of Christian revelation in favour of the reflections of the pagan philosophers"[79]. Further,

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[78] *Ibid.*, "Gli inidizi di una lettura agostiniana di queste opere di Ambrogio e Vittorino sarebbero senza dubbio molto più numerosi e convincenti, se l'indagine fosse estesa a tutte le opere agostiniane.", p. 262.

[79] *Ibid.*, "di provare che questo influsso [of the pagan Neoplatonists] è passato attraverso il filtro di alcune fonti cristiane, rappresentate da opere di Ambrogio et di M. Vittorino" & "permise al neoconvertito di evitare affermazioni avventate...di aver cioè identificato la Trinità cristiana con la triade di Plotino...con la conseguenza di un grave cedimento sul contentuto della rivelazione cristiana a favore della riflessione dei filosofi pagani", p. 309.

> In effect, already in the dialogue of Cassiciacum we have often seen the attempt to underline, on the one hand, the perfect divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, and, on the other hand, the ontological distance which separates the soul from God. This preoccupation escapes Du Roy with the consequence of attributing a non-existent grave confusion to Augustine. [80]

Early in Augustine's career Cipriani sees Augustine fully aware of the doctrinal and theological implications of certain tendencies of pagan Neoplatonism which enabled Augustine to steer through the Charbidys and Scylla represented by Arianism and Sabellianism. On account of what he proved in his article, Cipriani finds the early Augustine "much more Christian than commonly thought" [81].

Cipriani sets up a bulwark by which he says that it would be unlikely, even impossible, for Augustine to have uncritically appropriated the insights of pagan Neoplatonism. Even more importantly, he sets up an hermeneutic by which a direct influence of Victorinus and Ambrose on Augustine can be shown. He moves beyond Hadot (following Hadot's own principle) by allowing the possibility of an influence of Victorinus on Augustine by showing similarities in doctrine, not necessarily a literary citation.

Pier Beatrice in his provocative article, "Quosdam Platonicorum Libros: the Platonic Readings of Augustine in Milan"[82], argues that the sole pagan Neoplatonic influence is Porphyry's "Philosophy from Oracles". However, Beatrice expands the contents of this work. For instance, Beatrice thinks that *'contra christianos'* and *'de regressu animae'*, traditionally

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[80] *Ibid.*, "In effetti, già nei dialoghi di Cassiciaco lo abbiamo visto sempre attento a sottolineare da un lato la perfetta divinità sia di Cristo che dello Spirito Santo e dall'altro la distanza ontologica che separa l'anima da Dio. Questa preoccupazione è sfuggita del tutto al Du Roy con la conseguenza di attribuire ad Agostino una grave confusione totalmente inesistente.", p. 309.

[81] *Ibid.*, "molto più cristiano di quanto comunemente si pensi.", p. 312.

assumed to be separate works of Porphyry, "are not the Latin titles of two different works of Porphyry, but two different ways by which Augustine individuates qualifying aspects of the same work, the *Philosophy of Oracles*"[83]. For Beatrice, it is "plausible to think that through it [*Philosophy from Oracles*] Augustine came in contact with wide fragments of Greek philosophical works, especially by Plato -- apart from what he already had read from other Latin translations -- and Plotinus"[84]. The result of his hypothesis is this:

> Finally, the religious purpose of the *Philosophy from Oracles* explains the attention given to it by Augustine when he dealt with the problem of man's salvation and the mediation between God and man. If to all that we add exactly this work of Porphyry was available to Augustine in a Latin translation, we cannot but conclude that precisely the *Philosophy from Oracles, and no other work,* was read by Augustine in Milan in the Latin translation by Marius Victorinus, and through this work he came to know the passages of the *Enneads* upon which he was to meditate all his life. [85]

Beatrice writes that "Porphyry was the real "mediator" or "conveyer" of Neoplatonic philosophy from Plotinus to Augustine and that he was the author of the books which conveyed that philosophy"[86].

As for Marius Victorinus' role in all this, Beatrice sees Victorinus' interest lying wholly in Porphyry and not Plotinus:

> If Marius Victorinus mediated the knowledge of Plotinus in the Latin West, he very probably carried out this important cultural undertaking not by means of the translation of the *Enneads*, but of some work of Porphyry which contained and commented on some extracts from Plotinus.[87]

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[82] *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 43(1989), Leiden: E. J. Brill, p. 248-281.
[83] *Ibid.*, p. 261.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 255.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 255; italics mine.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 257.
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 264.

This is further confirmed by "how closely he [Victorinus] followed Porphyry's anti-Christian arguments"[88] in the period before Victorinus' conversion, which makes Augustine's account of it all the more compelling. For if

> Marius Victorinus was then a persevering and proud supporter of pagan idolatry as seen by Porphyry...[and] in spite of all that, he bowed to the yoke of humility at the end...and through the Neoplatonic metaphysics he fought against the Arian heresy, why couldn't Augustine follow the same spiritual path?[89]

"Only within his contemporary pagan culture," writes Beatrice, "so deeply influenced by Porphyry's thought, can we fully understand the meaning of his biographical data in Augustine's *Confessions*"[90]. Victorinus' role, then, in all this was as the translator of the Neoplatonic *and* anti-Christian text of Porphyry, *Philosophy from Oracles*, and also as a paradigm for the conversion of a Roman pagan philosopher.

The most recent Plotinian scholarship has attempted to place Plotinus within his own historical period and not to view his system through contemporary philosophical problems[91]. The result of this scholarship, so far as those areas in Plotinus which would seem to close the gap between the One and Nous are concerned, is that Plotinus is seen in no way to wish to ascribe noetic predicates to the One. Plotinus in fact guards the distance between the One and Nous. Therefore, inasmuch as Porphyry brings the One and Nous

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[88] *Ibid.*, p. 265.
[89] *Ibid.*, p. 266.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 265.

closer together, he is unfaithful to his master and develops a philosophical system in a direction which could be considered contrary to Plotinus'. Yet, the same scholarship has shown that Porphyry develops strands of thought implicit in Plotinus. The outcome of this scholarship is an account which renders a more balanced interpretation of both Plotinus and Porphyry. Plotinus still guards the difference between the One and Nous, but they are found to be closer to each other than previously thought. This closeness – discovered by scholarhsip not dominated by anachronistic interpretations of Neoplatonism – also allows Porphyry to be both loyal and disloyal to his master. Porphyry continues to develop that closeness between the One and Nous, a closeness found in Plotinus' own writings.

Conclusion

Two main problems reveal themselves in our survey of modern scholarship. The first is the relation of the scholarship on the ancients to modern philosophical problems such as German idealism and phenomenology. Too often, as we have seen, concern for modern philosophical problems obscure the reading of the ancients. Contemporary Plotinian scholarship has begun the immense task of finding a position somewhere between the idealistic identification of the Plotinian One with Nous and the phenomenological emphasis of "an abyss" between them. So far as this thesis is concerned, this new research allows us to understand more clearly how, what and to what extent Porphyry developed and differed

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[91] *Cf.* K. Corrigan, "Amelius, Plotinus and Porphyry on Being", <u>*ANRW*</u>, 36:2(1987), p. 975-993, F. M. Schroeder, "Synousia, Synaisthaesis and Synesis: Presence and Dependence in the Plotinian Philosophy of Consciousness", <u>*ANRW*</u>, 36: 2(1987), p. 677-699, G. Leroux, <u>*Plotin: Traité sur la liberté*</u>. With trans., intro and commentary. Paris: Vrin, 1990, I. Perczel, "L'intellect amoureux et l'un qui est", <u>Revue de Philosophie Ancienne</u>, XV:2(1997), p. 223-264. These will be discussed more fully in chapter two.

from his master's own position. These investigations in turn shed a brighter light on the entire subsequent history of the Porphyrian strain of Neoplatonism, central obviously to Augustine's own development and to this thesis.

The second problem is the imposition of the scholastic division between theology and philosophy on this history. In Hadot, this has rendered a most confusing interpretation in which he tries to account for development or influence in the most awkward ways. His account seems so cumbersome simply because he was trying to read this late ancient period according to late mediaeval categories. The influence of this book is pervasive and has no doubt had a greater influence than simply in Hadot's ascription of the Parmenidean commentary to Porphyry. Surprisingly, no one has pointed out this most basic and egregious error. Correcting this, too, is central to my thesis because the influence and use of Scripture, as well as assumptions about the nature, goals and use of theology and philosophy, are decisive in the proper understanding of this history, especially in Victorinus and Augustine.

The question of determining the sources and influences of an author can sometimes seem to be a rather capricious affair, but the very process of ascertaining them makes one both conscious of one's own philosophical presuppositions and, along with this, determined to look at that period within its own historical and philosophical problems. This is what this thesis will attempt to do relative to the intellectual history leading up to Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity beginning with Plotinus, mindful not to make the ancients say what they could not.

Chapter Two:

Plotinus and Porphyry

Introduction

Plotinus wants to preserve both the absolute unity and causality of the One and the finite and divided realm of determined being as found in Nous and below, but is presented with a problem. On one hand, to preserve the finite, divided and determined realm, he must exclude being, life and thought from the One itself. For to introduce these into it would destroy the causality and freedom of the One and, on account of this destruction, the realm of the finite. This perspective looks at Plotinus' universe from the perspective of the finite and as such emphasizes the divided and hierarchical universe. As the perspective is divided, the One escapes all thought about it and so this side of Plotinus' thought is most often seen as apophatic. On the other hand, in the very same attempt to establish further the One's freedom and causality, and therefore the realm of the finite, Plotinus must, though qualified and with reluctance, ascribe these predicates to the One. Such ascriptions occur primarily in Ennead VI, 8. Is this Plotinus' final word on the One? Can Porphyry, on account of closing the gap between the One and Nous purportedly found in Ennead VI, 8, be the true interpreter of Plotinus? Current scholarship has given an exceedingly subtle, but clear answer to these questions: the purpose of Plotinus in Ennead VI, 8 is not to ascribe noetic predicates to the One. Yet the same scholarship has also revealed that in many other places in the Plotinian corpus, the distance between the One and Nous is closer than previously

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thought. Other research in Plotinian ethics, psychology, ontology and epistemology (areas not entirely separable from the relation of the One and Nous[1]) also reveals this same closeness.

The result of this scholarship is that we have a clearer understanding of both Plotinus and Porphyry. Without looking through the lenses of an Hegelian (which would see in Plotinus' One only absolute self-consciousness) or through a French phenomenologist (which would emphasize the abyss between the One and self-consciousness in Nous), we can better determine how this Neoplatonic history unfolds. We are better able to distinguish between what Plotinus himself said and what is in fact *the Porphyrian interpretation of Plotinus*. In the first part of this chapter, therefore, I will show what can properly be said about Plotinus' own system. I will then lay out those elements in Plotinus which would lead Porphyry to bring the One and Nous closer together.

In the second part of this chapter, I will show how Porphyry begins to bring the One and Nous closer together[2]. Through his distinction between forms of being, Porphyry begins to show how that full, free and transcendent principle is at once its determinations. His first principle is at once super-being and its determination as being, life and thought unified in act. How Nous and the One are precisely related, however, is ambiguous, just as in Plotinus' system. The first moment of Nous is *hyparxis*, but is this first moment coincident with the

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[1] *Cf.* I. Perczel, '*L'intellect amoureux et l'"un qui est"*', <u>Revue de Philosophie Ancienne</u>, XV: 2(1997), p. 226 where Perczel says he will attempt to demonstrate that "le doctrine spirituelle de Plotin repose sur des bases ontologiques clairement défines".

[2] For the purposes of this thesis, I will assume that Hadot's ascription of the Parmenidean commentary to Porphyry is correct. For a recent confirmation of Hadot's thesis, see J. Dillon, "Porphyry's Metaphysic of the

absolute simplicity of the One or is it, rather, "clearly below it"[3] as A. Smith argues? However, if one looks at the commentary as a whole, considering especially the ascription of infinitive being to the One and finite being to Nous, or the first stage of Nous, *hyparxis*, must somehow be within the One. Yet Porphyry does not explicitly say this. Further, Porphyry's use of the word *hyparxis*, denoting the character of actuality[4] and of "pure being, being before all determintion"[5], coincides nicely with the infinitive, pre-determined being which the One is. Since Porphyry was the first to make this distinction between forms of being, it would be hard to imagine that the choice of the word *hyparxis* was accidental or not meant to indicate the absolute purity and unity of the *to einai* of the One and hence have *hyparxis'* first moment in the One. While I believe it is clearly implied that the first moment of Nous is contained within the One, *Porphyry's reticence concerning the precise location of it reveals the same difficulties with which Plotinus was dealing.* Porphyry brings Nous and the One closer together, but hesitates to say how exactly, for he too wished to save the One's absolute and freedom.

What is ambiguous in Porphyry is made definite in Victorinus as he firmly and clearly ascribes *hyparxis* to the One, or the Father, as a means to unify and distinguish the three hypostases, developing Porphyry's system even further. The way in which Victorinus imputes *hyparxis* to the One sets up an opposition between potency and act, undermining his attempt to give a philosophical coherent doctrine of the Trinity. *Importantly, Porphyry's reticence*

One", in <u>SOFIHS MAIHTORES: Chercheurs de sagesse, Hommage à Jean Pépin</u>, Paris: 1992. I will also limit the purview of Porphyry's thought to this commentary alone.

[3] *Cf.* "Hypostasis and *hyparxis* in Porphyry", in <u>Hyparxis e Hypostasis *nel Neoplatonismo*</u>, eds. F. Romano & D. P. Taotmina, Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1994, p. 40.

[4] *Cf.* P. Hadot, <u>*Porphyre*</u>, p. 488-490. The term, *hyparxis*, is taken from the Stoics.

and ambiguity protects his principle from determinations which, following his master, properly exist below it.

In the end, the result for Porphyry is not the unity of the One and its determinations, but, as Augustine calls it, three gods[6]. But first, we must begin with Plotinus.

Section One:
The Plotinian Structure of the Universe:
Levels of Unity and the Relation Between the One and Nous

Following in the footsteps of Aristotle[7], Plotinus claims that "It is by the One that all beings are beings"[8]. The cause of unity is the One, the principle of all that is sequent, but the One can only be a principle if it is "authentically a unity". Plotinus explains that,

> For if [the One] is not to be simple, outside all coincidence and composition, it could not be a first principle; and it is the most self-sufficient, because it is simple and the first of all: for that which is not the first needs that which is before it; and what is not simple is in need of its simple components so that it can come into existence.[9]

The universe of multiplicity needs the absolute simplicity of the One. For Plotinus, the universe is an hierarchically ordered series of unities, beginning with the One, the most truly a unity, then Nous and Soul, right down to rocks and vegetables. So while a rock is a composite and quite unlike the One, "what is not simple is in need of its simple components so that it can come into existence". The One is the cause of all in virtue of each thing being one, each having the simplicities within itself.

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[5] *Cf. ibid.,* "à l'être pur, à l'être antérieur à toute détermination", p. 112.
[6] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei,* X, 29.
[7] Aristotle, Metaphysics, X, 2, 1054a*ff.*
[8] *Cf.* Ennead VI, 9, 1. *Cf. ibid.* I, 9, 1. I will use Armstrong's translation, Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1996.
[9] *Ibid.,* V, 4, 1.

This One is "not-limited" and "infinite"[10] and as such is dependent upon nothing outside of itself. Any determinations which would impose any sort of limit would destroy this Unity as the first cause of all. For the One to be a productive principle, it can have nothing within it which would divide it. To introduce finitude into the infinite One or to make the infinite dependent on the finite would be to destroy the One's causality and creation's salvation. This One is a principle that has no need of anything whatsoever,

> For since he is the most sufficient and independent of all things, he must also be the most without need. For whatever is in need is in need as striving towards its principle, but if the One is in need of anything, it is obviously seeking not to be one.[11]

As a Unity, the One rests absolutely complete, lacking or desiring nothing. It is only as such that it is free and as such it can be productive[12].

Plotinus was trying to prevent - because it is impossible - the division of the first principle. The Plotinian universe depends on this self-sufficing principle of the One. For Plotinus, to have self-thinking thought as the first principle, or Aristotelian Nous, would be to divide the indivisible and to posit, unwittingly, a prior, but true, undivided principle. All division implies, indeed necessitates, a prior unity. Nevertheless, thought needs a divisible object, a one-many principle which has being and unity. This One-Many is Nous. This is the reason why from this view point of the henological structure of the universe Plotinus cannot have any being, thought or consciousness in the One. For thought, being, or consciousness

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[10] *Ibid.*, V, 5, 10.
[11] *Ibid.*, VI, 9, 6.
[12] *Cf.* J. Bussanich, The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus, New York: E. J. Brill, 1988, p. 7. He is here commenting on Ennead V, 4, 2.

to exist, that is, for all intelligible or sensible reality to exist, the One must remain an absolute unity without any of these attributes.

The current understanding of Nous, the phases of its procession and its relation to the One is hotly debated[13]. In <u>Ennead</u> II, 4, 5, Plotinus speaks of Nous' two moments, one as intelligible matter or indefinite thought, the other as determined by turning or returning to the One. However, the return to the One has itself two moments as well to make it Nous[14]. In turning to the One in the first moment, the intellectual matter is fecundated by the One (this is the production of being or the content of thought); the second moment is a reflection on itself, on that with which it is filled (this is the birth of thought). Plotinus writes: Nous, "which sees the intelligible and turns towards it and is, in a way, being perfected by it, itself indefinite like seeing, but is defined by the intelligible"[15]. And again: "Its halt and turning towards the One constitutes being, its gaze upon the one, Intellect. Since it halts and turns towards the One that it may see, it becomes at once Intellect and being"[16]. Thus we have the duality of Nous which exists inseparably, "one does not abandon the

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[13] For an overview of positions, *cf.* I. Perczel, *'L'intellect'*, pp. 223-225.
[14] I follow G. Reale here, <u>A History of Ancient Philosophy. Vol IV</u>, trans., J. Catan, Albany: State University of New York, 1990, p. 342.
[15] <u>Ennead</u> V, 4, 2.
[16] *Ibid.*, V, 2, 1.

other, but this one is two things"[17]. Nous is intelligence and Intelligible, being and thought[18], a one-many[19].

To make matters more complicated, I. Perczel has further distinguished two moments of the mystic return to the One, when it becomes Nous proper. In one passage, <u>Ennead</u> II, 4, 5, Plotinus says that the vision of the One for Nous is "*epibolê tini kai paradokê*", an "advancing and receiving". *Paradokê*, Perczel writes, is essentially passive and implies a subject object division. *Epibolê*, however, is an active and direct perception, "which does not necessarily presuppose a subject-object division"[20]. To give only one example which Perczel deals with, and this based on accurate readings of Plotinus' text, the result is that Nous is found to be closer to the One than previously thought, *yet the difference between the two*, ever crucial as we have seen above, *still remains*. A middle position has been found between the seeming abyss between the One and Nous (and therefore man) and those who would make the One absolute self-consciousness. A reality in Nous has been discovered in Plotinus' system which "entirely transcends Nous but is not, however, identified purely and simply with the One"[21]. "The mediating position [between the One and Nous] of this entity," writes

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[17] *Ibid.*, V, 1, 4.

[18] The Plotinian Nous has subsumed Plato's forms, but the forms as contained in Nous have also become living ideas which are thinking, for, "it has nothing in it which does not think", <u>Ennead</u> V, 1, 4. Although essential to mention as part of his system, I will take up the idea of Nous as thinking (i.e. as productive) later in this chapter.

[19] "For they are simultaneous and exist together and one does not abandon the other, but this one is two things, Intellect and Being and thinking and thought, Intellect as thinking and Being as thought", <u>Ennead</u> V, 1, 4.

[20] *Cf.* I. Perczel, *'L'intellect'*, p. 229-232: "qui ne présuppose pas nécessairement une dualité sujet-objet".

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 225, "une 'réalité' dans l'intellect qui tout en trascendant l'intellect ne s'identifie pourtant pas purement et simplement avec l'Un".

Perczel, "in the Plotinian system makes its relation to the absolute One *completely indefinable*"[22]. Such an interpretation of the relation between the One and Nous is typical of current scholarship. It sees a closeness between the One and Nous, but it does so without completely identifying one with the other. Plotinus, therefore, is clear that Nous is not identified with the One, yet he also reveals a proximity of the two which is not able to be defined. It must be, as Perczel puts it, "indecise and ambiguous"[23]. Such scholarship which shows the precise relation between the One and Nous (that is, as precisely as Plotinus will allow) is obviously important for our treatment of Porphyry, for it is that ambiguous status of Nous, the "amorous intellect" spoken of in Perczel's article, which Porphyry develops. We may see a certain precursor of Porphyry's thought in Plotinus, but Porphyry, as we will see, trespasses -- though with trepidation and reticence -- against his master's system by bringing the One and Nous together.

For our purposes here, we need only sketch the first two levels of the Plotinian world, the One and Nous. In these two levels, we see the consequences of the Plotinian system for thought. In our thinking, we divide the object, just as Nous itself is divided. Just as Nous presupposes and demands a higher unity, so too, for Plotinus, does our thinking. The One and Nous represent the two sides of human thinking. As Plotinus writes, "For there could not be thinking without otherness, and also sameness"[24]. However, as we have shown, it is fatal within the Plotinian system to collapse the One and Nous, for the One

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 254, "La position de médiateur de cette entité dans le système plotinien rend sa relation à l'Un absolu *complètement indéfinissable*"; italics mine.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 226, "indécis et ambigu".

cannot accommodate Nous, or a thinking which divides it. This is why there is omnipresent the statement that there can be nothing predicated of the One (or only terms which will not divide it[25]). Although the One and Nous are now seen to be closer, that distance is still guarded.

Section Two:
Hellenistic Salvation and the Freedom of the One:
Plotinian Psychology, Ontology and Creative Contemplation

The philosophy around the time period of Plotinus and Porphyry was concerned with salvation and freedom[26]. This is what we see in Stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism and our two philosophers are no exception. *Apatheia* and *autarchia* were the goal for the individual. They desired freedom from the assaults of the world[27]. For Plotinus, the One was the goal of all desires and aspirations[28]. It was there that freedom was to be found[29]. It was there that all things, especially rational beings, find rest. That is why Plotinus refers to the

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[24] Ennead, V, 1, 4.

[25] *Cf.* G. Leroux, Plotin: Traité sur la liberté et la volonté de l'Un, Paris: Vrin, p. 38: The predicates dismissed in Ennead VI, 8 are predicates belonging to Nous. However, there are a list of "non-noetiques" predicates, such as will and liberty which show, 'l'absolue originarité de l'Un". L. Westra, in her book Plotinus and Freedom: A Meditation on *Enneads* 6. 8., Lewiston: The Edward Mellon Press, 1990, shows how the concepts of will and liberty were developed to prevent the One being subject to chance which would prevent the One from being independent and august. Leroux and Westra here are close on this.

[26] *Cf.* A.-J. Festugière, Personal Religion Among the Greeks, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960, in particular chapter 2, "The Hellenistic Mood and Plato".

[27] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 40: "One more important feature of the Hellenistic Age was favorable to personal union with a god: the sense of the instability of human affairs. Here political circumstances play a decisive part. No more tormented period of world history is to be found than the first centuries of the Hellenistic Age."

[28] *Cf.* Ennead VI, 8, 7: The One, "That principle of Good is the sole object of desire and the source of self-disposal to the rest, to soul when it fully attains", "that to which all else strives to mount…".

[29] *Cf.* Ennead II, 3, 9: "Our task, then, is to work for our liberation from this sphere, severing ourselves from all that has gathered about us…There is another life, emancipated, whose quality is progression towards the higher realm, towards the good and divine, towards that Principle which no one possesses except by deliberate usage but so may appropriate, becoming, each personally, the higher, the beautiful, the Godlike, and living, remote, in and by it…"

One as "the Liberator", 'eleutheropoion'[30]. However, how was the individual to arrive at this summit? Again arising out of the Hellenistic philosophies on which Plotinus depends, the individual sought for the cause and principal of all within himself[31].

What, however, was the nature of this ascent? The individual's ascent was one of a "contemplative intelligence"[32] or a "creative contemplation"[33] where, in the movement from his corporal animal self towards himself as intelligible and intellectual, he becomes free[34]. The higher he goes, the more truly unified he becomes, and the more his knowing is unified; he discovers also, therefore, his true self. The higher he goes, the freer he becomes. In the ascent, during the contemplation of progressively higher and more intelligible things, the individual constructs his own reality[35], but that construction is not a creation of a fantasy world. Rather, it is a discovery of what was already there: it is a more unified knowing of a

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[30] *Cf. ibid.* VI, 8, 12.

[31] *Cf.* L. Westra, Plotinus, p. 60: "Freedom, here, is to be understood primarily as "interiority," the very effort to turn inward, turning within while fleeing the temptation to multiplicity existing without. And it is not only at the start that freedom and salvation coincide; on the contrary, the whole upward journey is a continuing striving toward unification, and thus toward freedom itself. It is grounded, as is all else, in the One."

[32] *Cf.* L. Westra, Plotinus, p. 53.

[33] *Cf.* W. Hankey, "Patterns of Creative Contemplation: Boethius, Eriugena, Anselm and Aquinas", a paper given for the Mediaeval Colloquium of Boston College, October 18, 1999, published as: "*Secundum rei vim vel secundum cognoscentium facultatem*. Knower and known in the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius and the Proslogion of Anselm", for Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism and Christianity, eds. John Inglis, Richmond [England]: Curzon Press, 2001, in press: "Plotinus tells us that "All things come from contemplation and are contemplation" (*Ennead* III. 8. 7.). Contemplation, whether the simple regard which is the interior activity of the One, or the motionless motion of Intellect which is the perfect activity of Nous, or the successive acts of reasoning which make up the life of Soul, is the constitutive heart of the primary subsistences of the cosmos...From the higher contemplations proceed the lower ones. The higher and the lower are linked from both sides. On the one hand, the lower contemplation is an image or "utterance" of the higher in a more divided medium (*cf. Ennead* V. 1. 3, V. 1. 6., V. 1. 7.). On the other hand, the lower is completed and comes to its true being only by turning to its prior".

[34] *Cf. Ennead* VI, 8, 7: "The soul, then, becomes free when it presses on without hindrance to the Good by means of Intellect, and what it does through this is in its power".

[35] *Cf. Ennead* III, 8, 4: "And my act of contemplation makes what it contemplates, as geometers draw their figures while they contemplate."

thing which was known at a lower level in a more divided medium. The movement upward through the levels of self is a movement toward what is really real; it is a discovery of already existent realities which discovery is the individual's "creative intelligence".

The two primary levels which constitute the Plotinian universe, the One and Nous, are analogous to the two sides needed in the ascent in Plotinian psychology. That is, this upward movement of the souls depends upon "two patterns of productivity"[36]. The first pattern, the production of the One, depends upon an object which always exceeds its grasp. W. Hankey writes:

> Because the One is the ultimate object of contemplation, it is the origin of everything beneath it; but everything else differs from the One. In itself the One does not think, its simple self-regard is certainly not the contemplation of another above it. Because of the same superior unity which prevents any reflexion even upon itself, the One does not have being... Being is beneath the One and everything within Being exists by a reflection upon a cause which has a higher mode. This model of creation depends upon the difference between the simplicity of what is known and the division of the knower. The higher simplicity of the known prevents the object from being known as it is in itself. Ultimately the pattern depends on the exclusive simplicity of the One.[37]

The second pattern is that of the Aristotelian Nous, "the thinking of an object of thought which is both the necessary correlative of the activity of thinking and the equality of the

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[36] This demarcation comes from W. Hankey, "Patterns". While the two patterns of productivity or creative contemplation are found in L. Westra's book, they are not distinguished, but certainly implied. Hankey makes clear these two sides, which gives a clearer understanding of this notion in Plotinus and allows for a broader interpretation of Plotinus by his contemporaries (one, Proclan/Iamblichan; the other, Porphyrian/Augustinian).

[37] *Cf.* W. Hankey, "Patterns"; italics mine.

subject of the activity".[38] The thinker in this model is equal to the object thought. Yet both

sides together make possible the movement toward the One.

L. Westra looks at the problem of the movement through the levels of self from the

point of view of the One's freedom which acts as the paradigm for the Plotinian quester

himself. She writes in her book, Plotinus and Freedom,

> If...the One is in essence freedom, contemplation which comes
> from the One must be "freedom" in progressively weaker degrees.
> Whether we are ascending or descending, contemplation is a
> "freeing" creative intellectual power...Thus, as cultivated and slowly
> emerging from us, it represents a freeing act which rediscovers the
> reality to which we have been inclined all along.[39]

Or again,

> Therefore, if the One is freedom..., and if it is our nature as the
> nature of the upper part of the soul which is always There, the
> whole upward journey is nothing but the progressive acquisition or
> affirmation of freedom, a process of becoming which has freedom
> as its full actuality.[40]

Our progressive acquisition of freedom, attained by "contemplative intelligence", is nothing

other than knowing on a higher and more unified level, what was known on a lower and

more dispersed level. We begin with the second pattern where the thing thought is equal to

the thinker. However, this acquisition and elevation is only possible through the One's own

perfect "contemplative intelligence", out of whose absolute freedom and unity the universe

was spawned. This is the first pattern where the One is perfect and simple and must exceed

the grasp of all below it. That is to say, at whatever level of knowing and freedom the man is

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[38] *Ibid.*
[39] L. Westra, Plotinus, p. 59.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

at and is equal with (second pattern), he is also dependent on each of the higher sequent realities and is ultimately dependent on the One for his freedom to move upward and for his ultimate rest in the One[41] which knowledge necessarily escapes him. The two sides which Hankey demarcates are here in Westra's account. The movement of the soul is dependent on both the One's freedom and the deficient freedom of Nous *at once*. In Plotinus, we see that the two sides are necessary and that, just as the levels of the One and Nous must be kept separate as we discussed above, so too the two sides must remain *two* and *separate*. Yet the movement of the soul requires the *two* sides in *one* moment.

Westra pursues this again from a different angle. In examining the well-known and little understood Plotinian image of the "alone to the Alone"[42], she distinguishes in Plotinus many senses of the concept "alone" or solitude[43]. Alone could, for example, mean a deficiency or privation, that is, a not possessing of something that one ought to possess. Yet for the One, Westra argues, it is a different story. The One is and signifies plenitude and fullness, no lack whatsoever. It is perfection. She argues that modern commentators have understood the "alone to the Alone" to mean a complete annihilation of the self towards an empty, abstract principle. They have fallen into a false understanding that Plotinus at every point was trying to prevent: they have ascribed our finite understanding of "aloneness" or solitude to the "aloneness" of the One. To correct this she writes:

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[41] *Cf.* Ennead VI, 7, 8: "all [is] dependent upon it and taking from it their powers even to this power of self-disposal" and V, 8, 4: "...as each moves, so to speak, towards what is Above, it is attended by the very god from which it starts."

[42] *Cf.* Ennead VI, 9, 11.

[43] L. Westra, Plotinus, p. 65.

> if "alone to the Alone" entails the absolute freedom for the One,
> for us the increased true self-awareness that is engendered by the
> liberating journey back to our Source gradually removes the hard
> shell of self-willing, isolating individuality.[44]

It is in our movement to our higher true selves, stripped of our finite and "self-willing, isolating individuality", that we come to know freedom and, as it were, our true personality. The flight of the "alone to the Alone" when understood from the side of the One, that is, when understood correctly, is the flight of the truly free, full and complete to Freedom, Plenitude and Completion. To acknowledge the One's difference from ourselves and to allow it to be a paradigm for ourselves allows the movement toward it and rest in it. As Boethius learns, freedom from the earthbound determinism of fate and the apparent contradiction between freewill and providence which prevents any movement and renders him senseless depends upon a proper understanding of God's knowing and our finite knowing[45]. This is all to say that the "perfect self-regard" and freedom of the One and which is the One must be kept separate and distinguished from the deficient, but equally necessary, contemplation of Nous. Once again, we see in Plotinus both the necessity of keeping the two separate and not conflating the them and also the unity of the two sides in the movement of the individual soul.

F. Schroeder, in his article "Synousia", writes about the "asymmetrical pattern of cognition"[46] between the One and forms of knowing other than it. In this, he also reveals the

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[44] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[45] Boethius, *Consolatione Philosophiae*, V, iv, 72-77.
[46] F. Schroeder, "Synousia, Synaisthaesis and Sunesis: Presence and Dependence in the Plotinian Philosophy of Consciousness", *ANRW*, 32: 2(1987), p. 677.

two forms of "creative contemplation", the absolute necessity of their separation *and* their ambiguous unity. For instance, Schroeder looks at the use of the word "synousia", "being with", when Plotinus describes the procession of Intellect from the One. Seeing also that soul has the same relation to Intellect as Intellect to the One, Schroeder writes: "The being of Intellect (or of anything below the One), is then "a being with" (synousia) in the sense of a "being in dependence"[47]. Yet later, he notes that "synousia",

> may also be employed to describe the self-sufficiency, coherence and integrity of Intellect... In comparison with Soul, Intellect, as the achieved identity of thought and being, is said to "be together with Itself" (5. 9. 7) as its act need not find fulfillment beyond itself. This self-sufficiency is seen, however, to hold only in relation to its inferior.[48]

Where there is self-sufficiency, there is an equality of thinker with thing thought (Second pattern). This self-sufficiency, however, is such only in comparison to the lower level. Compared to the One, the Intellect is by no means self-sufficient. The self-sufficiency of Intellect depends upon the One which is radically other than it and is not equal with it (First pattern). That which is below the One reveals an ontological ambiguity, a necessity that it be, or have united in itself, the two patterns. It is both perfect and self-sufficient and dependent on and deficient relative to its prior *at once*. Yet the two patterns, the One and Nous, must also be kept separate. It is the knowing individual especially, but also all of the universe below the One, which holds the two together, caught between them both. Schroeder writes again:

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[47] *Ibid.*, p. 680.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 681.

> Synousia, although it expresses self-coherence, yet it implies a deficiency of self-identity. The very use of the prefix sun- ("with") implies at least a duality, if not a multiplicity. What unity there is in this self-coherence is, in each case, mediated through that which is more radical and superior unity and self-identity.[49]

Likewise, self-consciousness, "synaisthaesis", has a similar role to "synousia". He quotes

<u>Ennead</u> V, 3, 13:

> That which is altogether simple and truly self-sufficient has need of nothing, but that which is only secondarily self-sufficient, as it has need of itself, needs to think itself; and that which is wanting in respect to itself has made a sufficient autarchy for the whole from all its parts by its self-coherence (sunon heatō) and directing its thought toward itself. Since even sunaisthaesis is a perception of multiplicity.

Commenting on this, Schroeder says, "Sunaisthaesis here is addressed indeed to the objects of thought in Intellect, but is also reflexive, i.e. a form of self-consciousness. It is a consciousness of a self, however, which is deficient by reason of its multiplicity"[50]. Again he quotes Plotinus at length:

> For thinking is a fine thing for us, because the soul needs to possess intellect, and for Intellect, because its being is the same as thinking, and thinking made it; therefore this Intellect needs to keep company with thinking and to be always getting an intimate understanding of itself, that this is this, because the two are; but if it was only one, it would have sufficed to itself and would not have needed to get understanding. Since also "Know thyself" is said to those who because of their selves' multiplicity have the business of counting themselves up and learning that they do not know all of the number and kind of things they are, or do not know any one of them; not what their ruling principle is or by what they are themselves. But if the Good is anything, it is so in a greater way than by knowledge and thought and sunaisthaesis of itself.[51]

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[49] *Ibid.*, p. 685.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 686.
[51] *Cf.* <u>Ennead</u> VI, 7, 41.

Commenting on this, Schroeder writes:

> The deficient self-coherence of Intellect presents a paradox to its consciousness which compels it to the function of maximizing unity; through this act of consciousness the ontic unity of the hypostasis is achieved. To carry the paradox further, in contrast to the searching self-ignorance of Intellect, the One has no sunaisthaesis (at least of the type found in Intellect) for in the supreme unity of subject and object, where there is no duality, there is no place for it.[52]

The means by which the Intellect constitutes itself becomes at once the means for its difference and dependence on the One. It is a recipe for dissatisfaction where Nous, as self-constituting and seeking the source and ground of that constitution, as it is constituted through deficiency, can never become unified with the object of its desire. While it seeks the immediate and absolute simplicity of the One, it cannot have it. Schroeder writes again:

> Sunaisthaesis and sunesis have been seen to belong to a self consciousness which, while it might seem immediate to the subject of such awareness, is in fact mediated through the source on which it is dependent. It is a deficient self-identity which conceals multiplicity under an apparent unity. Since the One is the highest hypostasis and ground of all else, it is absolutely unmediated. We should therefore be surprised if it were to have some form of self-awareness.[53]

So while there should be no self-awareness of the One, Plotinus admonishes us that we ought not *not* to attribute this to it:

> But when we raise the difficulty "Then it has no perception of itself (anaisthaeton heatou) and is not even conscious of itself and does not even know itself", we should consider that by saying this we are turning ourselves round and going in the opposite direction.[54]

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[52] *Cf.* F. Schroeder, "Synousia", p. 686; italics mine.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 691.
[54] Ennead V, 3, 13.

That is to say, if we do not somehow attribute these to the One, that might force us to deny consciousness to levels where it might be appropriate[55], that is, to Intellect and, therefore, us.

The question raised here Schroeder sees answered in <u>Ennead</u> V, 4, 2:

> The Intelligible remains by itself and is not deficient; like that which sees and thinks – I call that which thinks deficient as compared with the Intelligble, but it is not like something senseless (anaisthaeton); all things belong to it and are in it and with it. It is completely able to discern itself; it has life in itself and all things in itself, and its thinking of itself is itself, and exists by a kind of (hoiovei) sunaisthaesis, in everlasting rest and in a manner of thinking different from the thinking of Intellect.

Schroeder sees in the "by a kind of" that,

> Plotinus meant us to understand that the sunaisthaesis of the One is not that which is appropriate to the Intellect. The cognitive expression of the radical sunousia of the One is sunaisthaesis, an inclination toward itself which implies no division or duality.[56]

He also sees this passage to be important to comprehend and interpret Plotinus' whole system:

> The being of everything which follows upon the One, of Intellect, Soul, or the human person, is imperfect by reason of its lack of self-identity and unity. Their self-consciousness is also correspondingly deficient, as each seeks, but does not truly find or achieve, identity in itself. Intellect is a unity of being and thought. This still represents a duality, however great the degree of mutual implication. For the One, however, its introspection is itself. The verb 'to be' is omitted in the Greek. The grammarian might suggest we supply it. Yet a clearer sense is rendered by its omission: "Its introspection – itself". The presence of the copula would suggest predication and hence duality. This radical unity of self and contents in the One is paralleled in other texts.[57]

Further,

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[55] *Cf.* F. Schroeder, "Synousia", p. 692.
[56] *Ibid.*

> The statement that the sunaisthaesis of the One is in eternal rest implies that the One (unlike Intellect) has not the motion of otherness. This otherness in the Intellect is a motion of the incomplete desire toward fulfillment. The One contains no otherness and hence no duality, even in its inclination toward itself.[58]

The point in Schroeder's article is that the relationship of being, consciousness and knowing between the One and Nous or human knowing is asymmetrical and that because of this, strictly speaking, we cannot or ought not apply these predicates to the One. They are more for the levels below it, than they are for it itself. The One is the paradigm for these, but is these or has these, in a completely different way than Nous and below. Nevertheless, the same vocabulary used to describe the One is also used for the realm of Nous and below which once again shows the ambiguous status of Nous and its relation to the One. It is both the first and second pattern; it is, as Schroeder puts the tension so clearly, "a deficient self-identity"[59]. The One is separate, free and absolutely independent in its "synousia", "synesis" and "sunaisthaesis", yet Nous has these too. As Schroeder has shown, how the One is these and how Nous has these, while they are definitely different from one another, are also strikingly similar. The One is not Nous, yet Nous is shown to be close to the One.

Conclusion to Plotinus

We have shown that modern scholarship has revealed a Plotinus who at once makes clear the distinction between the One and Nous and so prevents the One from collapsing into a an absolute self-consciousness, yet who also keeps open or ambiguous the exact

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 682-683.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 693.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 691.

relation between the two. The One and Nous have found to be been closer than previously thought, yet that difference is still guarded. These ambiguities Porphyry capitalizes on. Because of this scholarship, we are able to get a new and clearer understanding of the development which we find in Porphyry. As we have seen in the first chapter of this thesis, too often philosophical or religious prejudice (unconscious, but present nonetheless), has obscured our understanding of this history. If we cannot understand the first person in this history[60], then we will get the whole history wrong. What is clear, however, is that due to the nature of the Plotinian One, which is set in radical opposition to the many[61], it must remain purely and radically One.

Section Two:
Porphyry

Porphyry continues to confront this most difficult problem of the One and its relation to what is other than it. The problematic in which Porphyry is working is the same as Plotinus', which is the problem of the One understood as absolute sheer unity. To sum up the structure of Porphyry's Commentary on Plato's Parmenides in a sentence, the absolute transcendence of the principle becomes the basis for its determination in the movement of thought whose first moment is not external to itself[62]. Porphyry brings closer together and begins to unify what was separate in Plotinus. What is an "implicit , but fundamental strand

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[60] While what one makes of the beginning of philosophy in the Pre-socratics, or even in the Mesopotamian world and Homeric hymns, is altogether determinative of what one makes of later philosophy, I am only, obviously, speaking here of the beginning of Neoplatonism.

[61] Cf. W. Beierwaltes, _Plotino: Un cammino di liberazione, verso l'interiorità, lo Spirito e l'Uno_. intr. G. Reale. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1993, p. 36.

[62] The first moment of Nous is _hyparxis_. A. Smith locates this moment clearly below the One. Cf. "_Hypostasis_", p. 40. I disagree with or at least would strongly qualify Smith's remark and will discuss this shortly.

of Plotinus' thought"[63] in Plotinus' system becomes explicit and more acute in Porphyry's. How this is so, we will discuss shortly.

With the distinction between infinite and finite being, and their application to the One and Nous respectively, Porphyry gives an incipient conception of the prior unity of the two hypostases. Because of his ascription of being to the One – even if infinitival - he must *give a logic of how* Nous unfolds from the One. The advantage Plotinus had in placing the One above thought and being, predicating the One only "as if", and therefore not having to give a logic of its productivity[64], Porphyry does not enjoy. So how does Nous unfold from the One? For Porphyry, the One differs from itself in *hyparxis* and *energein*. These moments are Nous. Yet while the first moment of Nous, that is, *hyparxis*, is and must be coincident with the One itself, Porphyry is imprecise as to its exact location. He does not explicitly say that the first moment of Nous, or *hyparxis*, is identical to the One. Yet, if we look at what was said in the commentary as we possess it, it is implied in his system. However, insofar as he is ambiguous about it, and I think his ambiguity says much, Porphyry still wishes to keep the hypostases separate. Just as the ambiguity in Plotinus could allow for a Porphyrian interpretation, so also could this ambiguity lead in a Victorine direction[65]. Had Porphyry applied *hyparxis* explicitly to One (and developed the consequences of it), he would have

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[63] *Cf.* K. Corrigan, "Amelius", p. 986.

[64] *Cf.* E. Diamond, "Hegel", p. 193: The Neoplatonists "would consider themselves untouched by Aristotelian/Hegelian criticisms that they have not demonstrated the logical necessity of the productivity of the One, because, for them, the realm of logical necessity which governs thought constitutes the world up to the noetic level, yet not beyond."

[65] Victorinus capitalises on and completes this, so as to explain the unity of the Trinity. However, it is this appropriation which will in turn undermine his Trinitarian conception of the first principle. *Cf.* M. Carreker, A

undermined the One's unity and freedom because the One would *need* Nous for its own completion in act[66]. What saves Porphyry is his ambiguity and it is Victorinus's battle against Arianism which forces Victorinus to develop and state explicitly that the first principle or the Father is *exsistentia* or *hyparxis*.

What is also seen in the <u>Commentary</u> is the nascent explanation of the unity of the principle in act. This is crucial for both Victorinus and Augustine. The indeterminateness of the One's being as *to einai* reveals the absolute unity of thinker and thought in act without any division. The use of the word *hyparxis* likewise reveals these same characteristcs relative to Nous. This allows the first moment of Nous to begin in the One. Yet it departs from the One according to *energein*, whose moments are life and thought. This movement which unfolds from and which returns to the One reveals in a deficient manner the perfect inner life of the One which is absolute unity in act. The crux is to bring these two together without the one undermining the other. But first, we turn to the commentary itself.

<u>Commentary on Porphyry's Commentary</u>

For Porphyry, as with Plotinus, we begin with how we know. The commentary as we have received it begins with an exegesis of the first hypothesis of Plato's Parmenides[67]. This is the place in Plato's dialogue where all the attributes, all relations of and to the first principle (as the Neoplatonists understood it) are negated. The One, Porphyry writes, "escapes our conception because of our feebleness [, s]o it is necessary to remove everything

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<u>Commentary on Books Five, Six, and Seven of the *De Trinitate* of Saint Augustine of Hippo</u>, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1992, especially pp. 283-324.
[66] How this is so will be discussed in chapters three and four of this thesis.

and to add nothing"[68]. The character of this negation is qualified though: "but to remove everything not by falling into that which does not exist in any way at all"[69]. We are not to give up thinking, to fall headlong into absolute nothing,

> but [rather] by maintaining in thought everything that is from him and due to him, holding the opinion that he himself is the cause of both the multitude and being of them, but himself [is] neither one nor multitude, but "being" beyond all the things which are due to him [70].

Porphyry wishes to make clear the difference between cause and caused. The One, as cause, is on a different ontological plain altogether from things caused and as such is the cause of everything. The term "the One" is primarily to connote its "infinite power"[71] and is even beyond the notion of the One[72]. This negation serves to purge the mind of finite forms of knowing, a form of purification that we see in the soul's movement to the One in Plotinus. Human finite discursive thought must see this gulf between itself and the One to begin properly the ascent to the One. The One, as it were, must be thought on its own terms, and until we do this, it will flee our comprehension.

In the third folio, Porphyry begins with what seems to be an out of place question, "Therefore, is God dissimilar to and other than the mind? And if not by participation in otherness, yet by the fact that he is not mind?"[73] and then does not bring up Nous again for

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[67] For a history of document, see P. Hadot, *Porphyre*, p. 102-113.

[68] The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's "Parmenides", trans. with commentary G. Bechtle, Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1999, II, 3-4.

[69] *Ibid.*, II, 4-5.

[70] *Ibid.*, II, 3-12.

[71] *Ibid.*, I, 25-26.

[72] *Ibid.*, II, 13.

[73] *Ibid.*, III, 1-3.

over 90 lines. Nous is dropped from discussion, apparently, because we have to understand better that gulf which separates us and the One, for the question of the One's similarity and dissimilarity is a false question. Following the logic of Plato's First Hypothesis, sameness and difference do not exist in the One due to its incommensurable excellence. To ask the question is to drag down the One to finite form of being.

From our finite point of view, if the One is beyond the notion of the One, then it seems that the One cannot contain anything other than it, even Nous. But this negation is of course only to purge our mind of finite knowing. This view point is clarified:

> Or must we say that the One has no experience of similarity or dissimilarity, because, whether the things which are from him and subsist because of him exist or do not exist, [he], always as the same, having incomparable superiority in regard to all things whatsoever – "all things" just as if, [being] of the things that are subsequent to him, they were nothing; otherness does not divide/distance him from them, because he is incomparable with the things subsequent to him and uncircumscribed;[74]

It is we who participate in similarity and dissimilarity and existence and non-existence in virtue of the One's absolute and incomparable self-identity above all things, not that the One participates in these things. It exists in such a way that, in relation to things which exist by the One, it is as if it did not exist.[75] The apparent non-existence of the One is on account of our perspective, not a remark about the One itself.

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[74] *Ibid.*, III, 3-12.

[75] Published the year before Hadot's monumental work on the anonymous commentary, Rist's book, <u>Plotinus' Road to Reality</u> (Cambridge: CUP, 1967) arrives at an opposite conclusion. Rist states: "For the anonymous commentator we should not say that this 'Being by itself' is not-being (tò mê óv); rather we should say that we ourselves and all Beings (pánta tà ónta) are nothing in comparison to it (IV, 19-22). That is, for the one to exist, everything else must be annihilated. This manner of expressing the position could only have arisen in the mind of someone who, unlike Plotinus, had forgotten the original purpose of the Forms, namely to be perfect self-hood....", p. 34. Porphyry here is *not* saying that the finite world is to be annihilated. While Rist recognizes that

This point is clarified in Porphyry's analogy of a setting sun: one could maintain that the sun never sets because the sun is just obscured by darkness. Porphyry's point is that this only seems to be the case because of our own perspective on earth. Night and day seem to exist as "a condition of those [people] on earth and they transfer their own circumstances to him, not knowing what occurs [i.e. the accidental character of night and day]"[76]. Following Plato's First Hypothesis, the One, therefore, banishes, drives out (ekballeîn) all sameness and difference because, "he [is] always without relationship to the things subsequent to him"[77]. We attempt to limit God as finite because the things generated by the One "are unlike [him]"[78]. That is, we confuse the caused with the cause. We confuse the One's product and our knowing with the One as producer. It is not that the One itself is finite and has contraries. It is in virtue of the One's eternal plenitude that those things which are dissimilar, "seek to attach themselves to him and think that their relationships are reciprocal also to him"[79].

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the One's infinitude is central to understand the One and its relation to what is other than it, it is only in virtue of the One's infinite free self-gathered will that anything can exist. This point he misses. Also, the passage from the commentary which he quotes, and the area surrounding it, emphasizes the crucial difference between the perspective of finite knowing and the One in itself and so the passage clearly cannot in any way be taken as the final word on the One and our relation to it. Further, the Sophist should tell one that the forms (whether for Plato and most definitely for Plotinus) are not examples of perfect selfhood: they are derived compounds.

[76] Commentary, III, 27-30.

[77] Ibid., III, 35-IV, 1.

[78] Ibid., IV, 1-2.

[79] Ibid., IV, 2-4. The Italian translation of this (Commenatrio al 'Parmenide' di Platone. Introduction, text with critical apparatus and commentary by P. Hadot. Translation by G. Girgenti. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1993) renders "attach" as "Ritornare". The Greek is sunartân: to fasten along with, knit together. One does not get the sense of the unity or divinisation with "ritornare" or, for that matter, the danger of confusing modes of knowledge where we would "knit" or "fasten" the One according to our knowledge. Hadot's French translation is better, s'attacher. This doctrine is from Plotinus (Ennead I, 2, 2, 4-10) which helps clarify Porphyry here: "We must first distinguish two modes of Likeness. There is the likeness demanding an identical nature in the objects which, further, must draw their likeness from a common principle: and there is the case in which B

Once this all important distinction is made, Porphyry can say that God "had, as [something] inseparable from himself, being the pure being and above all things, being himself his own pleorma, he possesses in virtue of his unity and solitariness"[80]. We have to seek "his saving simplicity"[81] and not "refer our own conditions to him because of our being really nothing"[82]. The One possesses "a knowledge outside knowledge and ignorance, from which knowledge comes"[83] which "transcends all knowledge"[84]. "[H]e knows…not as that which is based on opposition and privation, i.e. that from which he knows if he is not ignorant, … and because of this he is found to be greater than knowledge and ignorance"[85]. Hadot, in the notes to his Italian edition of the Commentary, makes an interesting collation of the line, "[This] knowledge is not like [something] of someone who knows the thing known, but that itself [is] knowledge"[86] to Plotinus' <u>Ennead</u> VI, 7, 39, 4:

> Again, if the Supreme is to have intellection it cannot know only itself; that would not be intellection, for if it did know itself, nothing could prevent it knowing all things -- certainly not lack of power. With self-intellection it would no longer be simplex; any intellection even in the Supreme, must be aware of something distinct; as we have been saying, the inability to see the self as external is the negation of intellection.

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resembles A, but A is a Primal, not concerned about B and not said to resemble B. In this second case, likeness is understood in a distinct sense: we no longer look for identity of nature, but on the contrary, for divergence, since the likeness has come about by the mode of difference". Porphyry's point, then, is that the human as B takes itself as Primal and seeks an identical likeness. In this case, the human fashions the "Divine and Infinite A" into its own likeness of "Human and Finite B". This is the mistake. Rather, we are to take A as Primal and not look for an identical nature as B because B has "come about by the mode of difference."

[80] *Ibid.*, IV, 7-11.
[81] *Ibid.*, V, 3-4
[82] *Ibid.*, IV, 35-V,1.
[83] *Ibid.*, V, 10-11.
[84] *Ibid.*, V, 15.
[85] *Ibid.*, V, 28-30.
[86] *Ibid.*, V, 32-34.

Porphyry is saying that the One does not at all think as a subject which thinks an object, to think itself as external to itself. This would make it Nous and a duality. Rather, the One is thought, but not with subject and object duality[87]. Porphyry follows, therefore, his master here. The One is infinite and self-gathered, that is, an absolute unity, and it is only as such that it can know all. That is, it is precisely because the One is unable "to see the self as external", because of its infinite transcendence and unity, that it can know everything, not as having intellection, but as being intellection.

When Porphyry treats of Nous or the Second One, commenting on Plato's Second Hypothesis, he is very clear about the difference of character between the One and Nous. Whereas the One was without all determinations, this is the distinguishing feature of Nous: the determined or concrete being becomes an "hypostatic individual"[88] or "fully alloyed with"(sunêlloiôtai) the One[89]. Nous is like a definition, Porphyry says, which is both one and two things. Insofar as it is understood as "man", it is one. Insofar as it is understood as rational and animal, it is two. Yet these two are not placed beside one another[90], rather they imply one another, and need one another, and so they are one. Therefore we treat here a kind of "hypostatic individual" which imitates the simplicity of the One[91]. What allows this distinction and enables Porphyry to show how this Nous is generated by the One is the

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[87] In addressing this very topic, Plotinus writes, "we must eliminate all knowing and all association, all intellection whether internal or external. [The One] is not to be thought of as having but as being intellection", Ennead VI, 9, 6.

[88] Cf., P. Hadot, Commentario, n. 82, p. 127.

[89] Commentary, XI, 8-9.

[90] Ibid., XIV, 18.

[91] Ibid., XI, 20-21.

distinction between the infinite and finite form of the verb "to be". This is the main difference between the One and Nous.

Porphyry interprets Plato's "One beyond being and knowing"[92] as a One which possesses (or perhaps better, is) infinite being, indicated by the infinitive form of the verb "to be". Nous, on the other hand, possesses finite and derived being, indicated by the finite form of the verb "to be"[93]. The One, therefore, is "not that which is, nor substance nor act, but on the other hand rather acts; the acting also is itself pure, so that the being itself, which is before that which is, is also [pure]"[94]. This new division between forms of being discovered by Porphyry allows him to move beyond the "hoion" statements of Plotinus' about the One. This is because Porphyry begins to show how there can be being within the One which does not divide it. Porphyry brings closer together the One and Nous of Plotinus, where the self-caused, abundant principle is brought together with its determinations. The One is now understood as "the form of that which is", "the idea of being"[95]. As such, Nous possesses a derived being[96]. *How* and *that* Porphyry allows this unity is especially important relative to how he further explains the unfolding of Nous from the One.

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[92] The Republic, 509b.

[93] W. Beierwaltes puts it succinctly: "tò eînai" is "the most intensive possible unity of thought and being without difference". "Eriugena's Platonism", Hermathena, 149(1990), p. 63.

[94] *Ibid.*, XII, 24-27.

[95] *Ibid.*, XII, 32-33. K. Corrigan writes that "the idea of being" "is hardly an innovation, but a natural Porphyrio-Plotinian interpretation of a difficult Platonic passage, giving creative explanation of why the Good is both [beyond being and knowing] and yet the supreme idea [cf. V, 5, 5]". "Amelius", p. 988. Corrigan writes convincingly on many points which see the implicit or explicit similarities between Plotinus and Porphyry. See also G. Girgenti, *Il Pensiero Forte di Porfirio* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1996), pp. 101-110.

[96] *Ibid.*, XII, 28.

With the discovery of the philosophical distinction between the infinitive form of the verb "to be" and its participle form, Porphyry is able to bring closer together the One and Nous, while at the same time attempting to maintain the infinite, absolute and free Unity of the Plotinian One. Porphyry endeavors to show how the One possesses being without being subject to finite discursive reason which would abrogate the One's freedom. Because for Plotinus the One is beyond "the realm of logical necessity which governs thought [and which] constitutes the world up to the noetic level, yet not beyond"[97], and even Nous at its most intimate moments with the One is "completely indefinable"[98], such an explanation for Plotinus was not needed. With Nous and the One that much closer in Porphyry, even one within the other, where the One is understood to be "the idea of being", Porphyry is forced to explain how this is so.

The Second Hypothesis and the Production of Nous: Plotinian Ambiguity *Redux*

Before we continue with an analysis of the Commentary, we must anticipate some of the argument to deal with recent interpretations of the Commentary which pertain to Nous, or the Second Hypothesis of Plato's Parmenides. A. Smith[99], and G. Bechtle following him[100], have argued that Porphyry does not identify *hyparxis*, or the first stage of Nous, with the One. Instead, Smith argues, it is "clearly identified with the lower One or Intellect that

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[97] *Cf.*, E. Diamond, "Hegel", p. 193.
[98] *Cf.*, I. Perczel, "*L'intellect*", p. 225.
[99] *Cf.* A. Smith, "*Hypostasis* and *hyparxis* in Porphyry" in Hyparxis e Hypostasis *nel Neoplatonismo*. Eds. F. Romano & D. P. Taormina. Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1994.
[100] *Cf.* G. Bechtle, Commentary, p. 260.

differs from itself"[101]. And later he says, "At no point is it suggested that *hyparxis* had more or indeed anything to do with the higher One than for example have *zoê* and *nous*…"[102]. Smith's point is well-taken, Porphyry does not explicitly identify *hyparxis* with the One, but his point is overstated. Whereas Hadot is in concord with Smith that Porphyry here treats of a One or Intellect which differs from itself[103], Hadot differs from Smith when he argues that the first moment of difference is based upon a prior identity, which is *hyparxis* in the One. Hadot writes: "The Nous which is not able to enter into itself [*ie.* as *hyparxis*] is also the indivisible act which grounds the possibility of movement by which Nous, in its second state, knows itself as Intelligence and Intelligible"[104]. This identity is *hyparxis* and, Hadot argues, is identical to the One. Difference enters when this *hyparxis* turns into *energia*, whose moments are life and thought[105]. While I agree with Hadot, these discordant interpretations about such an important passage also show us that Porphyry was not exactly clear about the precise location of *hyparxis* and, therefore, of the exact relationship between the One and Nous. Importantly, this reticence in Porphyry reveals the same ambiguity and difficulty which Plotinus had in describing the relation of Nous and the One. Porphyry does not want to undermine the One's freedom or unity, a point made at length in his commentary, yet he also wants to show how the One is productive. Is it surprising, therefore, that Porphyry is unclear about it?

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[101] *Cf.* A. Smith, "*Hypostasis*", p. 40.
[102] *Ibid.*, p. 41 and Commentary, XIV, 15-16.
[103] *Cf.* Commentary, XIV, 5-7.
[104] *Cf.* P. Hadot, *Porphyre*, "L'Intelligence qui ne peut rentrer en elle-même est elle aussi l'acte indivisible qui fonde la possibilité du mouvement par lequel l'Intelligence, en son état second, se saisait Intelligence et

Porphyry explains that because Nous comes from the One, it is the same as the One[106] because "it has the cause of its procession from another"[107]. Insofar as it is not its own cause, it is identical to the One. Yet because Nous exists and depends upon the One as cause, it is not the same as the One[108]. How is it then that the One can be productive without itself becoming many? Just as Plotinus' system demanded various levels of unity, Porphyry's *to einai* also requires levels. For instance, Nous has two moments: existence and act, *hyparxis* and *energein*[109]. When Nous is in the state of *hyparxis*, it is unknowable and unspeakable. According to this moment, "Nous has the same predicates as the first One"[110]. Following Plotinus, it is only as such that the One can be a cause: "for how could One become One, unless the one were pure One"[111].

Porphyry also modifies his teacher's position: Nous, Porphyry writes, "has not become existent first, and then participated in the (first) One, but has become existent from the (first) One, having let itself down from it"[112]. In Plotinus, the first moment of Nous is outside of the One as existence and then turns back to (that is, participates in) the One and becomes thought. Here, the first moment of Nous begins in the One according to the mode

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Intelligible", p. 134.
[105] *Cf.* P. Hadot, *Porphyre*, p. 133.
[106] Commentary, XI, 29-30.
[107] *Ibid.*, XI, 28; translation mine.
[108] *Ibid.*, XI, 25.
[109] *Ibid.*, XIV, 15-16.
[110] *Cf.* P. Hadot, *Porphyre*, "l'Intelligence aura les mêmes prédicats que le premier Un", p. 133.
[111] Commentary., XI, 31-33, with alterations.
[112] *Ibid.*, XII, 14-17.

of *hyparxis*. Nous, according to *energein*, departs and becomes different from the One and exists according to the distinctions of Life and Thought[113].

According to *hyparxis*, it is still indistinguishable from the One itself for here thinker and thing thought are one[114]. However, according to Life, the Thinker moves outside of *hyparxis* (and therefore out of the One) and becomes alone. Nous at this moment is infinite[115]. Yet according to the mode of Thought, the act is finite, "turning to itself"[116]. Therefore Nous is both One and Not-One. As One and according to the mode of *hyparxis*, "on the level of that [part] of it which is purely the One and insofar as it is first and really the One, it is neither at rest, nor in motion, neither the same, nor different, neither in itself, nor in another". As Not-One and according to act, it "is at rest and is in motion at the same time, is in itself and in another, is a whole and has parts, and is the same and is different"[117]. So just as being is double in Porphyry, so also is Nous double. It exists on the level of the absolute One and in its own proper realm, that of finite determined being. The distinction between *hyparxis* and *energia* enabled Porphyry to explain, however vaguely he intimated, how Nous unfolds from the One.

The prior identity of the One, which is pure act and pure being, establishes the difference of Nous. The first moment of Nous, *hyparxis*, which also denotes actuality, grounds the difference of itself in its second moment. Nous in its second moment, or *energia*,

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[113] *Ibid.*, XIV, 15-16.
[114] *Ibid.*, XIV, 16-17.
[115] *Ibid.*, XIV, 20-21.
[116] *Ibid.*, XIV, 24-25.
[117] *Ibid.*, XIV, 28-30.

shows the unity of Nous in its difference. At every moment, act is used to explain and ensure the unity of the principle, both in its moment of difference and also to establish the very possibility of difference itself. How the overall concept of act (either as *energia* or *hyparxis*) is related, to use the language of the Parmenides, to the whole and to the parts is not worked out, nor does it necessarily have to be for Porphyry, for the hypostases of Nous and the One are and are not brought together. His ambiguity about that relation saves him from requiring a precise working out of what should be predicated where. Because Plotinus did not predicate being to the One, he did not have to give an account of the logic of production of Nous by the One. Porphyry, on the other hand, does predicate being to the One and gives an account of production by means of *hyparxis* and *energia*. Yet, because he himself was ambiguous about the exact location of *hyparxis*, and perhaps he had to be so, it was not necessary for him to work out a precise logic of predication. This task falls to Victorinus and Augustine.

Conclusion to Porphyry

The main importance of Porphyry is, of course, his distinction between the finite and infinite forms of being. Yet because of that distinction, he is forced to give an explanation of how the finite being of Nous unfolds from infinite being of the One. As we have seen, Porphyry's answer to how this is so is imprecise, even though when one looks at the whole commentary the location of the first moment of Nous is clear enough. And while I think Hadot's interpretation is correct, Smith's observations and objections to Hadot bring into

greater relief the difficulty Porphyry had when attempting to describe he first moments of Nous. His reluctance to say clearly that *hyparxis* belonged to the absolute simplicity of the One as the first moment of Nous also reveals the closeness of Porphyry to Plotinus: one can only ascribe predicates to the One, if at all, with the greatest reluctance and with a constant eye to guarding the absolute freedom and unity of the One.

<u>Conclusion to Chapter Two</u>

For Plotinus, the One by its own nature precludes being and thought and cannot be predicated of anything which would divide it. While Plotinus seems to break forth into kataphatic assertions about the One, they are in fact non-noetic ascriptions (that is, predications which do not divide it) and are said only to guard the One's freedom and absolute simplicity. The only reason needed to be given for the cause of the production of the Nous by the One was the One's superabundance and freedom, which, strictly speaking, is not a cause for a cause refers to a prior principle, whereas the One has no prior principle. Yet, along with this understanding of the Plotinian principle is a new-found understanding of the complexity of the relation between the One and Nous. While the two are not one entity, they have been found to be closer than previously thought. Modern Plotinian scholarship has found a new middle way in the locating of Nous: the One in any honest reading of Plotinus can neither be found to be self-thinking thought or self-consciousness, nor is there an insuperable abyss between the two. This new understanding of Plotinus provides us with a fresh perspective on Porphyry. For when Porphyry brings Nous and the

One closer together, he follows and develops that one strand of Plotinus' thought.

Porphyry, in his distinction between forms of being, is faced with a new question. For once one brings the infinite One beyond being together with its determinations in Nous, one must show the logic of its production and unity. This Porphyry does, but it is accomplished hesitantly and ambiguously. As stated above, this reticence shows the difficulty of the problem of attributing predicates which would undermine in any way the One's unity and freedom. Attributing *hyparxis* to the the first moment of Nous which is in the One enables Porphyry to explain how Nous could unfold from the One or how the One could be productive of Nous, an explanation necessitated on account of his ontological distinction. Both this ontological distinction and Porphyry's use of *hyparxis* as the first moment of Nous allows for the further development of certain elements of Plotinus' doctrine. Porphyry's system allows for there to be a unity of the principle in act[118], a consequence determinative for the Latin West through Victorinus and Augustine both for the development which Porphyry offers and for the problems which that development raises which go unsolved in Porphyry himself.

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[118] While obviously an Aristotelian concept, it is arrived at within a Neoplatonic system.

Chapter Three:

Marius Victorinus

Introduction

The development of Marius Victorinus' conception of the Trinity and our understanding of it is more complex because now there are two sources of inspiration. The first is what we could call "Christian concerns". This would include the priority of Scripture and dogma. Victorinus fought against Arianism which would deny the substantial identity of the Son with the Father. The second source of inspiration is, of course, Neoplatonic rational investigation of the universe. It is as a Neoplatonic Christian that he renders an account of the first principle. So while Marius Victorinus follows, as Beierwaltes notes, the intention of the Neoplatonic tradition of the One as "*epekeina tes ousias*" and is "determined in a essential way"[1] by Porphyry's Commentary on the Parmenides, he also moves beyond it. However much the problem is common to both pagan philosophy and the Christian ennunciation of the Trinity, the strictures of doctrine and Scripture enable that movement beyond Porphyry. In turn, it will be a more consistent and systematic use of Scripture to determine the categories proper to the Trinity that enable Augustine to move beyond Victorinus.

Porphyry, as was said in the previous chapter, began to close the distance between the first two hypostases. Victorinus continues this work and is in large part determined by Porphyry, but ultimately he transforms Porphyry's system into quite another thing.

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[1] *Cf.* W. Beierwaltes, *Plotino: Cammino di liberatione verso l'interiorità, lo Spirito e l'Uno*, Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1993, p. 71-72. In this section on Marius Victorinus' I am heavily indebted to this book and his *Platonismo nel*

Victorinus attempts to show how the Trinity is Unity and the Unity Trinity while meeting the demands of rational inquiry. The ambiguity of the relation of Nous to the One in Plotinus' system, which is found again, albeit significantly reworked, in Porphyry, is further developed and given a certain clarity in Victorinus.

Whereas earlier in Plotinus and Porphyry, the First Principle as absolute, free and undetermined causality formed the basis for producing something outside of itself (while the first moment of Nous in Porphyry *begins in the One*, Nous unfolds completely *outside* of the One), in Victorinus the same principle becomes the means for a generation *within* the divine principle. At once, both the First Principle (i.e. the Father) *and* the Trinity as a single principle are absolute causality and are nothing other than one another. It is the totality of the Trinity, and not only the Father, that is the cause of itself[2].

To give a rational explanation of how this is so, Victorinus capitalises on Porphyry's accomplishments and his ambiguity. For example, the distinction between infinite and finite being is found in Victorinus. This allows for the identity or consubstantiality of the Father and the Son. Parallel to this distinction is the opposition between *hyparxis* and *ousia*, or as Victorinus translates them, *exsistentia* and *substantia*[3]. Significantly, Victorinus attributes *hyparxis* explicitly to the first principle[4]. Whereas in Porphyry this showed how the first moment of finite being was contained within the infinite being of the One *to be developed*

Cristianesimo, intro. G. Reale & trans. M. Falcioni, Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2000.

[2] W. Beierwaltes, *Plotino*, p. 73-74.

[3] *Cf.* Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.*, I 30, 20; *Candidi Epist.* I 2, 18. *Cf.* P. Hadot, "*Hyparxis*" in Plotin, Porphyre: Études Néoplatoniciennes, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1999.

[4] A. Smith in his "*Hypostasis*" article (p. 41) also sees this as unique in the history of philosophy, especially

outside of it, Victorinus develops this idea as his own and so becomes the basis for consubstantiality among and distinction within the Trinity itself.

The first principle, or the Father, undergoes a further change in Victorinus. In Porphyry, the One is "pure act", and the first moment of Nous, *hyparxis*, is meant to connote a similar actuality. In Victorinus' understanding, the Father, as *exsistentia*, becomes potentiality which will prove to undermine Victorinus' attempt to articulate a coherent doctrine of the Trinity. The Father's unformed and indetermined being as potential becomes the basis for the determination and actualisation of being in the Son. As said above, this subtle and radical change of *hyparxis/exsistentia* from act to potency allows for the consubstantiality and distinction within the Trinity. The Father as potentiality or rest contains the Son, who in act or movement manifests the Father and differentiates himself from the Father[5]. The problem in this development is that the Father needs the Son for his own development because the Father is potential and so needs the actualisation of his self-knowledge in the Son and so undermines the basis of its trinitarian movement[6]. Victorinus has not yet fully distinguished between predicates relative to the divine substance as a whole and relative to each person. Without this distinction, the Father has no actual essence or identity which he can communicate to establish his Word or Son and so undermines that

considering that he did not think the Commentary on Plato's Parmenides attributed *hyparxis* to the first principle.

[5] This is the movement from potentiality to act which P. Hadot preferred. *Cf.*, "*L'image*", p. 429.

[6] I get this subtle and crucial distinction from M. L. Carreker, A Commentary on Books Five, Six, and Seven of the De Trinitate of Saint Augustine of Hippo, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1992. *Cf.* p. 298 and 310. Carreker is the only scholar to notice this in Victorinus and therefore to see the decisive criticism of Victorinus by Augustine. Although he sees Victorinus as a "very important transitional figure in the history of Christian thought" (p. 444, n. 135), he shows how Augustine "disagrees with the nature of the

which enables difference in the first principle. As M. Carreker notes, Victorinus' logic "ends in a unitarian and not a trinitarian view of God"[7].

The first section in this chapter will briefly look at the problem of Arianism. The second will look at Victorinus' system in the terms of the demands of Neoplatonism and the ambiguous relation between Nous and the One found in Plotinus and Porphyry. In this second section, we will first look at Victorinus' system in terms of the divine absolute causality who is absolute unity and resists all speech and thought. Secondly, we will investigate the divine in its triadic or trinitarian movement which moves according to and which admits thought. The separation of the hypostases and their ambiguous status in Plotinus and Porphyry Victorinus brings closer together and attempts to show how they are one within one substance.

First Section:
Arianism

Arianism was a movement which arose in the early Fourth century and referred to its founder Arius[8]. Arius argued that the Son could not be of the same substance as the Father. There were, however, many degrees of Arianism, not identical to the ideas of its founder. Some would concede that the Son could be of a similar substance, while others would not even concede that. For the latter, any identification of the Father and the Son whatsoever would make the Father impure and make him less than God. In short, Arianism refused to

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activity itself in Victorinus' Trinity", p. 304.
[7] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, A Commentary, p. 307.
[8] For the purposes of this thesis, the different shades of Arianism will be overlooked. For an overview of this controversy see, M. Simonetti, *La Crisi Ariana nel IV Secolo*, Rome: Augustinianum, 1975.

make a complete identification of the Father and the Son. This is, of course, what the Council called by Emperor Constantine at Nicea achieved: the Son was of the same substance of the Father.

Arianism above all should be understood as an act of misguided piety. It sought to protect God the Father's august repose. Firmly within the Middle-platonic tradition, it radically subordinated the Son to the Father. A problem arises, however, with the appearance of Holy Scriptures and how they are to shape the Christian understanding of God. The Arians only quoted from parts of the New Testament, numerous and ubiquitous, that referred to the Son's subordination to the Father to the exclusion of those that referred to the equality and unity of Jesus and his Father. The Arians, for their part, also refused the term *ousia* (within the term *homousia*) because it was not found in Scripture[9]. The Church's dilemma was to hold fast to what the whole of Scripture said while at the same time explaining and defending it rationally. It was through this that the Nicene Creed came to be.

More accurately, this showed the need for a reshaping of human thought by divine revelation. The Creed was not the end of the problem though. Arianism in its various strains continued to thrive: the boundaries of dogma having been outlined at Nicea, the Creed had to be defended *rationally* beyond the attempts of St. Athanasius. This is the ecclesiastical climate in which Victorinus lived and spent his time writing his theological treatises.

Section Two:
Victorinus' System

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[9] W. Beierwaltes, *Platonismo*, p. 43.

Part One:
The First One or the Father as Absolute Unity and Cause

As with Plotinus and Porphyry, Victorinus recognises the inadequacy of language and man's thought to describe God[10]. He writes, for instance, that "since it is not possible to find a name worthy of God, we name God from those things which we know, bearing in mind that we are not speaking of him properly"[11]. God is "unknown, indiscernible, [and] unknowable"[12]. Writing of God the Father, Victorinus says,

> But the first "to be" is so unparticipated that it cannot even be called one or alone, but rather, by preeminence, before the one, before the alone, beyond simplicity, preexistence rather than existence, universal of all universals, infinite, unlimited – at least for all others, but not for itself – and therefore without form; it is understood by a certain intuition and is perceived, known and believed by a preunderstanding rather than understanding. This is what we have called "to live" or "he lives", the infinite "to live," superior to the "to live" of all universals, "to be" in itself, "to live" in itself, not to be something or to live something.[13]

This recalls the Porphyrian principle which is beyond thought, whose being is before determination, and "without form". This hidden, transcendent life of Victorinus' God the Father, Beierwaltes identifies with the hidden life revealed in the One in <u>Ennead VI 8</u> and

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[10] W. Beierwaltes, <u>Plotino</u>, p. 71. Generally, when Victorinus refers to God, he refers to both God the Father and the Trinity as a whole. Yet specifically, he refers to God the Father. This is why when he refers to "God", it is often in connection with unknowability. This, of course, refers to the 'esse' or even 'supra-esse' of the Father. Yet the unknowability also refers to the entire Trinity. This problem arises only with the unification of the hypostases and so this problem is more acute in Victorinus, than in Porphyry. This difficulty, not surprisingly, is discussed at length in Augustine's <u>De Trinitate</u> where he is inquiring into what is predicated to the entire substance of the Trinity and what is predicated relatively to each person.

[11] Marius Victorinus, <u>Ad Cand.</u>, 28; with alterations. Cf. <u>Adverus Ariam</u>, II 1, 23; II 3, 21-23; IV 4, 4; IV 23, 22ff; IV 24, 29ff; IV 26, 8. I will use M. Clark's translation of Victorinus' work found in M. Victorinus, <u>Theological Treatises on the Trinity</u> in "The Fathers of the Church", vol. 69. Translation with notes and introduction by M. Clark, Washington, D. C.: CUA Press, 1981.

[12] Cf. <u>Adv. Ar.</u> IV 23

[13] Cf. <u>Adv. Ar.</u> IV 19.

with Porphyry's First One. Reminiscent of <u>Ennead</u> VI 8, Victorinus writes:

> This is God, this is the Father, preexisting preintelligence and preexistence keeping himself and his own happiness in an immobile movement, and because of that, having no need of other beings.[14]

It is this aspect in each thinker's writing, where the principle is self-constituted, fully complete, "having no need of other beings", absolute unity, simple and transcendent, that is as absolute cause of itself, that allows a creativity either below itself (in Nous as in Plotinus or both within and without in Porphyry's First One) or as substantially within it for Victorinus[15].

Following Porphyry, it is the First One or the Father according to Victorinus that is properly and most fully unknown and undetermined[16]. References to God the Father as "pre-existence", or any other "prae"[17], super, "hyper"[18] prefixed word, or as the infinitive forms of "to be", "to live" and "to think" denote his unknowability, not as pure privation, but as plenitude[19]. This is due to God's transcendence. Victorinus writes:

> [God the Father's] "to be", "to live", "to understand" is incomprehensible, and not only that his "to be", "to live", "to understand" is incomprehensible, but that this "to be", "to live", "to understand" seems not to exist, because it is above everything. That is why it is said that he is...without existence, without substance, without understanding, without life, certainly not by sterêsin (privation), but through transcendence.[20]

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[14] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* I 50.

[15] W. Beierwaltes, *Plotino*, p. 74.

[16] *Cf.* note 11 *supra*.

[17] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* IV 23.

[18] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* II 1.

[19] *Cf.* W. Beierwaltes, *Plotino*, p. 71: Referring to the Father, Beierwaltes writes, "La negatività del Primo (l'Origine assoluta come "praeprincipium") dev'essere pensata come "Pre-essere" unito in sé nel modo più intensivo – come "Pienezza" implicata".

[20] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* IV 23.

It is God the Father's transcendence that makes it seem to us that he is without substance, existence, life and understanding, not that he does not possess these in some manner[21]. We can, however, attribute the infinitives "to be", "to live" and "to understand", but in the end even these are incomprehensible.

Due to God's absolute transcendence, the attribution of substance to God for Victorinus is problematic. There is also the possibility of God being subject to accidental attributes which *ousia* or *substantia* could entail[22]. To circumnavigate this, however, Victorinus makes clear how we think about God and then distinguishes between how it and we exist.

> In such a manner we say: God lives, God knows, God foresees: from our actions we describe the actions of God, that one existing above all things, not existing, but as if existing, not being an *on* (existent), but as if an *on* (existent). It is in this way also that we attribute to God substance and existence and that we call his "to be" *ousian* (substance), although he possesses his "to be" otherwise.[23]

Victorinus places God on an entirely different ontological plane because of his transcendence, but having specified this he can attribute substance to God.

Most importantly, just as for Plotinus and Porphyry and their first principle, it is God the Father's transcendence and consequent unknowability that allows Victorinus to say that God the Father is "cause of himself"[24], "self-moved"[25]. The interior and hidden life of the Father, which is utterly indeterminate, completely simple and an absolute unity, the "to be"

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[21] *Cf.* Porphyry, Commentary, III, 3-12.
[22] *Cf. Cand. Ep. I*, 8.
[23] *Cf. Ad Cand.* 28. Note the use of "as if", strikingly resembling Plotinus' use in Ennead VI 8.
[24] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* IV 6, 38.
[25] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* III 7, 13-14: "suo a se motu"

without form[26], forms the logical basis of the production of the Son[27]. That is, the self-caused, undifferentiated being, thinking and willing of the Father understood as substance is the basis of the Son's substance[28].

Part Two:
Substance in Trinitarian Movement

What is peculiar to Victorinus is that the absolute and causal first principle becomes explicitly the basis for a circular movement according to the logic thought which unfolds *within that principle itself and is nothing other than that first principle*. This is the most significant step beyond Plotinus and Porphyry, however much Victorinus' system depends upon Porphyry's principle. What allows the unity between the absolute self-caused, self-related, unformed being of the Father and the determined form of being of the Son (and in turn the Son's reflection on the Father and the Father on the Son which is the Holy Spirit) is the Porphyrian distinction between forms of being and Victorinus' peculiar use and development of the concept of *exsistentia*. The distinction between forms of being allows the first principle to remain simple and one, while the categories of and movement from *exsistentia* or *potentia* to act attempt to distinguish the persons. How Victorinus attempts to accomplish this I will show presently.

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[26] Cf. *Adv. Ar.* II 4; and again, "but that which is "to be" without anything joined to it is that which is simple, that which is one".

[27] Cf. W. Beierwaltes, *Plotino*, p. 72. Instead of predicating *esse* to the Father, Augustine ascribes it to the entire Trinity.

[28] Cf. W. Beierwaltes, *Plotino*, p. 73. Cf. *Adv. Ar.* I 55, 16-27.

Basic Outline

Victorinus' system begins, not surprisingly, with the Father. He is understood as undetermined being or *Esse*[29], which is substance. He is an absolute unity, even before the idea of unity[30]. He is rest[31] or repose, "silence" and "immobility"[32]. He is *exsistentia*[33] and *potentia*[34]. From within that substance and repose, the Son, understood as life, movement or act, moves within the Father and is the determination of the Father's Being. Thus we have, with the Father and the Son, the primary dyad. The movement out from the Father, though still within the Father, is complimented with a return to the Father. This return is the Holy Spirit, understood as Thought, who joins together the Father and the Son. Because thought is also movement and life is the first moment of movement, the Holy Spirit comes from the Son. What allows the identity among them all is the *ousia* or *exsistentia* of the Father, and, as said above, Victorinus uses the categories of *potentia* and act to establish difference within that unity of the Father, both in the Son and the completion of the act in its return in Holy Spirit[35].

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[29] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* II 4; IV 19.
[30] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* IV 23, 17-28.
[31] *Cf.* Marius Victorinus, *Hymnus Primus*, 3: "quiescis".
[32] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* III 7.
[33] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* I 30, 22-23; *Cand ad Vict.* I 2, 17.
[34] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* III 2, 1ff; I 55, 16 & 22. At line 22, P. Hadot thinks *potentia* applies only to "le caractère déterminant de chacun" (*Traités Théologiques sur la Trinité* in "*Sources Chrétiennes*", vol. 69, text by P. Henry with introduction, translation and notes by P. Hadot. Paris: Les éditions du CERF, 1960, p. 866). I think he is partially right, but within the context of chapter, Victorinus is establishing instead, "a logic of derivation which begins with potency. Identified with the Father as being itself, this potency pours forth like a fountainhead and gives being to the Son and the Spirit" (M. L. Carreker, A Commentary, p. 297). Most truly, the *potentia* here refers to the Father and only then establishes the *potentia* of the other members of the Trinity.
[35] *Cf. Adv. Ar.* I 59, 7-8: "...secundum potentiam et actionem solum apparetne alteritate".

Predominance

We have seen that God the Father is "to be", "to live" and "to think" and that this absolute plenitude allows him to be causal. But how is the Father related to the Son and Holy Spirit and how is the Trinity as a whole causal and not just the Father? Victorinus argues that each person within the Trinity is what each of the other persons of the Trinity are. That is to say, the Father is being, life and thought; the Son is being, life and thought and the Holy Ghost is being, life and thought. What distinguishes each person is their predominant action[36]. Insofar as being is repose, by this predominant action, God the Father is being. Insofar as life is movement[37], by this predominant action, God the Son is life. Insofar as thought is also movement, God the Holy Ghost is thought. Yet each person is being, life and thought.

Similarly, the Father is not only repose. He is also movement, although turned in on itself. The Father acts or moves "interiorly"[38]. The Father is "a movement that is interior and turned toward itself"[39]. Movement turned in on itself is repose, is substance. Likewise, the Son is not only movement; he is also repose.

Following Porphyry, Victorinus says that the Second One, or the Son, has a double act or movement. That is to say, in the Son's first moment where he is turned to the Father, he is confounded in the pure and undetermined *Esse* of the Father. This is act in repose and

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[36] Cf. *Adv. Ar.* III 2. It is important to note that Augustine and Victorinus both share the idea of each person being what the other is and of a certain predominance which distinguishes one from the other. Augustine also shares with Victorinus a certain priority of the Father. The crucial difference will be the difference in predication and its effect on the activity of the Trinity.

[37] Cf. *Adv. Ar.* III 2, 21-22 & 32: "it is necessary that life is movement".

turned inwards[40]. When the Son turns to himself, he becomes distinct, yet not separate, from the Father, and so is a determined form of being, movement and life. This is act in act, or act proper, a movement turned to the exterior, which is the necessary character of movement[41]. Victorinus says that this movement is in God and is God[42]. The being of the Son is double: he is both *esse* and *ens*, both confounded within the Father and distinct from him. What first allows the doubleness of the Son is the distinction found in Porphyry between indetermined and determined being, between *to einai* and *to on*, and what keeps them separate or allows that distinction are the categories of *potentia* and act.

The greater question is whether Victorinus could attain that which he desired. I have alluded to this in many places in my thesis and a complete answer will have to wait until the final chapter when Augustine himself addresses the difficulty I will presently detail. There is no doubt that Victorinus' intent was to keep the Father an absolutely free, pure act, much like Plotinus and Porphyry did[43]. As said above, Victorinus chooses the categories of *potentia* and act as a means to differentiate each person of the Trinity, and although the Father is an interior act, the proper predication of act belongs to the Son and Holy Ghost because they are *necessarily exterior to God the Father*[44]. The development of God the Father's life and understanding of himself, because they cannot *truly* be within him, but only as an interior and

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[38] Cf. *Adv. Ar.* III 2, 19-20.

[39] Cf. *Adv. Ar.* III 2.

[40] Cf. *Adv. Ar.* III 2, 15-16.

[41] Cf. *Adv. Ar.* III 2, 22-24: "vita atque intellegentia motus sunt – omnis autem vita vivificat, *omne vero quod vivificator foris est*, itemque intellegentia"; italics mine.

[42] Cf. *Hymnus Primus*, 21.

[43] Cf. *Adv. Ar.* III 2, 19-21: "Similiter ergo et pater et facit et agit, sed intus. Unde cum nullo eget extrinsecus, semper plenum, semper totum, semper beatum est".

therefore false form, *must depend on their actualisation in his Son and the Holy Ghost*. This is because Victorinus has not distinguished or has not worked out completely the differnce between predicating things to God as a whole and to each particular person. Because Victorinus ascirbes act most truly and properly to the Son, the Father is not actually life and thought, although Victorinus intends otherwise. The Father must depend on them for his life and thought. If the Father must depend upon that which is outside of him, how can he communicate his essence to his Son? Or, more importantly, how can he establish what is other than him, if he is not himself complete and self-identical? How does this dependernce not undermine the Trinitarian structure of his principle? Carreker puts it nicely:

> From the perspective of Augustine, the kind of trinitarian theology which Victorinus maintains *renders the Son constitutive of the Father*. The motion to self-knowledge in the self-generation of the Son completes the Father who cannot have the fullness of life which self-knowledge brings without the potential wisdom in himself coming to the outward form of the Son as Word. While the Father for Victorinus is a full potency, hidden, and at rest, to which the divine activity wills to return having come to a knowledge of itself, it is a fullness which is incomplete, and the necessity of its motion is to bring it to actuality.[45]

In short, "The categories of Victorinus intend[ed] to secure the doctrine of the *homoousian* derived from Scripture"[46] and to establish thereby a coherent Trinitarian doctrine in the end undermine his doctrine and so fails in his attempt.

Conclusion

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[44] *Cf.* note 40 *supra*.
[45] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 306.
[46] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 307.

While the equality of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost could find its origin in Plotinus' One where in its pre-thinking the thinkable relations are not subordinate[47], it is not said so clearly and, in fact, as we have seen, cannot be said. Likewise, Porphyry shows how this might be so, and does so more clearly, but again even he falls short. Victorinus attempts to show how the thinkable relations are equal in their consubstantiality without underming its unity, while maintaining that diversity. It is obvious that Victorinus works out this problem within the problematic of post-Plotinian Neoplatonism and is deeply indebted to it, but moves, as it were, substantially beyond it. The problem of showing how the One can accommodate difference without destroying its absolute simplicity and causality finds a certain solution in Victorinus with some help from Porphyry, but the problem is, of course, that Victorinus does not go far enough.

He applies the predicates of being, life and thought to each person of the Trinity, which in turn establishes their substantial identity, but his means to differentiate each person is deficient, or at least misplaced. To reconcile substantial identity with a difference of persons Victorinus applies potency to the Father and act to the Son and Holy Ghost. While he says that the Father is act as well, although interior, yet what allows the distinction of persons in the first place is the very externality of act, something which must be foreign to the Father: the Father depends, therefore, on the Son and the Holy Ghost and so undermines the possibility of diversity within the Trinity. This mistake requires a further meditation on the placement of predicates to each person and the Trinity as a whole, so that

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[47] *Cf.* W. Beierwaltes, _Plotino_, p. 58.

neither the unity of the Trinity, nor the difference of persons is undermined. This is not to depreciate Victorinus' role in the history of philosophy. He began the arduous task of explaining the Trinity using the categories of human thought depending both on Scripture and philosophical inquiry. In so doing, his conception of a divine activity unified in one substance of being, life and thought is determinative for Augustine.

Chapter Four:

Augustine

Introduction

With Augustine, we enter the same problem as confronted Plotinus, Porphyry and Victorinus, but it is astoundingly different. The dilemma of the infinite first principle and its finite determinations is attacked with such concision and clarity, with such fresh eyes, both in method and substance. Like his predecessors, he tries to discover a diversity in unity without annulling the unity, the ground of its diversity. Like Victorinus, Augustine's argument is determined by Scripture. Yet it is all, somehow, different. The difference is that Augustine allows Scripture wholly to determine the categories of thought with which he will think God. Victorinus begins this, but not with the logical consistency and rigour of Augustine. As for the structure of Victorinus' works, they often seem to have no logic governing them. Both the structure and content of the *De Trinitate*, however, reveal a conscious and systematic relation to Scripture. There is a constant dialectic between the potential knower and Principle which the knower seeks to find and understand. This Principle is found primarily in Scripture and in the Nicene Creed, which Creed is in no way opposed to what Scripture details about the Trinity. Augustine moves beyond his predecessors through the dialectic between the categories of God revealed in Scripture and Augustine as potential knower. Certainly, he uses Aristotelian categories within a Neoplatonic philosophical context. These are essential to understanding Augustine and his

doctrine of the Trinity. But more importantly is Augustine's method in the _De Trinitate_ and _how the Principle contained in Scripture reforms and reshapes how the mind will think about that Principle_. As his first confession details in his _Confessiones_[1], this difference arises from Augustine's most profound critique of antiquity and of the height of human reason. He did not attempt to solve the problems it presented simply on its own terms, for this would be to aggravate and compound the problem. It necessitated a conversion of philosophy _in principle_[2].

The result of such an exercise, one which comprehends, unites and surpasses all previous thought about the first principle, is a Principle which is able to be comprehended precisely because the Principle itself has formed those same categories by which the mind is to think it. The mind thus illumined, Augustine arrives at a Trinity understood as three relations in substance in act. Understood as such, the single divine essence or substance can be united in act with its predicates peculiar to each relation. This is something which even Victorinus was unable to achieve. Augustine's method confirms what Plotinus knew: man's intellection alone could conceive of the first principle without irreparably dividing the first principle.

Section One:
The Structure of the _De Trinitate_

The structure or method of Augustine's _De Trinitate_ is determinative to the correct understanding Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity itself, something which few modern

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[1] _Cf._ Augustine, _Confessiones_, books I-IX.
[2] The bringing together too quickly or prematurely of religion or faith and philosophy or reason is the Manichee's mistake, as it might also be for Victorinus. So also Augustine would see the Platonists as refusing to admit what is necessary or presupposed in their own thought.

interpreters have done. For instance, Hadot sees Augustine's investigations not so much on being or on God per se, but rather as being merely psychological or a psychologising of God[3]. Aside from Augustine's warning to readers in the opening book that this is exactly what he is not doing[4], the goal of the *De Trinitate* is to provide an indubitable proof[5] of God as Trinity where the Trinity is shown to be the necessary presupposition for thought itself. Thus, the psychological trinities of the last eight books are in no way meant to be a psychologising of God, nor determination of Augutine's doctrine on the Trinity. The goal is,

> to see itself solely as *memoria Dei, intellectus Dei, voluntas Dei*, that is, to see itself as precisely nothing other than *imago Trinitatis*. To attain this conclusion is to see the intuitive, intellectual basis of all the mind's external and discursive activities to discover in the end, in contemplative *sapientia*, the indubitable starting-point or presupposition of finite being and of rational *scientia*.[6]

That is to say, Augustine's psychological trinities of the last eight books are not to be Augustine's final word on the doctrine of the Trinity – Augustine is not enunciating his doctrine there – and therefore those last eight books can in no way be a rejection of a theological consideration in favour of a psychological understanding of God as Hadot would have us believe.

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[3] *Cf.* P. Hadot, "*L'image*", p. 429 and my discussion of it in my first chapter.

[4] *Cf.* Augustine, *De Trinitate*, I, i, 1: "The following dissertation concerning the Trinity, as the reader ought to be informed, has been written in order to guard against the sophistries of those who disdain to begin with faith, and are deceived by a crude and perverse love of reason...[The second class of people] frame whatever sentiments they may have concerning God according to the nature or affections of the human mind; and through this error they govern their discourse, in disputing concerning God, by distorted and fallacious rules." I will use the translation of A. W. Haddam in "The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers", Vol. III, ed. P. Schaff. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1993.

[5] *Cf.* Augustine, *De Trinitate*, I, ii, 4: "Then, if God be willing and aid us, we may perhaps at least so far serve these talkative arguers...as to enable them to find something which they are not able to doubt..."

[6] *Cf.* R. D. Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method" in *Studia Patristica*, XVI(1985), p. 509.

Thus with a proper understanding of the structure of this treatise, we will be able to give an adequate explication of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity and then properly place it within the history which precedes him. Aside from confusions of the place of philosophy and theology or faith and reason in the ancient world, this misunderstanding of the method or structure of the _De Trinitate_ has also prevented modern scholars from understanding correctly the significance of Augustine's achievement in Trinitarian doctrine.

The _De Trinitate_ is divided into three parts according to what is said, believed and understood[7]. The first part is what the Scripture says about the substantial unity of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The second part is what is to be believed from what was said in the first section. Since this is the section where Augustine explains what is to be believed according to the categories of thought, I will mostly focus on this. This is where Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity is to be found. The third part is an investigation into the presuppositions of what was believed in the previous section. Because the goal of the treatise is to give an indubitable proof of the Trinity, this final section shows that the entire inquiry into the Trinity, and indeed of all thought generally, presupposes a God as Trinity. Thus the psychological trinities "should not be regarded as a series of more or less plausible psychological illustrations of the concept of the Trinity." But rather, as said above, "to see the intuitive, intellectual basis of all the mind's external and discursive activities...[and] the indubitable starting-point or presupposition of finite being and of rational _scientia_"[8]. So long

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[7] _Cf._ Augustine, _De Trinitate_, I, ii, 2. For my understanding of the structure of the _De Trinitate_, I follow R. D. Crouse, "Philosophical Method".
[8] _Cf._ R. D. Crouse, "Philosophical Method", p. 509.

as we keep the purpose and structure of the _De Trinitate_ in mind, we will prevent ourselves from misinterpreting Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity.

Augustine begins his treatise with God as found in Scripture. He begins with the principle which he wishes to know. It would be impossible for Augustine to say with Victorinus that "we name God from those things which we know"[9]. This is important, for Scripture serves "to purge our minds"[10] which, by the supremacy of God and in virtue of the mind's own infirmity, cannot on its own know God rightly.[11] We all must therefore start with the "righteousness of faith"[12]. The Scripture and the exposition of it is determinative for Augustine's quest, not only for the first section which deals explicitly with Scripture, but for the work as a whole and especially for the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity according to the categories of thought.

Just as there was a division in Plotinus between the self-gathered, self-willed and self-created unity of the life of One and the dividedness of the human soul in its life and knowing, so also is there a division in Augustine between God who is "unchangeable, invisible and having life absolutely and sufficient to itself"[13] and the infirmity of the human soul. Yet, as Carreker writes,

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[9] _Cf._ Victorinus, _Ad Cand._ 28.
[10] _Cf._ Augustine, _De Trinitate_, I, i, 3.
[11] _Cf._ Augustine, _De Trinitate_, I, ii, 4.
[12] _Cf._ Augustine, _De Trinitate_, I, ii, 4.
[13] _Cf._ V, i, 2

> Augustine will not attempt to overcome these distances by negation [as Plotinus does]. Rather, soul's dividedness will be seen to be overcome in this reconstitution of soul, the <u>purgatio mentis</u>, or renewal of the mind's faculties according to divine revelation. This will involve a new understanding of the Principle itself, and a new mediation as well.[14]

Just as the complete integration of diversity in the unity of the first principle, and therefore in the human knowing, was impossible for Plotinus and Porphyry, and even Victorinus[15], the attempt to provide an orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, that is, of a rationally coherent integration of diversity in unity, must begin from that principle itself *which is to reform the way the mind thinks of the principle*. As Carreker notes astutely, "The ultimate principle of Augustine's method is that divine predication is possible only if the divine predicates itself"[16]. This is a confirmation and recognition of the limits of man's knowing and is a conversion of philosophy itself. "For with what understanding," asks Augustine, "can man apprehend God, who does not yet understand that very understanding itself of his own, by which he desires to apprehend Him?"[17]. The principle as found and exposited in Scripture in books I-IV of <u>De Trinitate</u> determines as well, therefore, the categories by which the mind thinks about it. Books V-VII, therefore, are a dialectic between Scripture and the mind,

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[14] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary on Books Five, Six, and Seven of the <u>De Trinitate</u> of Saint Augustine of Hippo</u>, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1992, p. 101. I am deeply indebted to this work for my understanding of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity and structure of the <u>De Trinitate</u> and the crucial and subtle way Augustine moves decisively beyond Victorinus. As mentioned in my previous chapter, Carreker is the only modern scholar both to analyse and compare Victorinus's doctrine of the Trinity and the proper structure and, therefore, Trinitarian doctrine found in the <u>De Trinitate</u>.

[15] We might add to this list the mind of the church thus far. *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 22, 287-307 and *ff*.

[16] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 102.

[17] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>De Trinitate</u>, V, ii, 2.

where "the categories appropriate to Scriptural revelation are formed in the mind"[18]. Once the mind has been reshaped into the image of the Trinity at the end of book VII, and therefore is a mirror or "speculum" for the Trinity, books VIII-XV represent an entering into the mirror itself, where the external understanding of the Trinity, is progressively interiorised[19] and the Trinity is discovered as the necessary principle without which thinking, self-consciousness and the quest itself was not possible.

Section Two:
Augustine's Doctrine of the Trinity

This section will not involve a detailed discussion of the form and content of books V-VII[20]. It will point out only how Augustine differs in terms of method and his doctrine of the Trinity from his predecessors. We should once again reiterate that Augustine is working with a problem common to the entire history of philosophy: the necessity for thought of a single principle comprehensive of diversity. Further, within the common mind of the church, there had not been an understanding of this unity in diversity according to the principles adequate to logic, only in an external form as found in the Nicene Creed or in inadequate reasoned attempts by both Greek and Latin theologians[21]. Thus, the Augustinian

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[18] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, A Commentary, p. 21.

[19] Augustine describes the character of the last section of the books as a "modo interiore", VIII, i, 1.

[20] For a detailed exposition on these books, see M. L. Carreker, A Commentary. Due to Augustine's exceedingly concise and air-tight logic, I will be forced to skip over all of the necessary and ineluctable reasons which connect each and every sentence and thought and which lead Augustine to his doctrinal position. Although regrettable, it falls outside the purview of this thesis.

[21] For a concise explanation of this, see M. L. Carreker, A Commentary, p. 130-137. In Gregory Nazianzus, for example, "The divine essence, the divine relations, and the hypostases are not given in a unified logical expression.", p. 136. M. L. Carreker follows J. A. Doull in seeing the Cappadocian Trinitarian logic as reminiscent of the subordinationism of Plotinian or Origenic Neoplatonism. *Cf.* J. A. Doull, "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions", Dionysius, Vol. VIII(1984), p. 94-95.

doctrine of the Trinity as relations in substance in act presents us with a solution to both problems.

As with his predecessors, Augustine is presented with a disparity between God and us. This does not leave us in silence. However, Augustine makes sure that we do not speak of God analogically, a method which he prohibits at the very opening of the treatise[22]: "What, therefore, we do not find in that which is our own best, we ought not to seek in Him who is far better than that best of ours; that so we may understand God, if we are able, and as much as we are able, as good without quality, great without quantity..."[23]. Augustine begins with the Aristotelian category of substance[24] which *he finds in Scripture*, although the Aristotelian categories "are all qualified to place the divine at a distance, different from creation"[25]. Augustine writes: "And who is there that IS, more than He who said to His servant Moses, "I am that I am;" and, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, He who is hath sent me unto you?""[26]. Augustine, however, runs straightway into a problem regarding the traditional understanding of substance.

> But other things that are called essences or substances admit of accidents, whereby a change, whether great or small, is produced in them. *But there can be no accident of this kind in respect to God*; and therefore He who is God is the only unchangeable substance or essence, to whom certainly BEING itself, whence comes the name of essence, most especially belongs.[27]

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[22] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>De Trinitate</u>, I, i, 1.
[23] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>De Trinitate</u>, V, ii, 1.
[24] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>De Trinitate</u>, V, ii, 3.
[25] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 113.
[26] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>De Trinitate</u>, V, ii, 3.
[27] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>De Trinitate</u>, V, ii, 3; italics mine.

With the introduction of the category of substance, the category of accident appears. This forces Augustine to distinguish between finite and infinite being so as to deny the category of accident to God, for that would introduce a change in God's substance.

There are two things to note here. Firstly, Augustine arrives at the first logical category of thought, substance. The second is the pattern or method of investigation: Augustine *begins with Scripture* to find an essential attribute for God, finds the traditional rational understanding of it problematic according to reason and then alters it fundamentally. Thus with the aid of the illuminative grace as found in Scripture, Augustine begins to reshape the categories of his own thought about God. As Carreker notes, "Scripture itself illumines the categories by means of which the mind moves through itself"[28]. This is the pattern, the dialectic between principle and potential knower, which is found throughout this section and the entire treatise.

Since Scripture has been determinative for this inquiry, this dialectic between principle and potential knower has thus far prevented any other category. Augustine, however, *in examining Scripture* notices that not everything concerning God in Scripture is said according to substance: "For it is said in relation to something, as the Father in relation to the Son and the Son in relation to the Father, which is not an accident; because both the one is always Father, and the other is always Son..."[29]. Augustine finds another category in Scripture which sharpens the mind's own understanding of the principle itself. The category

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[28] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, A Commentary, p. 115.
[29] *Cf.* Augustine, *De Trinitate*, V, v, 6.

of relation becomes the means of differentiation or distinction within the single principle of the Trinity without separating or dividing it. Augustine says,

> Wherefore, although to be the Father and to be the Son is different, yet their substance is not different; because they are so called, not according to substance, but according to relation, which relation, however, is not accidental, because it is not changeable.[30]

Thus since together, "the categories of substance and relation render the biblical revelation logically intelligible"[31], the principle illumines the means by which it itself is understood. Both our understanding and our understanding of it are made clearer. It remains, however, for Augustine to hold the two categories in one view.

Augustine achieves this single view with the introduction of the category of act, but he just mentions it and moves on[32]. The reason for this silence is difficult to understand. For one reason, the structure and the content mirror one another in this work: as we begin to understand this Trinity as it is adumbrated in this treatise, we become more like it. So only when we properly understand the *three* categories at *once*, will we understand the Trinity who is *three* in *one*. The act of reformation and eventual act of understanding the trinal unity is to mirror the principle itself. The principle itself is to shape the categories of the mind, the same categories by which we behold the principle. The second reason for this silence is the peculiar nature of this final category. The final category is even more difficult to show because it is in this way that Augustine moves beyond his pagan and Christian predecessors,

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[30] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>De Trinitate</u>, V, v, 6.
[31] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 140.
[32] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>De Trintitate</u>, V, viii, 9.

most notably Victorinus. It also consumes, in one way or another, all or most of books VI and VII.

In short, for Augustine to explain the role of the category of act, he must show *how* the divine substance and relations are unified or are one necessarily. Others have shown *that* substance and relations are one, but because they do not show *how* this is so, their understanding of the Trinity is *liable to* and *does in fact* collapse under scrutiny. They do not give a logic to that unity. This is the point at which Augustine is in his argument. To give and understand the necessary logic of the three categories *is* to unify the relations in substance *actually* which is what the principle is. To put it another way, to show how the relations in substance exist in actuality as Trinity involves a simultaneous, actual, and unified grasp of these relations in substance. Because the principle itself is leading the mind to an adequate understanding of the principle, the mind must become what that principle is, as best it can, and will only understand what that principle is when the mind understands the Trinity. The understanding must be actual and unified, just as the Trinity is. This is why the category of act is difficult to understand and why Augustine seems to be silent about it, when he is in fact leading us to understanding it.

For Augustine, his doctrine stands under scrutiny and moves beyond his predecessors because his categories or predicates about God come from God Himself as found in Scripture and as the Church has defined its belief in the Nicene Creed. The priority of Scripture is immediately apparent once again. This is not to say that the Cappodocians or

that Victorinus did not hold to the priority of Scripture. Augustine is just the most rigorous, consistent and systematic in finding the categories by which we think God or can predicate God in Scripture. It is this rigorous and consistent *method* that enables Augustine to move beyond his predecessors and the mind of the Church in his *doctrine* of the Trinity.

The question centres around God's essence and his predicates or "the distinction between the divine substance and the divine relations"[33] and how they are one. Augustine writes that there are only three predicates which are proper to the Father in his relation to the Son: Father, begetter and Principle[34]. Everything else predicated of the Father will be proper to the Father in relation to his substance "and mark him as he is the divine essence"[35]. As usual, Augustine's choice of names proper to the Father is not arbitrary and the consequence of this choice is not without enormous subtlety.

Augustine underlines here the predicate of begetting as *act*[36]. As act or in the act of begetting, the Father is able to establish himself as principle to that which he begets. Unlike Victorinus' conception of the Father, the Father is all that he is actually and is without need. His begetting of the Son is a complete begetting of what God the Father actually is. Because Augustine limited those predicates which are relative to the Father and the Son, all other things are common to each person. The consequence of this predication is that the Father and the Son are no more merely *relations*, but *also* have common to them *substance* and are unified in that *act*. Thus the Father is self-established as principle, wholly actual, and *by the act*

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[33] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 191.
[34] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>*De Trinitate*</u>, VI, ii, 3.
[35] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 193.

of begetting wholly communicates his substance (as actual and entire) in and to the Son who is at once relative to and shares in the same substance with the Father. Augustine's distinction here begins to bring to light for us this unification of divine substance and relations. As Carreker notes, "The consequence of this logical distinction is to see the divine names which predicate the divine essence as common to the Father and the Son in their one substantial life"[37]. Crucially, this distinction allows a certain priority of the Father as principle, or begetter of the Son, without denying the Son any of the divine essence[38]. Through Augustine's distinction between what can be predicated relatively to each person and to the divine substance, we begin to see the unity of essence and persons or divine substance and its relations in a unititive act.

The above distinction allows each relation to have *both* an essence relative to itself, and therefore common to the divine substance, *and at once* a peculiar distinctive relation to another, either by begetting, being begotten or proceeding, which are unified in act. The movement we have seen in books V-VII, then, is this: the unity of the Trinity is, at first, established through *substance*. *Relation* is introduced as a category of distinction within that substance. Yet in making the distinction between predicates that apply *to the relation* and *to the divine substance or essence*, Augustine shows how the category of *act* can unify, complete and maintain the substance and relations, all of which are nothing other than the Trinity. That

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[36] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 149.
[37] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 194.
[38] *Cf.* Victorinus' system, as we noted above, demands the priority of the Father or indetermined being, hidden being. We also showed how this was not the case when the system was actually examined. Augustine achieves what Victorinus attempted.

distinction allows an essence proper to the relation *relative to itself* which, in turn, allows the relation to be, for the referent in the relation must have an essence in the first place[39]. When Augustine shows each relation to exist *as actual*, that is, showing how each of the divine persons or relations is the divine substance and how each are one in act and each are actual, Augustine moves beyond Victorinus.

Victorinus, it will be remembered, collapsed the difference between divine substance or essence and its predicates[40]. Or, it could be said, he brought them together too quickly. While the Father in Victorinus' system comprises the totality of divine subtance or being as being, life and thought, the Father also *needs* the movement from potency to act in his own self-knowledge in the Son. To put it otherwise, Carreker writes: "...the Father's fullness is incomplete since it needs its motion to bring it into actuality"[41]. In Augustine, power and wisdom, although said by Paul to belong to Christ in I Cor 1, 24, are discovered to belong to the entire divine substance and so the Father is complete prior to the begetting of his Son. His self-knowledge (because as divine substance he is wisdom) is complete prior to the enunciation of his Word. The difference in the begetting of the Father in Victorinus' and Augustine's systems is this: in Augustine, the Father has a prior essence, *which is shared by each person of the Trinity*, which is actual, complete and which grounds himself as relation. This was Victorinus' mistake. It is the actual and complete begetting the actual and complete, related to one another and whose unity and completion is further unified and completed in their

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[39] *Cf.* Augustine, <u>*De Trinitate*</u>, VII, i, 2: "...wherefore, if the Father also is not something in respect to Himself, then there is no one at all that can be spoken of relatively of something."
[40] *Cf. supra* p. 79 and M. L. Carreker, <u>A Commentary</u>, p. 310.

mutual adoration which is nothing other than their substance. The Father in Victorinus is potentially the completion of his being as indeterminate being, life and thought who for his own completion needs the actualisation and determination of Himself in His self-understanding. The completeness of the Father is an incomplete fullness precisely because it is potential and needs its determination in the Son. There is no essence to ground difference. Carreker writes that Victorinus' logic, "ends in a unitarian and not a trinitarian view of God"[42]. Although Victorinus was the first to develop "the divine essence into a coherent activity which as the motion of the divine spirit is nothing other than the divine persons", it remained for Augustine to ennunciate rationally the proper relation of divine essence and its predicates[43]. Importantly, Carreker notes that the reason for the collapse of Victorinus' system was that Victorinus did not allow himself to be wholly determined by the categories revealed in Scripture and even when he used them was inconsistent, confusing essential predicates with relative ones and vice versa.

Conclusion

The speculative genius Augustine provides us with is at once his philosophical method centred around Scripture and Scripture's ability to reveal to the mind categories adequate to the Principle and his doctrine of the Trinity which flows from that method. At every point, Augustine is positively determined by Scripture and through such a determination he is provided with predicates and their logical unity so as to come to a

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[41] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, A Commentary, p. 306.
[42] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, A Commentary, p. 306.
[43] *Cf.* M. L. Carreker, A Commentary, p. 307. *Cf.* Carreker's analysis of Victorinus' categorical short comings in

doctrine of Trinity. It is through the category of act, obtained from Scripture, that Augustine can bring together the two sides of substance and relation into a unity which is the Trinity. By allowing Scripture to form his thought about God, Augustine can distinguish between essential and relative predicates, something which Victorinus attempted, but not consistently and with confusion of them.

relation to the Augustinian distinction of essential and relative predicates, p. 287-307.

Conclusion

Few scholars have understood Augustine's contribution to the history of philosophy and it is easy to see why. His immediate influences, Plotinus, Porphyry and Victorinus, taken each individually, are still not yet well understood and tracing a line of influence through them all to Augustine is even a more difficult and precarious task. Care must be taken not to read Augustine, Victorinus or Porphyry into Plotinus and even more care not to read Hegel or Heidegger into this whole history. What one makes also of the influence of Christianity or the role of Scripture is also an easily misunderstood concept. Yet, it is out of these mistakes or partial views that a clearer, more comprehensive and accurate history can be formed: we see far because we stand on the shoulders of giants.

The most recent scholarship, as I hope I have shown, reveals the need for a patient and careful reading of this history and this they have begun to do. Their work has already shown the complexity of a creative of dependence of one author on another. Porphyry is both loyal and disloyal to his master. He both teases nuances found in Plotinus' work and also moves beyond him. The Porphyrian distinction between forms of being proves crucial for the Latin West. Yet Porphyry's reluctance to attribute clearly the first moment of Nous, or *hyparxis*, to the One shows that he was still working out the implications of his distinction.

The movement begun by Porphyry Victorinus continues and transforms, but it appears his transformation was not radical enough. Victorinus attributes potentiality to the Father and act to the Son as a means to distinguish the persons within the substantiality and

unity of the Trinity. Carreker's work uncovers the deficiency of Victorinus' predication and sees that it in fact leads to its opposite: instead of maintaining those distinctions, it annuls them. Likewise, it is Carreker alone who sees Augustine's doctrine confronting and overcoming this most subtle mistake of Victorinus.

Augustine's work, _De Trinitate_, aside from discovering a rationally coherent doctrine of the Trinity, which is astounding in its own right, is also remarkable for the means by which the doctrine is achieved. The root of the problem is attacked, that is, man's defective knowing, and is overcome by a renewing of the mind by Scripture. Certainly, Scripture plays an important part in Victorinus' system, as for other Christian theologians in the first few centuries of the existence of Christianity, but the implications of man's enfeebled knowing and the necessity for the regeneration of it by the whole of Scripture so as to understand the Trinity sufficiently is not to be found outside of Augustine. He realised that only God could predicate Himself and so Augustine humbly and magnanimously submited his intellect to be reformed by that which he desired to know.

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