

Nature and Grace

in Augustine's Expositions of Genesis I, 1-5

According to Augustine's interpretation of the creation narrative the heavens of the first verse of Genesis are the spiritual creation, and the darkness over the deep represents the formlessness and mutability of intelligent life as it exists in itself ; the spiritual creation " becomes light " through conversion toward its Source — that is, by adhering to God it is illuminated by eternal Wisdom and fully " formed ".

In recent decades this interpretation of the opening verses of Genesis has attracted attention as a notable instance of Augustine's indebtedness to neo-Platonism, and several studies have traced the parallels between Augustine's thought and certain passages in the *Enneads*¹. In addition to these investigations of the dependence of Augustine upon Plotinus, other studies have examined in some detail Augustine's own line of thought in his various commentaries on Genesis². Building upon the work that has already been done in these areas, I propose to examine in the present essay the principal theological topic which emerges from

1. René ARNOU, *Le thème néoplatonicien de la contemplation créatrice chez Origène et chez saint Augustin*, in *Gregorianum*, 13 (1932), pp. 124-36 ; René ARNOU, *Platonisme des Pères*, in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, XII, 2, cols. 2355-59 ; Joachim RITTER, *Mundus Intelligibilis. Eine Untersuchung zur Aufnahme und Umwandlung der neuplatonischen Ontologie bei Augustinus* (Philosophische Abhandlungen, VI ; Frankfurt am Main, V. Klostermann, 1937) ; J. WYTZES, *Bemerkungen zu dem neuplatonischen Einfluss in Augustins 'de Genesi ad litteram'*, in *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 39 (1940), pp. 137-51 ; Hilary ARMSTRONG, *Spiritual or Intelligible Matter*, in *Augustinus Magister*, I, pp. 277-83.

2. Christopher J. O'TOOLE, C.S.C., *The Philosophy of Creation in the Writings of saint Augustine* (Washington : Catholic University of America, 1944) ; Gerhart LADNER, *The Idea of Reform : Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 167-85 ; Jean PÉPIN, *Recherches sur le sens et les origines de l'expression 'caelum caeli' dans le livre XII des "Confessions" de saint Augustin*, in *Bulletin du Cange. Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi*, 23 (1953), pp. 185-274.

Augustine's repeated encounters with the opening verses of Genesis, that of nature and grace — the distinction between what finite spirit can become on the basis of its own resources and what it can become through the gracious activity of God. It has been recognized since the time of Peter Lombard that these passages have to do with the distinction between nature and grace³. Indeed, Augustine himself made use of those very terms and handed them on to medieval thinkers⁴. And he furnished not only the terms, but the substance of the distinction as well⁵.

The pertinence of the topic of nature and grace to Augustine's thought needs no proof. But it is not enough merely to note its presence in his writings, as though he could be assumed to support one or another of the standard theories of nature and grace. The real task is to inquire into the exact understanding of nature and grace that is to be found in Augustine's works, resisting the temptation to read into them any of the theories formulated by later theologians and instead allowing his writings to speak for themselves, acknowledging at least the possibility that his perspective on the question might be instructive to contemporary theologians.

Most treatments of nature and grace in Augustine have focused their attention upon the anthropological discussions which are contained in the anti-Pelagian writings⁶. While an awareness of the distinction between nature and grace is, beyond all question, present in those writings, the evidence is often indirect, for the anti-Pelagian writings are concerned almost exclusively with the condition of man under sin and with the necessity of a *gratia sanans naturam*⁷. The various commentaries on

3. *Liber II Sententiarum*, d. 2 and d. 5. Cf. René ARNOU, *Platonisme des Pères*, in *DTC*, XII, 2, cols. 2358-59.

4. *De civ. Dei*, XII, 9 (C.C., 48, 364) : « ... [Deus] eos cum bona uoluntate, id est cum amore casto quo illi adhaerent, creauit, simul eis condens naturam et largiens gratiam ».

5. *Conf.*, XIII, 3, 4 (Skutella, 330-31) : « sed sicut non te promeruerat, ut esset talis vita, quae inluminari posset, ita nec cum iam esset promeruit te, ut inluminaretur. neque enim eius infirmitas placeret tibi, si non lux fieret non existendo, sed intuendo inluminantem lucem eique cohaerendo, ut et quod utcumque vivit et quod beate vivit, non deberet nisi gratiae tuae... ».

6. Paul DUMONT, *Le surnaturel dans la théologie de saint Augustin*, in *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 11 (1931), pp. 513-42 ; 12 (1932), pp. 29-55, 194-219 ; F.-J. THONNARD, A.A., *La notion de 'nature' chez saint Augustin. Ses progrès dans la polémique antipélagienne*, in *Revue des études augustinienne*, 11 (1965), pp. 239-65.

7. *De natura et gratia*, 67, 81 (P.L., 44, 288) : « ... et gratiam Dei non evacuavi, sine qua natura humana iam contenebrata atque vitiata illuminari non potest et sanari : de qua re cum istis tota vertitur quaestio, ne gratiam Dei quae est in Christo Iesu Domino nostro, perversa naturae defensione frustremus ». In the same work, however, Augustine also notes the role of divine aid even apart from sin (ibid., 48, 56 [P.L., 44, 274]) : « Si de integra et sana hominis natura loqueretur, quam modo non habemus..., nec sic recte diceret, quod non peccare nostrum tantummodo sit, quamvis peccare nostrum esset : nam et tunc esset adiutorium Dei, et tanquam lumen sanis oculis quo adiuti viderent, se praerberet volentibus ».

Genesis are of far greater value, because in them it is possible both to trace the origins of Augustine's understanding of nature and grace and to study it in its most explicit formulations. Despite the apparent remoteness of the subject-matter from human life and the astounding character of Augustine's exegesis, so far from the *prima facie* meaning of the text, his discussions of the angelic realm are of great value for understanding his view of man, for the Plotinian schema which he utilizes is integral to Augustine's philosophical perspective upon intelligent life. He himself asserts that there is a parallel between what is said about the angels and the situation of man before God⁸, and from the start his interpretation of the meaning of the light of the first day was buttressed by a text having to do with man : " You were darkness but now you have been made light in the Lord " (Eph. V, 8). The relevance of the topic to human life is reinforced by its association with the theme of the two cities, which has such an important place in his later thought.

The development of Augustine's interpretation of Genesis, ch. I, can be traced quite readily because he returned to the passage frequently during his career. It is absent from the early work, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (388-89). It first appears, in the form of fragmentary suggestions, in the unfinished commentary, *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber* (393-94). The fullest discussions are found in the *Confessiones*, books XII and XIII (written about 399-400), and in the long commentary, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim* (begun about 401 and completed about 415, but with most of the relevant passages clustered in the early books). Much later the interpretation of the creation narrative receives its final statement, with some significant omissions but without fundamental change, in books XI and XII of *De civitate Dei* (written about 416-20). At the very end of his career the problem of the initial state of the angels is discussed, though not in the form of commentary, in *De correptione et gratia* (426-27).

It seems that the development of Augustine's thought on this topic moved through three stages, each dominated by a major concern. In the earliest period he already possessed, in the doctrine that the beatitude of finite beings is necessarily composite, the framework for making a distinction between nature and grace ; but it was only about 399 or 400 that he inquired into the components of true beatitude and formulated explicitly the notion of a double gratuity of nature and grace ; about 410 to 412 he began to inquire into the initial state in which intelligent beings were created, and he did not resolve the problem to his own satisfaction until the last decade of his life. Thus his thought on the subject is cumulative. There are no major reversals of position, but as new questions are raised his thought steadily became more explicit and more complex. He began with some important insights about the final state of beatitude

8. *Conf.*, XIII, 2, 3 (Skutella, 330) : « nam et nos, qui secundum animam creatura spiritalis sumus... ».

and gradually moved backward, analyzing the causes and conditions and antecedent states which contribute to the realization of true beatitude. In this essay I shall examine, with an awareness of chronological sequence and with a concern to trace the unfolding of the problem, Augustine's understanding of (1) the compositeness of beatitude, (2) the gratuity of beatitude, and (3) the way toward beatitude.

I. THE COMPOSITENESS OF BEATITUDE

The first hint of the direction in which Augustine's thought will move is found not in an exegetical work but in the apologetic or protreptic treatise *De vera religione*, where Augustine speaks, in strongly Plotinian language, of *anima* as the "first intellectual creature", made by the Truth in order to behold the Truth and thereby become godlike⁹. Here we find him already stressing the difference between God and all creatures, even the highest, for their being is finite and mutable and becomes firm and stable only when they adhere in love to God as a good above themselves¹⁰. It is a common theme in his writings that the soul which seeks truly to "be" — not merely to live, but to live with coherence and stability — finds that goal to be unattainable as long as its affections are bound to changeable things or as long as it trusts in its own resources; it must ground its entire life in God as the One who "summe est"¹¹.

9. *De ver. rel.*, 37, 68 (P.L., 34, 152): « Sed aliqui se in hoc tenent, ut pro summo Deo animam colant, et primam intellectualem creaturam, quam per Veritatem Pater fabricavit, ad ipsam Veritatem semper intuendam, et se per ipsam, quia omni modo ei simillima est ». Cf. *De lib. arb.*, III, 11, 32 (P.L., 32, 1287): « Si enim deessent animae quae ipsum fastigium ordinis in universa creatura sic obtinerent, ut si peccare voluissent, infirmaretur et labefactaretur universitas, magnum quiddam deesset creaturae: illud enim deesset, quo remoto stabilitas rerum atque connexio turbaretur. Tales sunt optimae, et sanctae, et sublimes creaturae coelestium vel supercoelestium potestatum, quibus solus Deus imperat; universus autem mundus subiectus est. Sine istarum officiis iustis atque perfectis esse universitas non potest ».

10. *De ver. rel.*, 13, 26 (P.L., 34, 133): « Fatendum est enim, et angelos natura esse mutabiles, si solus Deus est incommutabilis: sed ea voluntate qua magis Deum quam se diligunt, firmi et stabiles manent in illo, et fruuntur maiestate ipsius, ei uni libentissime subditi ».

11. *De lib. arb.*, III, 7, 21 (P.L., 32, 1281): « Si vis itaque miseriam fugere, ama in te hoc ipsum, quia *esse vis*. Si enim magis magisque esse volueris, ei quod summe est propinquabis: et gratias age nunc quia es... Quanto enim amplius esse amaveris tanto amplius vitam aeternam desiderabis, teque *ita formari* exoptabis, ut affectiones tuae non sint temporales, de temporalium rerum amoribus inustae et impressae... Qui autem amat esse, probat ista in quantum sunt, et *amat quod semper est*. Et si *variabatur* in amore istorum, *munietur* in illius; et si *diffinuebat* in amore transeuntium, in permanentis amore *solidabitur, et stabit, et obtinebit ipsum esse, quod volebat* cum timebat non esse, et stare non poterat irretitus amore fugientium... Huic enim exordio quo esse vis, si adicias magis magisque esse, consurgis atque extrueris in id quod summe est; *atque ita te ab omni labe cohibebis, qua transit ut non sit quod infime est, et secum amantis vires subruit* ».

Indeed, from the time of his earliest writings and throughout his career Augustine speaks of God as the true life of the soul, just as the soul is the life of the body¹².

These ideas are linked with the creation narrative for the first time in the unfinished commentary on Genesis, where Augustine advances the conjecture that the "caeli" of verse 1 are the "creatura sublimis atque invisibilis"¹³. M. Pépin, who has inquired into the possible sources of this identification, finds that the only parallels are in Philo and Origen¹⁴. Since there is mounting evidence that Augustine derived a number of exegetical ideas from Origen, either directly or through intermediaries, this interpretation also may have been suggested to him by earlier writers. But he does not consider himself bound by their authority, for in the work in which this suggestion is first put forward it stands side by side with the alternative conjecture that the angels are the "spiritus Dei" moving over the waters, a living and invisible creation by which the visible world is administered; the latter view seems even to be given preference, for it allows the "heaven and earth" of verse 1 to be interpreted in the more obvious way, as the matter from which the entire visible creation is formed¹⁵. It seems likely, then, that Augustine, casting about for some mention of the angels in the creation narrative, tried out various ways of apportioning its designations to the material and the spiritual creation. Thus in another anticipation of his later views he suggests, almost by the way, that, if it is legitimate to assume that the creation narrative deals with the origin of all things, the light of the first day is an appropriate place for the mention of the angels¹⁶.

Most important for the development of his thought is the application of the notion of materiality to the whole of created reality, whether intellectual or animate or inanimate. Materiality, thus understood, is regarded as one of the probable meanings of the "deep" in verse 2¹⁷. Augustine suggests, in addition, that the waters above the firmament (that is, above

12. *Solil.*, I, 3; *De lib. arb.*, II, 16, 41; *De ver. rel.*, 12, 25 and 49, 97; *Conf.*, X, 6, 10 and 20, 29.

13. *De Gen. ad litt. op. inp.*, 3, 9 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 464).

14. PÉPIN, *art. cit.*, pp. 248-67; cf. RITTER, *op. cit.*, pp. 59 ff.

15. *De Gen. op. inp.*, 4, 17 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 470): «... ut super materiam rerum uisibillum in exordio fabricationis eorum superferretur inuisibilis spiritus, qui tamen etiam ipse creatura est, id est non deus, sed a deo facta atque instituta natura».

16. *Ibid.*, 5, 21 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 472): «sed cum liceat hic et incorpoream lucem intellegere, si non uisibilem tantum creaturam in hoc libro, sed omnem creaturam expositam dicimus, quid opus est in hac controuersia remorari? et fortasse quod quaerunt homines, quando angeli facti sunt, ipsi significantur hac luce breuissime quidem sed tamen conuenientissime et decentissime».

17. *Ibid.*, 4, 17 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 470): «si autem uniuersae creaturae, id est et intellectualis et animalis et corporalis, materia creditur illo aquae uocabulo enuntiata, nullo modo potest hoc loco spiritus dei nisi ille incommutabilis et sanctus intellegi...».

the visible heaven) represent the spiritual creation in its aspect of mutability, in which it is similar to corporeal matter. Spiritual life, when considered by itself, must be characterized in terms of "fluitatio" or quasi-materiality, and this intrinsic instability is overcome only through knowledge of the truth and formation by the virtues¹⁸. Thus the notion of spiritual matter as the mutability of the intelligent creature is present as early as 393 or 394¹⁹.

Augustine's interpretation is always put forward tentatively, in the form of constant inquiry, for he is fully aware of the novelty of his suggestions and he is always ready to acknowledge the legitimacy of other interpretations²⁰. But after taking the first hesitant steps in the unfinished commentary, he argues for his position at length and with greater conviction in the twelfth and thirteenth books of the *Confessions* and in the larger Genesis commentary. If the firmament made on the second day out of corporeal matter is the visible heaven, he argues, then the "caelum" of verse 1 must be the "caelum caeli", a heaven above the visible heavens²¹. It is the pure city, the heavenly Jerusalem, the house of God, enduring without end in the heavens²². Augustine does not

18. *Ibid.*, 8, 29 (C.S.E.L., 281, 479) : « ... sed est fortasse uis quaedam subiecta rationi, qua ratione deus ueritasque cognoscitur : quae natura quia formabilis est uirtute atque prudentia, cuius uigore cohibetur eius fluitatio atque constringitur et ob hoc quasi materialis adparet, recte aqua diuinitus appellata est... ».

19. The ever-lively question of the extent of Augustine's acquaintance with Plotinus arises again with this topic of spiritual matter and its formation through conversion, for it is a theme that could have come only from Plotinus, either directly or through his pupil Porphyry. In the previously cited studies by Arnou, Wytzes, and Armstrong, which make no sustained attempt to determine literary dependence, the treatises of the *Enneads* most often cited as containing the doctrine of spiritual matter are II, 4 (1-5), V, 1 (5), V, 3 (8 and 11), and V, 4 (2). Armstrong finds the closest parallels in V, 3, 8, especially the language of light and the emphasis on the total dependence of the lower upon the higher (*art. cit.*, pp. 282-83). [Other evidence for the use of *Enn.* V, 3, at least around the year 410, has been presented by Jean PÉPIN, *Une curieuse déclaration idéaliste du 'De genesi ad litteram' de saint Augustin, et ses origines plotiniennes*, in *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, 34 (1954), pp. 373-400.] It seems to me, however, that the treatise V, 1, whose early use by Augustine is beyond question, accounts sufficiently for the presence of the notion of spiritual matter in his writings. All that was needed was a suggestion to trigger his own thinking as he meditated on the creation narrative, and the earliest discussion of spiritual matter, found in these passages in the unfinished commentary, does not give the impression of being based upon extensive knowledge of a theory already stated in full by another thinker.

20. *De Gen. op. inp.*, 8, 29 (C.S.E.L., 281, 480) : « nihil autem horum temere affirmandum sed caute omnia modesteque tractanda sunt ». Cf. the long discussion of exegetical method in *Conf.*, XII, 23, 32 ff. The large Genesis commentary proceeds by way of questioning and conjecture, and of this work Augustine later says (*Retr.*, II, 50, 1 [C.S.E.L., 36, 159-60]), « ... in quo opere multa quaesita quam inuenta sunt et eorum, quae inuenta sunt, pauciora firmata, cetera uero ita posita, uelut adhuc requirenda sint ».

21. *Conf.*, XII, 8, 8.

22. *Ibid.*, 15, 21.

explicitly identify the *caelum caeli* with the angels until he is well beyond his discussion of the opening verses of Genesis, and in the commentary begun soon after the *Confessions* he is similarly reticent about making the identification²³. But the use of apparently impersonal terms like "heaven", "city", or "dwelling" should not be misconstrued; it is actually a way of conferring the highest dignity upon intelligent creatures and indicating that their life is fulfilled in communion with God²⁴. And if the "heaven" of verse 1 is so understood, then the creation of light on the first day, prior to the creation of any luminaries in the visible heaven, must be the illumination of the angels through contemplation of God, and the darkness over the abyss must be the groping and uncertain existence which they would have led without this illumination.

With this exegetical justification Augustine proceeds to develop what amounts to a complete metaphysical theory of formlessness and formative conversion. He notes that at the very beginning of the creation narrative no *fiat* by the divine Word is mentioned; there is only the assertion that God created heaven and earth *in Principio*. His explanation is that formless matter, whether corporeal or spiritual, is imperfect, and with its complete unlikeness to God it fails to imitate the eternal ideas which are contained in the divine Word and uttered in the *fiat*²⁵. Standing as it does between formed things and nothingness it is "next to nothingness"²⁶, and this means chiefly that it is associated with the possibility of corruption, either natural or moral, for creatures, being made from nothing, are necessarily mutable. Matter thus represents the creation in its aspect of otherness and distance from God. Order and beauty arise only insofar as there is a "conversion" of the material principle toward its Source, enabling it to imitate the eternal Word in a mode suited to its capacities²⁷.

23. In *Conf.*, XIII, 15, 18 (Skutella, 341), he identifies for the first time the heavens with the « supercaelestes populi angelorum tuorum, » which is the goal of the believer's pilgrimage on earth. Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.*, V, 19, 37 (C.S.E.L., 281, 162): « ... ibi primitus ecclesia, quo post resurrectionem et ista ecclesia congreganda est, ut simus aequales angelis dei ».

24. Cf. Fulbert CAYRÉ, *Les sources de l'amour divin. La divine présence d'après saint Augustin* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1933), p. 84, n. 4, where numerous passages are cited in which human souls in whom God dwells are called a « heaven ».

25. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 4, 9 (C.S.E.L., 281, 7): « ... quia formam uerbi semper patri cohaerentis... non imitatur imperfectio, cum dissimilis ab eo, quod summe ac primitus est, informitate quadam tendit ad nihilum... ».

26. *Conf.*, XII, 6, 6 (Skutella, 297): « ... quiddam inter formatum et nihil, nec formatum nec nihil, informe prope nihil ».

27. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 4, 9 (C.S.E.L., 281, 8): « in qua conuersione et formatione quia pro suo modo imitatur deum uerbum, hoc est dei filium semper patri cohaerentem plena similitudine et essentia pari, qua ipse et pater unum sunt, non autem imitatur hanc uerbi formam, si auersa a creatore informis et imperfecta remaneat, propterea filii commemoratio non ita fit, quia uerbum, sed tantum, quia principium est, cum dicitur: in principio fecit deus caelum et terram; exordium quippe creaturae insinuat adhuc in informitate imperfectionis. fit autem filii commemoratio, quod etiam uerbum est, in eo, quod scriptum est: dixit deus: fiat, ut per id, quod prin-

Augustine's doctrine of matter and form is a development of the neo-Platonic motif of *προόδος* and *ἐπιστροφή*, *exordium* (= *existentia*) and *conversio*²⁸. The whole of finite being and its modes of relation with God can be described according to the same metaphysical schema of indeterminacy and formation, mutability and stabilization. In a recent essay M. Gilson has assembled evidence, drawn from writings of all periods in Augustine's career, that for him finite existence differs from divine being in two respects : in its lack of self-identity and in its lack of stability²⁹. The hazards of finite existence arise from its diremptiveness (the necessity of a coexistence of a multiplicity of things other than and different from each other) and its mutability (the necessity of succession and becoming), the one more " spatial " and the other more " temporal ". God, in contrast, experiences neither limitation nor change, he is neither *alter* nor *aliter*, for he truly " is ", whole and immutable³⁰. Through participation in God creatures are rescued from both the *alter* of externality and the *aliter* of mutability, at least in the mode and for the span of time allotted them, though never in such a way as to abolish the intrinsic diremptiveness and mutability of their existence.

De même que l'« autre » est nécessaire pour qu'une essence qui n'est pas « vraiment » soit possible, de même l'« autrement » est requis pour qu'existe le « quasi-être » du devenir³¹.

This metaphysical perspective is clearly derived from Plotinus, and it is necessary to examine Plotinus' own account of spiritual matter and its formative conversion and then to ask to what extent Augustine modified it. The basis of Plotinus' theory of formative conversion is the thesis that the act of knowing necessarily involves a distinction of knower and known. From it he infers that a " knower " is constituted only by the act of knowing ; that is to say, the act constitutes an actuality which otherwise would be non-existent. Therefore Plotinus states (in a sentence which has some importance for Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity) that

cipium est, insinuet exordium creaturae existentis ab illo adhuc imperfectae, per id autem, quod uerbum est, insinuet perfectionem creaturae reuocatae ad eum, ut formaretur inhaerendo creatori et pro suo genere imitando formam sempiternae atque incommutabiliter inhaerentem patri, a quo statim hoc est, quod ille ».

28. *Conf.*, XIII, 3, 4 (Skutella, 330-31) : « ... erat iam qualiscumque vita, quam inluminare ... neque enim eius infortitas placeret tibi, si non lux fieret non *existendo*, sed *intuendo* inluminantem lucem eique *cohaerendo*... » *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 5, 10 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 9) : « ... a quo *extitit*, ut sit utcumque ac uiuat, ad illum *conuertitur*, ut sapienter ac beate uiuat ». Note that « existence », as « coming forth » and being « extant », is understood as *otherness* from God and thus *dissimilarity* from God.

29. Étienne GILSON, *Notes sur l'être et le temps chez saint Augustin*, in *Recherches augustinienes*, II (Paris, 1962), pp. 214-15.

30. *Conf.*, VII, 20, 26 (Skutella, 149) : « ... certus esse te et infinitum esse nec tamen per locos finitos infinitosve diffundi et vere te esse, qui semper idem ipse esses, ex nulla parte nulloque motu alter aut aliter... ».

31. GILSON, *art. cit.*, pp. 218-19.

the One generates Nous by returning upon itself and beholding itself ; Nous is constituted by this beholding³².

But Plotinus carries his speculations one step farther. If the act of knowing is actualized through conversion of the knower to the known, there has been a passage into act, and an element of potentiality within the knower is presupposed. If through its relation to the One Nous becomes actual vision, " sight seeing », apart from that relation it would be " sight not yet seeing ", and thus not yet Nous in its full actuality³³. There need not be a priority in order of time. Indeed, Plotinus assumes that Nous is eternally actual. Nevertheless there is a structure of potentiality and actualization³⁴.

It is this potentiality which can be actualized through conversion and vision, this capacity for vision or this " looking " which is not yet " seeing ", that Plotinus calls the material principle within the spiritual realm, an indeterminate substratum which gains form in actual knowledge and thereby becomes an intellectual " being " ³⁵. Even when the potentiality is ceaselessly actualized in knowledge (as it is in the case of the eternal hypostases), the relation of potentiality to actualization remains, and therefore the material principle continues to be related to the object of its knowledge by an attitude of desire and dependence³⁶.

Augustine utilized many of these features of Plotinus' thought, especially, I believe, as they were stated in the treatise V, 1. But he modified the doctrine of conversion, making a sharper distinction between the modes of conversion in God and creatures. While the Plotinian schema of desire and fulfilment undoubtedly exerted its influence upon the Trinitarian doctrine of Marius Victorinus and, through him, upon that of Augustine, Augustine quite consciously took steps to purge it from his doctrine of the Trinity. For him, God does not become perfectly divine through

32. *Enneads* (ed. Bréhier), V, 1, 7, ll. 5-6 : Πῶς οὖν νοῦν γεννᾷ ; " Ἡ οὐτι τῇ ἐπιστροφῇ πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐώρα' ἡ δὲ ὁρασις αὕτη νοῦς. Cf. *De Trin.*, II, 1, 3 (P.L., 42, 846) : « ... et ita videt Filius Patrem, ut quo eum videt hoc ipso sit Filius. Non enim aliud illi est esse de Patre, id est nasci de Patre, quam videre Patrem... ».

33. *Enn.* V, 1, 5, ll. 18-19 : ὅψις ἡ κατ' ἐνέργειαν, ὁρασις ὁρῶσα ; *Enn.* V, 3, 11, l. 5 : ὅψις οὕτω ἰδοῦσα.

34. *Enn.* V, 1, 6, ll. 19-22 : Ἐκποδὼν δὲ ἡμῖν ἔστω γένεσις ἡ ἐν χρόνῳ τὸν λόγον περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ ὄντων ποιουμένοις · τῷ δὲ λόγῳ τὴν γένεσιν προσάπτοντας αὐτοῖς αἰτίας καὶ τάξεως ἀποδόσει.

35. In *Enn.* II, 4, 5, the term ὕλη is used with reference to the divine hypostases ; in *Enn.* V, 1, 3, Psyche is said to be related to Nous as receptacle to form, and thus as νοῦ ὕλη ; in *Enn.* V, 9, 4, l. 11, Psyche is said to be perfected through union with its cause, standing in relation to it as ὕλην πρὸς τὸ ποιῆσαν τὸ πρῶτον. Cf. *Enn.* V, 1, 7, ll. 22-26 : Διὸ καὶ οὐσαὶ ταῦτα ὀρίσται γὰρ ἡδὴ καὶ οἶον μορφὴν ἕκαστον ἔχει · τὸ δὲ ὄν δεῖ οὐκ ἐν ἀορίστῳ οἶον θεωρεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' ὄρω πεπληγχαὶ καὶ στάσει · στάσις δὲ τοῖς νοητοῖς ὁρισμὸς καὶ μορφή, οἷς καὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν λαμβάνει.

36. *Enn.* V, 1, 6, ll. 50-51 : ποθεῖ δὲ πᾶν τὸ γεννησάν [τὸ γεγεννημένον] καὶ τοῦτο ἀγαπᾷ ... Apart from actual vision, there is ἔφεσις μόνον καὶ ἀτύπωτος ὅψις (*Enn.* V, 3, 11, l. 12).

the Trinitarian relations ; rather the Trinitarian relations follow from his perfect divinity³⁷. Augustine repudiated any element of potentiality and desire in God, and he could even find within Plotinus the resources for a purified doctrine of the generation of the Word³⁸. But the notion of spiritual matter, while inapplicable to God, seemed appropriate to the situation of intelligent creatures before God. It was already assumed in the early work *De vera religione*, as we have seen³⁹, and after some hesitation Augustine adopted it as his primary exegetical tool in the *Confessions* and the large Genesis commentary.

Why, after utilizing it so enthusiastically, should Augustine omit all mention of spiritual matter in his discussion of the creation narrative years later in *The City of God* and insert in its place a chapter on the simple and the composite⁴⁰ ? It does not represent a reversal or even a modification of his earlier position, but only the abandonment of a somewhat esoteric and misleading terminology for one which stated the essential point more directly — one which was, indeed, present from the first, for the contrast between divine simplicity and creaturely compositeness seems to have been developed by Augustine quite specifically as a means of introducing into the doctrine of formative conversion a distinction between the divine and the creaturely modes of formation⁴¹. For Plotinus the schema of potentiality and actualization could be applied to both the divine and the human realms, with the sole difference that the divine hypostases are eternally being actualized, while the human soul can become alienated from its formative principle. But for Augustine the difference between the divine and the creaturely is the far more radical one between the simple and the composite : whereas God's *esse* or *vivere* is identical with his *sapienter ac beate vivere*, in the spiritual creature there is a hiatus between them ; wisdom and beatitude are not intrinsic to its being and are attainable only through conversion toward God and contemplation of him. The doctrine of formative conversion can therefore remain applicable both to the Trinitarian relations and to creatures, but it is applied to them in radically different ways. In both, the act of contemplation is constitutive of a reality. But in spiritual creatures there is a passage from potentiality to actuality, presupposing an element of mutability. In God, on the contrary, there is no process of actualization, for he is already fully actual ; the act of contemplation in which the divine

37. Cf. *De civ. Dei*, XI, 10 (C.C., 48, 330) : « Et haec trinitas unus est Deus ; nec ideo non simplex, quia trinitas ».

38. *Enn.* V, 1, 6-7 ; cf. note 32 above.

39. See page 4 above.

40. *De civ. Dei*, XI, 10.

41. Cf. *Conf.*, XIII, 2, 3 ; *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 5, 10.

Word or Form is begotten presupposes no potentiality or alienation within God, but is the result of his perfection and self-identity⁴².

Creaturely beatitude is necessarily composite, for the being of a creature is limited and yet it can gain fuller actuality by looking above itself in contemplation. But creaturely being is not only finite but mutable. Change is inevitable, and the creature stands under the threat of losing even that to which it has already attained. The problem of mutability is resolved, it is true, in contemplation of the eternal. But the instability of the finite will makes it doubtful that contemplation will ever be achieved or that, once it is achieved, the creature will abide in it. Thus creaturely life has two dimensions. The one most evident in Augustine's earlier writings is that in which the creature looks "beyond" and "above" itself in contemplation. While the importance of contemplation in the life of the intelligent creature was never lessened in his estimation, the other dimension came increasingly to occupy his attention, the "practical" or "existential" dimension in which the finite spirit looks "forward" with responsibility for its own changeable life. Then the instability of the finite will seemed to call into question the attainability of true beatitude. This, it would appear, is the problem that arose in the very midst of the doctrine of formative conversion and led Augustine to develop the notion of a second gift, supplementing the natural powers of the creature, as the only sufficient foundation of lasting beatitude.

The importance of this problem will become plain, I trust, in an analysis of Augustine's meaning when he characterizes finite existence in terms of materiality and formlessness. It must be conceded that his meaning is not always evident, for in discussing the notion of spiritual matter he does not go outside the framework of, on the one hand, the Biblical imagery and, on the other, the rather general and abstract metaphysical doctrine of indeterminacy and formation. Here we have a striking instance of the unsystematic but always vital character of Augustine's thinking. He is governed by the *topos*; his attention is occupied by the

42. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 5, 10 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 8) : « non enim habet informem uitam uerbum filius, cui non solum hoc est esse quod uiuere, sed etiam hoc est ei uiuere, quod est sapienter ac beate uiuere ». *De Trin.*, XV, 16, 26 (P.L., 42, 1079) : « ... non formabile aliquid formatum vel reformatum est, sed forma ; neque informis, neque formata, ipsa ibi aeterna est immutabilisque substantia ». Cf. Axel DAHL, *Augustin und Plotin. Philosophische Untersuchungen zum Trinitätsproblem und zur Nuslehre* (Lund : Lindstedt, 1945), pp. 40 ff.

Similarly in his discussion of substance and accident in *De Trin.*, VII, 5, 10, Augustine regards the category of substance as correlative with that of accident, since the distinction is based upon an analysis of mutable beings in which accidents inhere and which change with their accidents ; because God is not mutable and therefore is not composite, the category of substance is applied to him only improperly (*abusive*), and he is more properly called *essentia*. For a fuller discussion of the distinction between substance and accident, cf. F.-J. THONNARD, *Ontologie augustinienne, Année théologique augustinienne*, 14 (1954), pp. 41-53 ; *Caractères platoniciens de l'ontologie augustinienne, Augustinus Magister*, I, pp. 317-27 ; and the note in *B.A.*, 35 (*La Cité de Dieu*, XI-XIV), pp. 478-81.

exegetical task, and he proceeds in so tentative a fashion and with such close attention to the Biblical language that he neglects to cross-reference his remarks with other aspects of his thought. We must ask precisely what is meant by the imagery of fluidity and formlessness, for Augustine, with perhaps too sanguine a trust in the discernment of his readers, does not offer a more prosaic explanation of it⁴³.

In the actual use of the imagery of spiritual matter, at least three different meanings can be discerned :

(1) When it is used " absolutely ", spiritual matter with its formlessness and fluidity serves to characterize the mode of existence which spiritual creatures possess in themselves, as distinguished from what they can become through relating themselves to God. They are already " intelligent life ", but their mode of existence is nondescript, undistinguished⁴⁴. The basis of the comparison of spiritual life with matter is, of course, the fact that all created beings are mutable⁴⁵. But in this case the mutability is of a singular kind ; it is the mutability of a being that is responsible for its own course of life, having a mind that is open to many and diverse objects of apprehension and a will that is indeterminate with respect to the values that will receive attention and the ends that will be pursued. Finite spirit, considered in and for itself, is a wanderer, and the imagery of fluidity and formlessness appropriately suggests its errant, aimless, wavering character when left to its own devices⁴⁶.

43. There are occasional passages in other writings which connect the notion of formlessness with the indeterminacy of human life, but they are rare and perhaps cryptic to the casual reader. *De lib. arb.*, III, 7, 21 (*P.L.*, 32, 1281) : « Quanto enim amplius esse amaveris, tanto amplius vitam aeternam desiderabis, teque ita formari exoptabis, ut affectiones tuae non sint temporales, de temporalium rerum amoribus inustae et impressae... ». *Ep.* 118, 3, 15 (*P.L.*, 33, 439) : « Ita cessans atque detumescens a iactatione atque inflatione propria, inhaerere Deo, atque ab illo incommutabili refici et reformari nititur, a quo esse iam capit non solum omnem speciem rerum omnium, sive quae sensu corporis, sive quae intelligentia mentis attinguntur, sed etiam ipsam capacitatem formationis ante formationem, cum vel informe aliquid dicitur, quod formari potest. Itaque tanto minus se esse stabilem sentit, quanto magis haeret Deo qui summe est... ».

44. It is « qualiscumque vita » (*Conf.*, XIII, 3, 4), « informis natura vitae » (*De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 1), « informis vita » (*ibid.*, I, 5, 10), « intellectualis vita » (*ibid.*, I, 9, 17).

45. *Conf.*, XII, 19, 28 (Skutella, 312) : « et verum est, quod omne mutabile insinuat notitiae nostrae quandam informitatem, qua formam capit vel qua mutatur et vertitur ... verum est omne, quod ex informi formatur, prius esse informem, deinde formatum ».

46. *Conf.* XIII, 2, 3 (Skutella, 330) : « aut quid te promeruit inchoatio creaturae spiritalis, ut saltem tenebrosa fluitaret similis abyssu, tui dissimilis, nisi per idem verbum converteretur ad idem, a quo facta est... ». *Conf.*, XIII, 5, 6 (Skutella, 332) : « et multa diximus de caelo caeli et de terra invisibili et inconposita et de abyssu tenebrosa secundum spiritalis informitatis vagabunda deliquia, nisi converteretur... ». *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 9, 17 (*C.S.E.L.*, 28¹, 13) : « intellectualis vita ... nisi ad creatorem inluminanda converteretur, fluitaret informiter ».

(2) When the imagery of formlessness is used in relation to form and light, it suggests a positive capacity for the knowledge and love of God. Creaturely life is then described as unformed in the sense that it has not yet been formed by conversion to the Creator, or as dark in the sense that it is not yet light, with no hint of the privation of something that should have been present already⁴⁷. This positive capacity for the knowledge and love of God is an important part of Augustine's thought. The suggestion that finite spirit, by its very character as *mens*, is *capax Dei* was stated as early as the period of Rome and Thagaste⁴⁸. And after about 412, this positive aspect of finite life, its capacity for God, is dignified by being called the *imago Dei*⁴⁹. This interpretation of the *imago* indicates beyond doubt Augustine's belief that, whatever may happen to the spiritual creature through sin or ignorance, it does not lose its rationality and its capacity for good; it stands at a level of being beneath which it cannot fall, however, grotesquely distorted it may become in its thinking and willing⁵⁰. And yet finite spirit, despite its capacity for communion with God, can and does fall.

47. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 1, 3 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 5) : « ... ut translato uerbo tenebrosam abyssum intellegamus naturam uitae informem, nisi conuertatur ad creatorem : quo solo modo formari potest, ut non sit abyssus, et inluminari, ut non sit tenebrosa. et quomodo dictum est : tenebrae erant super abyssum ? an quia non erat lux ? quae si esset, utique superesset et tanquam superfunderet : quod tunc fit in creatura spiritali, cum conuertitur ad incommutabile atque incorporale lumen, quod deus est ». Cf. *De lib. arb.*, III, 24, 71-72, where Augustine points out, in connection with the first man, that not all ignorance is *stultitia*, but only *vitiosa ignorantia*, and that there can be an ignorance which is a mere absence of wisdom and is not the result of aversion from God.

48. *De Gen. adv. Man.*, II, 16, 24 (P.L., 34, 208) : « Particeps enim veritatis potest esse anima humana : ipsa autem veritas Deus est incommutabilis supra illam ». *De ver. rel.*, 44, 82 (P.L., 34, 159) : « Horum alia sic sunt per ipsam, ut ad ipsam etiam sint, ut omnis rationalis et intellectualis creatura, in qua homo rectissime dicitur factus ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei : non enim aliter incommutabilem veritatem posset mente conspiciere ».

49. *De Trin.*, XIV, 8, 11 (P.L., 42, 1044) : « Sed prius mens in se ipsa considerata est antequam sit particeps Dei, et in ea reperienda est imago eius... Eo quippe ipso imago eius est, quo eius capax est, eiusque particeps esse potest ; quod tam magnum bonum, nisi per hoc quod imago eius est, non potest ». For Augustine's earlier understanding of *imago Dei* and the change which occurred about 412, see J. HEIJKE, *The Image of God according to saint Augustine (De Trinitate excepted)*, in *Folia*, 10 (1956), pp. 3-11 ; John Edward SULLIVAN, *The Image of God : The Doctrine of Saint Augustine and Its Influence* (Dubuque : Priory Press, 1963), chs. 1 and 2 ; Alfred SCHINDLER, *Wort und Analogie in Augustins Trinitätslehre* (Tübingen : J.C.B. Mohr, 1965), pp. 61-74.

50. *De Trin.*, XIV, 4, 6 (P.L., 42, 1040) : « ... ac per hoc si secundum hoc facta est ad imaginem Dei quod uti ratione atque intellectu ad intelligendum et conspiciendum Deum potest, profecto ab initio quo esse coepit ista tam magna et mira natura, sive ita obsoleta sit haec imago, ut pene nulla sit, sive obscura atque deformis, sive clara et pulchra sit, semper est ». *De Spir. et litt.*, 28, 48 (P.L., 44, 230) : « ... imago Dei ... quam non penitus impietas aboleverat ; nam remanserat utique id quod anima hominis nisi rationalis esse non potest... ».

Therefore (3) the imagery of formlessness and darkness is often set in opposition to form and light in order to suggest the threat of evil and to indicate what spiritual creatures may become on the basis of their aimlessness and mutability. The indeterminacy of their being has, from the first, a threatening aspect. Finite spirit is unable to maintain a position of sovereign neutrality between good and evil, and because of its lack of intrinsic determination to the good (i.e., because of its finitude and thus its non-identity with God as the fulness of the good) any self-assertiveness or narrow reliance upon its own resources will be disastrous, for it is not able to be the rule even of its own life⁵¹. Therefore formlessness comes to suggest the condition into which finite spirit could fall through aversion from eternal Wisdom; the creature would then live "stulte ac misere", not "sapienter ac beate" (an antithesis drawn from Cicero and utilized from the time of the Cassiciacum dialogues)⁵². Formlessness and fluidity, thus understood, is the condition of dispersion and aimlessness often evoked in the *Confessions*. Indeed, the threat of evil is so closely bound up with the natural condition of spiritual creatures that Augustine scarcely pauses to make a distinction between them in his exposition of the creation narrative. The "tenebrae super abyssos" are often interpreted directly from Ephesians V, 8: "Fuistis aliquando tenebrae, nunc autem lux in Domino". The darkness then represents the possibility of evil which has been actualized in sinful man, and which would have been actualized in the angels had they not been recalled immediately to the contemplation of God⁵³. It is not surprising, therefore, that in writings outside the commentaries on Genesis Augustine regularly links the image of darkness with sinful self-assertiveness and aversion from God⁵⁴. But within those commentaries the imagery of formlessness and

51. *De Gen. adv. Man.*, II, 15, 22 (P.L., 34, 208): « Non enim accepit hominis natura, ut per suam potestatem Deo non regente beata sit; quia nullo regente, per suam potestatem beatus esse solus Deus potest ». *Enarr. in Ps.* 121, 3, 6 (C.C., 40, 1807): « Qui uoluit ex se habere idipsum, ut quasi ipse sibi esset idipsum, lapsus est: cecidit angelus, et factus est diabolus. Propinavit hominis superbiam, defecit secum inuidentia qui stabat. Isti sibi uoluerunt idipsum esse; sibi principari, sibi dominari uoluerunt; noluerunt habere uerum Dominum, qui uere est idipsum, cui dictum est: Mutabis ea, et mutabuntur; tu autem idem ipse es ».

52. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 5, 10 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 8): « auersa enim a sapientia incommutabili stulte ac misere uiuit, quae informitas est ».

53. *Conf.*, XIII, 2, 3 (Skutella, 330): « nam et nos, qui secundum animam creatura spiritalis sumus, auersi a te, nostro lumine, in ea uita fuimus aliquando tenebrae et in reliquiis obscuritatis nostrae laboramus... ». *Ibid.*, 10, 11 (Skutella, 335): « in nobis enim distinguitur tempore, quod tenebrae fuimus et lux efficimur ... ».

54. *De Gen. adv. Man.*, II, 16, 24 (P.L., 34, 208): « Ab ea ergo ueritate quisquis auersus est, et ad seipsum conuersus, et non de rectore atque illustratore Deo, sed de suis motibus quasi liberis exsultat, tenebratur mendacio ». *De Trin.*, XIV, 14, 18 (P.L., 42, 1050): « Quamvis enim se ita diligit, ut si alterutrum proponatur, malit omnia quae infra se diligit perdere quam perire: tamen superiorem deserendo ... sic infirma et tenebrosa facta est, ut a se quoque ipsa, in ea quae non sunt quod ipsa, infelicius laberetur per amores quos non ualet vincere, et errores a quibus non uidet qua redire ».

even of darkness does not always suggest the state of sin, either actual or threatened.

These three aspects of the life of finite spirit — *indeterminacy, capacity, instability* — are only suggested, and in a somewhat fragmentary way, in the expositions of the creation narrative ; but what we find there is confirmed and more fully elucidated in other writings. (It will be permissible, I trust, to glance ahead occasionally at later works, for, by indicating what *was* and what was *not* a problem to him, they also can serve to illuminate Augustine's understanding of finite spirit during the time in which he was feeling his way toward a solution to the problem of mutability.)

According to Augustine *mens*, the higher aspect of the soul, is characterized by openness toward all those realities which can, in one way or another, make themselves known to it. The mind is not controlled by its own constitution, which is limited and changeable, but is capable of accommodation ("obtemperatio") to the wider field of reality, and properly to God as the source of all truth and value⁵⁵. The mind is regularly described as the *oculus animae*, open to all intelligibles and capable of directing its attention here or there according to its interests, or as *cor*, capable of loving a variety of objects and shaping a variety of purposes.

That which is given first and most directly to the mind is the mind itself, experienced through its presence to itself. Express self-knowledge, in which the mind adverts to itself with a distinction between knower and known, is not constant but is always arising and perishing because of the mind's mutability⁵⁶. Nevertheless the mind remains present and transparent to itself, "tanquam ipsa sit memoria sui", even when it is not thinking expressly of itself, and because of this abiding self-transparency the mind can always be "reminded" of itself, called to its own attention⁵⁷.

55. *De ver. rel.*, 55, 110 (*P.L.*, 34, 170) : « ... quoniam vita rationalis, si perfecta est, incommutabili veritati secum intrinsecus sine strepitu loquenti obtemperat, non obtemperans autem vitiosa fit. Non ergo per se excellit, sed per illam cui libenter obtemperat ».

56. *De Trin.*, XIV, 6, 8 (*P.L.*, 42, 1041) : « Tanta est tamen cogitationis vis, ut nec ipsa mens quodam modo se in conspectu suo ponat, nisi quando se cogitat : ac per hoc ita nihil in conspectu mentis est, nisi unde cogitatur, ut nec ipsa mens, qua cogitatur quidquid cogitatur, aliter possit esse in conspectu suo, nisi se ipsam cogitando ».

57. *Ibid.* (*P.L.*, 42, 1042) : « Proinde restat ut aliquid pertinens ad eius naturam sit conspectus eius, et in eam, quando se cogitat, non quasi per loci spatium, sed incorporea conversione revocetur : cum vero non se cogitat, non sit quidem in conspectu suo, nec de illa suus formetur obtutus, sed tamen noverit se tanquam ipsa sit memoria sui ». *Ibid.*, X, 9, 12 (*P.L.*, 42, 980) : « Sed cum dicitur menti, Cognosce te ipsam, eo ictu quo intelligit quod dictum est, Te ipsam, cognoscit se ipsam ; nec ob aliud, quam eo quod sibi praesens est ». *Ibid.*, X, 10, 13 (*P.L.*, 42, 980) : « Certe enim novit sibi dici, sibi scilicet quae est, et vivit, et intelligit ».

What must the mind be, if it is capable of knowing itself without mediation and has a certain awareness of itself even when it is not the express object of its own attention ? It cannot be an inert and opaque substance lying " behind " all awareness and attentiveness. The very " being " of mind must be understood as life, as task, as responsibility for its own knowledge and decisions, as quest for a well-being still to be achieved, as indeterminate openness toward a wider field of reality and accountability for its own decisions within this wider forum⁵⁸. All of this would seem to be drawn together in the image, utilized by Augustine in his later writings, of the mind as a *scintilla*, a glowing coal which may be lulled into inactivity but which is always ready to be fanned into flame ; through inquiry it can come to perceive what is true and good, and through decision it can shape its life in accordance with these norms⁵⁹. Apart from its actual relations it would be empty intellect and fluctuating will. But it is not fated to remain closed within itself, for it is capable of knowing itself and other beings and committing itself in love and loyalty. The life of finite spirit is a life in relation, both to itself and to other beings, and through relation it acquires determinate form, for better or worse. And it is pertinent to the present topic to note that in the later books of *De Trinitate* the schema of conversion and formation is detached from the exclusive connection with the relation to God which it had had in the earlier writings and is now generalized (" naturalized ") as a model for describing the structures of the entire life of the mind. Conversion becomes any act of animadversion, the directing of attention toward possible contents of knowledge ; the mind is then " formed " by its *verbum* or conception of those contents. Aversion, in this generalized usage, becomes any lapse of attention, leaving the mind unformed by an express conception of the object⁶⁰.

58. *Ibid.*, IX, 4, 5 (P.L., 42, 963-64) : « Mens autem amore quo se amat, potest amare et aliud praeter se. Item non se solam cognoscit mens, sed et alia multa. Quamobrem non amor et cognitio tanquam in subiecto insunt menti ; sed substantialiter etiam ista sunt, sicut ipsa mens : quia et si relative dicuntur ad invicem, in sua tamen sunt singula quaeque substantia ».

59. *Ep.* 187, 8, 26 (C.S.E.L., 57, 103) : infants « nesciunt ... mentem suam, cuius in eis ratio, qua uti non possunt, velut quaedam *scintilla sopita* est excitanda aetatis accessu ». *De Trin.*, XIV, 5, 7 (P.L., 42, 1041) : « An etiam ipsa [infantis mens] se nosse credenda est, se intenta nimis in eas res quas per corporis sensus tanto maiore, quanto noviore coepit delectatione sentire, non ignorare se potest, sed cogitare se non potest ? » *De civ. Dei*, XXII, 24, 2 (C.C., 48, 848) : « Ipse itaque animae humanae mentem dedit, ubi ratio et intelligentia in infante *sopita* est quodammodo, quasi nulla sit, *excitanda* scilicet atque *exerenda* aetatis accessu, qua sit scientiae capax atque doctrinae. et habilis perceptioni veritatis et amoris boni ; qua capacitate hauriat sapientiam virtutibusque sit praedita, quibus prudenter, fortiter, temperanter, et iuste adversus errores et cetera ingenerata vitia dimicet eaque nullius rei desiderio nisi boni illius summi atque immutabilis vincat. Quod etsi non faciat, ipsa talium bonorum capacitas in natura rationali diuinitus instituta quantum sit boni, quam mirabile Omnipotentis opus, quis competenter effatur aut cogitat ? »

60. David J. HASSEL, *Conversion-theory and 'Scientia' in the 'De Trinitate'*, in *Recherches augustinienes*, II (Paris, 1962), p. 391.

The problem of the mutability of finite life comes to a focus in the search for beatitude⁶¹. Augustine starts from the principle stated at the beginning of Cicero's *Hortensius*: "Beati certe omnes esse volumus"⁶². This desire for beatitude seems to arise from the mind's tendency to love, for beatitude, considered most generally, consists in the possession of that which is most pleasing⁶³. But Augustine goes on to reject the view that "beate vivere" is nothing more than "vivere secundum delectationem suam". The fact of men's changing loves can never justify a completely subjectivist theory of happiness, and Augustine can again cite the authority of Cicero in arguing that beatitude consists not merely in having what one loves or desires, but in having what one loves and desires *rightly*; to attain that which is improper would be far more miserable than not to attain that which is good⁶⁴. In the tenth book of the *Confessions* Augustine even argues that men have at least a dim awareness that true beatitude is not established arbitrarily by their changing loves, but stands under criteria of suitability. Beginning with the fact that all men desire to be happy, and fully acknowledging the fact that men desire many different things for themselves, he points out that men nonetheless desire their happiness to be based upon truth rather than falsehood, to the extent that they will sooner suppress the truth than acknowledge the vanity of their desires⁶⁵. Ultimately, then, the life of the rational creature, though in itself indeterminate, is lived under higher norms; and they are not imposed upon it heteronomously, for the mind is capable of acknowledging their validity and accommodating itself to them⁶⁶. This line of reasoning becomes, at its farthest reaches, an argument that the mind, insofar as it is based upon understanding, cannot escape the presence of God, in whom all truth and value is grounded. The indeter-

61. Special mention must be made of the massive study by Ragnar HOLTE, *Beatitude et sagesse. Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1962).

62. *De Trin.*, XIII, 4, 7 (P.L., 42, 1019).

63. *De Trin.*, XIII, 4, 7 (P.L., 42, 1018): « Ut enim eos quaeque res maxime delectavit, ita in ea constituerunt vitam beatam ». *Conf.*, IV, 10, 15 (Skutella, 65): « ... quoniam ipsa [anima] esse vult et requiescere amat in eis, quae amat ».

64. *De Trin.*, XIII, 5, 8.

65. *Conf.*, X, 23, 33 (Skutella, 234): « nam quaero ab omnibus, utrum malint de veritate quam de falsitate gaudere: tam non dubitant dicere beatos esse se velle. beata quippe vita est gaudium de veritate... multos expertus sum, qui vellent fallere, qui autem falli, neminem. ubi ergo noverunt hanc vitam beatam, nisi ubi noverunt etiam veritatem? amant enim et ipsam, quia falli nolunt, et cum amant beatam vitam, quod non est aliud quam de veritate gaudium, utique amant etiam veritatem nec amarent, nisi esset aliqua notitia eius in memoria eorum ».

66. *De lib. arb.*, III, 5, 13 (P.L., 32, 1277): « Humana quippe anima naturaliter divinis, ex quibus pendet, connexa rationibus... ». *De Trin.*, XV, 27, 49 (P.L., 42, 1096): « ... non est superior cui [mens] subdita regenda est, nisi Deus ». *De Trin.*, XII, 15, 24 (P.L., 42, 1011): « ... sed potius [rather than recollection] credendum est mentis intellectualis ita conditam esse naturam, ut rebus intelligibilibus naturali ordine, disponente Conditor, subiuncta sic ista videat in quadam luce sui generis incorporea, quemadmodum oculus carnis videt quae in hac corporea luce circum-adiacent, cuius lucis capax eique congruens est creatus ».

minate and changeable life of the mind becomes fully "formed" only in the contemplation of God⁶⁷.

In what sense, however, can the mind be said to be capable of such contemplation? Did Augustine share the assumption of later scholasticism, based upon an Aristotelian theory of knowledge, that the vision of God is beyond the power of any created intellect, and that the mind must therefore be perfected by a "super-natural" virtue before it can attain to the intuitive knowledge of God? It has been argued (most strongly by H. Köster) that Augustine did not share that assumption, that he did not regard the finite intellect incapable of the vision of God and needing reinforcement, and that his assertions that the mind is *capax Dei* are not to be understood in the qualified sense that the vision of God, though *supra naturam*, is not *contra naturam* but *secundum naturam*⁶⁸.

When such a thesis is stated baldly its implications seem most unsatisfactory, as though the creature had both a right to the vision of God and the power to claim it at any time. It is necessary, therefore, to recall the intensely historical, and quite un-Aristotelian, character of Augustine's understanding of the life of the mind. While to an Aristotelian the suggestion that the vision of God is a natural possibility would imply a secret identity between the finite mind and God, Augustine's theory of knowledge proceeds in terms of the vision of luminous objects rather than an identity of knower and known; the center of gravity is in the object rather than the mind, and there is no difficulty if the object is "above" the mind and "greater" than the mind — indeed, that is always the case with the timeless objects of thought, which are discovered and acknowledged rather than posited by the mind. The mind, in other words, does not function according to its own *a priori* rules, but can accommodate itself with elasticity to intelligibles which are somehow disclosed to the mind. Above all, God himself is present and luminous. The chief requirement for vision is not that the powers of the mind be augmented but that they be brought fully into exercise, that the eye of the mind be opened to the light constantly shining upon it or (in the case of sinful

67. *De Trin.*, XV, 16, 26 (P.L., 32, 1216): « Et tunc quidem verbum nostrum non erit falsum, quia neque mentiemur, neque falleremur: fortassis etiam volubiles non erunt nostrae cogitationes ab aliis in alia euntes atque redeuntes, sed omnem scientiam nostram uno simul conspectu videbimus: tamen cum et hoc fuerit, si et hoc fuerit, formata erit creatura quae formabilis fuit, ut nihil iam desit eius formae, ad quam pervenire deberet... ».

68. Heinrich KÖSTER, *Die Heilslehre des Hugo von Sankt-Viktor. Grundlagen und Grundzüge* (Emsdetten: Lechte, 1940), the entire first section and pp. 50-56, 72-73, 106-8. Gerard VRANKEN, in *Der göttliche Konkurs zum freien Willensakt des Menschen beim hl. Augustinus* (Roma: Herder, 1943), devotes the entire third chapter (pp. 66-81) to an attempt to demonstrate, against Köster, the supernatural character of the vision of God; but the texts are misappropriated, especially those concerning adoption, which in Augustine have to do with the election of sinful men as children of God, but which Vranken construes in Thomist fashion as applying to the elevation of human nature to the vision of God.

humanity) be purged of those distractions which make sustained vision impossible ; for if Augustine's " intellectualism " is such that he can consider the mind so flexible and receptive as to be *capax Dei*, his " voluntarism " is such that he can give the will the determinative role in preparing and directing the intellect. The vision of God is in no sense an inevitability, whatever may be the capacity of the mind, for the mind is not always in a position to behold God. It must be directed toward him and adhere to him in love, and through love alone can it become " like " God and transparent to him⁶⁹.

Augustine's most extensive discussion of the vision of God is to be found in Epistle 147 (*De videndo Deo*), especially in the section from 6, 17 through 15, 37, where there is a faithful but also creative exposition of a passage from Ambrose. Running through this section is a negative argument that God cannot be seen with the bodily senses, for he is by nature invisible and immutable ; but this negative argument supports the positive argument that God is fully intelligible and can be " seen " with the understanding if it is suitably prepared. God is " invisible ", then, not with respect to understanding but only with respect to the senses⁷⁰. The troublesome statement of Exodus XXXIII, 20, " No one can see my face and live ", is interpreted as being simultaneously a discouragement of bodily vision and an invitation to a vision transcending the conditions of bodily life, a vision which is attainable even before death by those who so die to the body that their attention is " ecstatically " focused upon God alone⁷¹. Augustine appropriates to his own use the

69. *De div. quaest.* 83, q. 46 (*P.L.*, 40, 30-31) : « Et ea quidem ipsa rationalis anima, non omnis et quaelibet, sed quae sancta et pura fuerit, haec asseritur illi visioni esse idonea : id est, quae illum ipsum oculum quo videntur ista, sanum et sincerum et serenum et similem his rebus, quas videre intendit, habuerit. Sed anima rationalis inter eas res quae sunt a Deo conditae, omnia superat ; et Deo proxima est, quando pura est ; eique inquantum charitate cohaeserit, in tantum ab eo lumine illo intelligibili perfusa quodam modo et illustrata cernit, non per corporeos oculos, sed per ipsius sui principale, quo excellit, id est per intelligentiam suam, istas rationes, quarum visione fit beatissima ». *Ep.* 92, n. 3 (*P.L.*, 33, 319) : « Nam et si mentibus piorum esset inaccessibilis, non diceretur, Accedite ad eum, et illuminamini ; et si mentibus piorum esset invisibilis, non diceretur, Videbimus eum sicuti est... In tantum ergo videbimus, in quantum similes ei erimus ; quia et nunc in tantum non videmus, in quantum dissimiles sumus... Et tanto efficitur similiores illi, quanto magis in eius cognitione et charitate proficimus... ».

70. *Ep.* 147, 20, 48 (*C.S.E.L.*, 44, 323) : « quia enim corpora consuetudine loquendi visibilia nominantur, propterea deus inuisibilis dicitur, ne corpus esse credatur, non quia corda munda suae substantiae contemplatione fraudabit... ».

71. *Ibid.*, 13, 31 (*C.S.E.L.*, 44, 305) : « ita fit, ut et illud verum sit, quod dictum est : Nemo potest faciem meam videre et uiuere, quia necesse est abstrahi ab hac vita mentem, quando in illius ineffabilitatem uisionis adsumitur, et non sit incredibile quibusdam sanctis nondum ita defunctis, ut sepelienda cadauera remanerent, etiam istam excellentiam reuelationis fuisse concessam ». *Ibid.*, 13, 32 (*C.S.E.L.*, 44, 306) : « [Moyses] accepit enim in praesentia congruum responsum, quod faciem dei uidere non posset, quam nemo uideret et uiueret, hoc modo deo significante alterius potioris uitae illam esse uisionem ». Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 27, 55 (*C.S.E.L.*, 28¹, 422) : « illo ergo modo in illa specie, qua deus est, longe ineffabiliter secretius et praesentius

eloquent statement of Ambrose, " nec in loco uidetur deus sed mundo corde, nec corporalibus oculis quaeritur nec circumscribitur uisu nec tactu tenetur nec auditur affatu nec sentitur incessu " ⁷². The organs of this vision are the eyes of the heart, and they are applied to their object by love, through which the heart is purified and becomes " one spirit " with God ⁷³.

What is required for the vision of God is not a supernatural perfection of the intellect by which it might be enabled to attain to a knowledge beyond its own capabilities, but a fervor and steadfastness of the will by which the mind can be borne toward God. Augustine assumes that God is not only present to the mind but fully knowable to the pure in heart ⁷⁴.

This interpretation of Augustine's thought would seem to be confirmed by those numerous passages in which he describes, in language reminiscent of Plotinus, the momentary ecstasy in which the mind catches a glimpse of God. Whether such an experience is to be called mystical, and whether it involves a true vision of God, are celebrated points of controversy whose answers probably depend upon the breadth with which the terms are used. In any case, the experience is described as a lightning-like flash of understanding in which the mind is traversed by the light of Truth and shaken by the awareness of God's presence ⁷⁵. The purpose of these descriptions of ecstasy is to indicate that the sinful mind, even

loquitur locutione ineffabili, ubi eum nemo uiuens uidet uita ista, qua mortaliter uiuitur in istis sensibus corporis, sed *nisi ab hac uita quisque quodammodo moriatur, siue omnino exiens de corpore siue uita auersus et alienatus a carnalibus sensibus, ut merito nesciunt, sicut apostolus ait, utrum in corpore an extra corpus sit, cum in illam rapitur et subuehitur uisionem* ».

72. Quoted in *Ep.* 147, 6, 18 (*C.S.E.L.*, 44, 291).

73. *Ep.* 147, 15, 37 (*C.S.E.L.*, 44, 311-12) : « ipsi enim sunt oculi, de quibus apostolus dicit : Inluminatos oculos cordis uestri et de quibus dicitur : Inlumina oculos meos, ne unquam obdormiam in morte. dominus enim spiritus est ; unde, qui adhaeret domino, unus spiritus est ; proinde, qui potest deum inuisibiliter uidere, ipse deo potest incorporaliter adhaerere ».

74. *De magistro*, 11, 38 (*P.L.*, 32, 1216) : « Intus ipsi menti praesidentem consulimus veritatem... Ille autem qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est Christus, id est incommutabilis Dei Virtus atque sempiterna Sapientia : quam quidem omnis rationalis anima consulit ; sed tantum cuique panditur, quantum capere propter propriam sive malam sive bonam voluntatem potest ». *Ep.* 147, 15, 37 (*C.S.E.L.*, 44, 311) : « unigenitus autem filius, qui est in sinu patris, deitatis naturam atque substantiam insonabiliter narrat et ideo dignis idoneisque tanto conspectu oculis etiam inuisibiliter monstrat ». *De civ. Dei*, XI, 2 (*C.C.*, 48, 322) : « Sic enim Deus cum homine non per aliquam creaturam loquitur corporalem... sed loquitur ipsa ueritate, si quis sit idoneus ad audiendum mente, non corpore. Ad illud enim hominis ita loquitur, quod in homine ceteris, quibus homo constat, est melius, et quo ipse Deus solus est melior ».

75. *De Trin.*, VIII, 2, 3 (*P.L.*, 42, 949) : « ictus, quo velut coruscatione perstringeris, cum dicitur : Veritas, mane si potes » ; *ibid.*, XII, 14, 23 (*P.L.*, 42, 1010) : « velut acie ipsa reverberata » ; *De cons. evang.*, III, 10, 20 (*P.L.*, 34, 1228) : « tamquam rapida coruscatione perstringitur » ; *Conf.*, VII, 10, 16 (*Skutella*, 141) : « et reverberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei radians in me vehementer ».

when it attains to a momentary glimpse of God, remains clouded by its sensual attachments and lacks the purity of heart which alone could give it the strength to abide in, or even to endure, the contemplation of God. Yet even while the debility of the will is being demonstrated, the capability of the mind is affirmed. The problem lies not in the nature of the mind but in the orientation of the will⁷⁶.

What, then, will be the meaning of the contrast between nature and grace? Grace will complement the nature of the spiritual creature not by superimposing an end which it had not envisaged (for the only end worthy of pursuit by an intelligent being is the contemplation of God, in which it finds perfect stability of life), nor by superadding new capabilities for activity beyond those given with its own constitution (for the knowledge and love of God lie within the scope of natural capability), but by counteracting the threat of loss which necessarily accompanies the life of a changeable being, and, after sin arises, by accomplishing for it what it cannot do for itself in its weakened condition. The function of grace will be, perhaps, to "elevate" the finite mind to a life of which it is otherwise incapable, but only in the sense that it enkindles and sustains its aspirations, gives time for amendment of life, and finally confirms it in the possession of an unchanging Good.

II. THE GRATUITY OF BEATITUDE

At the beginning of the thirteenth book of the *Confessions* we find the first explicit statement that the illumination of the angels is not their own accomplishment and that it is given to them not by necessity or by right but as a gift. The gift, it is true, presupposes the existence of a recipient⁷⁷. But both the creation of a being capable of receiving the

76. *De quan. an.*, 33, 75 (P.L., 32, 1076) : « Quod qui prius volunt facere quam mundati et sanati fuerint, ita illa luce reverberantur veritatis, ... et, cum quadam libidine et voluptate miserabili in suas tenebras, quas eorum morbus pati potest, medicinae maledicentes, refugiant ». *De mor. eccl. cath.*, I, 7, 11 (P.L., 32, 1315) : « ... reverberatur luce veritatis, et ad familiaritatem tenebrarum suarum, non electione, sed faticatione convertitur ». *Conf.*, VII, 10, 16 (Skutella, 141) : « et cum te primum cognovi, tu assumisti me, ut viderem esse, quod viderem, et nondum me esse, qui viderem ». *Ibid.*, VII, 17, 23 (Skutella, 145) : « Et mirabar, quod iam te amabam, non pro te phantasma, et non stabam frui deo meo, sed rapiebar ad te decore tuo moxque diripiebar abs te pondere meo et ruebam in ista cum gemitu ; et pondus hoc consuetudo carnalis ». *De cons. evang.*, III, 10, 20 (P.L., 34, 1228) : « [anima] si quando adiuta excedit ... hanc carnalem caliginem... tanquam rapida coruscatione perstringitur, et in suam infirmitatem redit, vivente desiderio quo rursus erigatur, nec sufficiente munditia qua figatur ». *De Trin.*, VIII, 2, 3 (P.L., 42, 949) : « ... relaberis in ista solita atque terrena ».

77. *Conf.*, XIII, 1, 1 (Skutella, 329) : « ... ut de te mihi bene sit, a quo mihi est, ut sim, cui bene sit ».

gift and the giving of the gift to be received are free and gratuitous acts on God's part⁷⁸. The gratuity of both acts is not compromised by the fact that this actual course of events is clearly better, a more suitable manifestation of the goodness and perfection of God, than the alternatives which might have been chosen (the non-existence of the spiritual creation, or its remaining in a formless state), for the better course, that of creating and perfecting intelligent beings, has been chosen by God freely, not out of need or necessity⁷⁹. The hovering of the Spirit over the waters is regarded as an explicit attestation of God's sovereignty over the world and his unenvying benevolence toward it, and conversely as an explicit denial of any indigence in God or any dependence upon the finite order⁸⁰.

This double gratuity, first stated in the *Confessions*, is further elaborated in the commentary on Genesis begun only a short time afterward. There Augustine applies the distinction between the divine acts of inaugurating and perfecting to all of finite reality, whether spiritual or corporeal, and it is of such importance to him that he seeks out some mention of all three persons of the Trinity in connection with each of the divine acts, according to the following schema⁸¹ :

78. Ibid., XIII, 3, 4 (Skutella, 330-31) : « ... erat iam qualiscumque vita, quam inluminares, sed sicut non te promeruerat, ut esset talis vita, quae inluminari posset, ita nec cum iam esset promeruit te, ut inluminaretur. neque enim eius informitas placeret tibi, si non lux fieret non existendo, sed intuendo inluminantem lucem eique cohaerendo, *ut et quod utcumque vivit et quod beate vivit, non deberet nisi gratiae tuae...* ».

79. Ibid., XIII, 4, 5 (Skutella, 331) : « Quid ergo tibi deesset ad bonum, quod tu tibi es, etiamsi ista vel omnino nulla essent vel informia remanerent, quae non ex indigentia fecisti, sed ex plenitudine bonitatis tuae... ? perfecto enim tibi displicet eorum imperfecto, ut ex te perficiantur et tibi placeant, non autem imperfecto, tamquam et tu eorum perfectione perficiendus sis ».

80. Ibid. : « sed superferebatur incorruptibilis et incommutabilis voluntas tua, ipsa in se sibi sufficiens, super eam quam feceras vitam... ». Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 7, 12 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 11) : « ... quia egenus atque indigus amor ita diligit, ut rebus, quas diligit, subiciatur, propterea, cum commemoraretur spiritus dei, in quo sancta eius benivolentia dilectioque intellegitur, superferri dictus est, ne facienda opera sua per indigentiae necessitatem potius quam per abundantiam beneficentiae deus amare putaretur ... cum ergo sic oporteret insinuari spiritum dei, ut superferri diceretur, commodius factum est, ut prius insinuaretur aliquid inchoatum, cui superferri diceretur, non enim loco, sed omnia superante ac praecellente potentia ».

81. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 6, 11 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 10) : « ... ut, quemadmodum *in ipso exordio inchoatae creaturae*, quae caeli et terrae nomine propter id, quod de illa perficiendum erat, commemorata est, trinitas insinuat creatoris — nam dicente scriptura : in principio fecit deus caelum et terram intellegimus patrem in dei nomine et filium in principii nomine, qui non patri, sed per se ipsum creatae primitus ac potissimum spiritali creaturae et consequenter etiam uniuersae creaturae principium est, dicente autem scriptura : et spiritus dei superferebatur super aquam completam commemorationem trinitatis agnoscimus —, ita *et in conuersione atque perfectione creaturae*, ut rerum species digerantur, eadem trinitas insinuetur, uerbum dei scilicet et uerbi generator, cum dicitur : dixit deus, et sancta bonitas, in qua deo placet quidquid ei pro suae naturae modulo perfectum placet, cum dicitur : uidit deus quia bonum est ».

(inchoatio)	Deus	fecit in Principio	Spiritus Dei superferebatur super aquam
(conversio atque perfectio)	Deus	dixit [Verbo suo]	vidit Deus quia bonum est

God makes a beginning with the creation of formless matter, the changeable existence of that which is other than God. The nature of finite life has already been discussed in the first section of this essay. The process of perfecting is more complex, moving through no less than three stages which are mentioned repeatedly in the *Confessions* and the Genesis commentary : *revocatio*, *conversio*, and *formatio*⁸².

I. REVOCATIO. Conversion is initiated by the " fiat lux ", which Augustine understands to be the eternal Word recalling the creature to himself⁸³. The call comes inwardly, through direct contact between the created mind and the eternal Word, and it presupposes the special relationship with the Word which is already established by the very nature of mind⁸⁴. Adam also is regarded as having been capable, prior to the darkening of his mind by sin, of receiving communications directly from God as they are " uttered " inaudibly in the eternal Word and made known through God's substantial presence to the mind⁸⁵.

The mode of communication is not exceptional. The divine invitation comes to the spiritual creature in the same manner as all intelligible truths and moral norms, that is, through a direct impression upon the mind, of which Augustine is certain although he does not profess fully to understand it. The metaphor of impression is even used to explain the awareness which sinful men have of truths and values, though their

82. Cf. *De lib. arb.*, III, 24, 72 (*P.L.*, 32, 1306), written a few years earlier, where there is a similar analysis of human life in terms of *capacitas-praeceptio-obtemperatio-illuminatio* : « Sicut autem natura rationalis praeceptum capit, sic praecepti observatio sapientiam... Quid ergo est unde non laudandus sit hominis Creator ? Bonum est enim aliquod homo, et melius quam pecus, ex eo quod praecepti capax. Et hoc melius, cum praeceptum iam cepit. Rursus, hoc melius, cum praecepti paruit. Et his omnibus melius, cum aeterno lumine sapientiae beatus est ».

83. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 4, 9 (*C.S.E.L.*, 281, 8) : « ut in eo, quod scriptura narrat : dixit deus : fiat, intellegamus dei dictum incorporeum in natura uerbi eius coaeterni, reuocantis ad se imperfectionem creaturae, ut non sit informis, sed formetur secundum singula, quae per ordinem exequitur ».

84. *Ibid.*, I, 5, 10 (*C.S.E.L.*, 281, 9) : « principium quippe creaturae intellectualis est aeterna sapientia : quod principium manens in se incommutabiliter nullo modo cessaret, *occulta inspiratione uocationis* loqui ei creaturae, cui principium est, ut conuerteretur ad id, ex quo esset, quod aliter formata ac perfecta esse non posset. ideoque, interrogatus, quis esset, respondit : principium, quia et loquor uobis ».

85. *Ibid.*, VIII, 27, 49 (*C.S.E.L.*, 281, 266) : God speaks « per substantiam suam... ad creandas omnes naturas, ad spirituales uero atque intellectuales non solum creandas, sed etiam inluminandas, cum iam possunt capere locutionem eius, qualis est in uerbo eius, quod in principio erat apud deum et deus erat uerbum, per quod facta sunt omnia... »,

knowledge of the source is, at best, obscure⁸⁶. The uniqueness and the gratuity of the divine call consist, therefore, not in its mode of communication but in its *content*. It is set apart from other varieties of divine disclosure by the fact that it concerns the destiny of the one addressed⁸⁷. The divine call, issued freely and not on the basis of some rational or moral necessity, offers to the intelligent creature a destiny, and with it a task to be fulfilled within the sphere of its own activity. There is a journey to be taken, a journey not for the feet but for the affections. "Pedes nostri in hoc itinere, affectus nostri sunt"⁸⁸. "Imus non ambulando, sed amando"⁸⁹.

2. *CONVERSIO*. If the grace of God is manifested initially by the issuance of the divine call, it is further manifested in the infusion of *caritas* by which the will, having responded to the invitation, is enabled to remain firm in its purpose. Here we find the center of Augustine's understanding of grace at this period in the development of his thought. If the chief problem of the finite will is its instability, which calls into question the possibility of ever attaining to or abiding in the vision of God, the solution will be a special divine gift by which the will is enkindled and sustained and thereby enabled to attain to the unending contemplation of God. The gift is, indeed, the Spirit, through whom finite spirit becomes "pertinent" to God.

in dono tuo requiescimus : ibi te fruimur. requies nostra locus noster. amor illuc attollit nos et spiritus tuus bonus exaltat humilitatem nostram de portis mortis. in bona voluntate pax nobis est... pondus meum amor meus ; eo feror, quocumque feror. dono tuo accendimur et sursum ferimur ; inardescimus et imus... igne tuo, igne tuo bono inardescimus et imus, quoniam sursum imus ad pacem Hierusalem... ibi nos conlocabit voluntas bona, ut nihil velimus aliud quam permanere illic in aeternum⁹⁰ ".

86. *De Trin.*, XIV, 15, 21 (*P.L.*, 42, 1052) : « Domini autem Dei sui reminiscitur. Ille quippe semper est ... et ubique totus est.... Sed commemoratur, ut convertatur ad Dominum, tanquam ad eam lucem qua etiam cum ab illo averteretur quodam modo tangebatur. Nam hinc est quod etiam impii cogitant aeternitatem, et multa recte reprehendunt recteque laudant in hominum moribus.... Ubinam sunt istae regulae scriptae, ubi quid sit iustum et iniustus agnoscit, ubi cernit habendum esse quod ipse non habet ? Ubi ergo scriptae sunt, nisi in libro lucis illius quae veritas dicitur ? »

87. *De Gen. ad litt.*, VIII, 27, 50 (*C.S.E.L.*, 281, 266) : « Si ergo Adam talis erat, ut posset capere illam locutionem dei, quam mentibus angelicis per suam praebet substantiam, non dubitandum est, quod eius mentem per tempus moverit miro et ineffabili modo, non motus ipse per tempus, eique utile ac salubre praeceptum veritatis inpresserit et quae transgressori poena deberetur ea ipsa ineffabili veritate monstrauerit, sicut audiuntur uel videntur omnia bona praecepta in ipsa incommutabili sapientia, quae in animas sanctas se transfert ex aliquo tempore, cum ipsius nullus sit motus in tempore... ».

88. *Enarr. in Ps.*, 94, 2 (*P.L.*, 37, 1217). Cf. *Ennead I*, 6, 8.

89. *Ep.* 155, 4, 13 (*P.L.*, 33, 672).

90. *Conf.*, XIII, 9, 10 (Skutella, 334-35).

3. *FORMATIO*. The end of the pilgrimage of the spirit is an unceasing vision of God, with the certitude that it is unceasing : an end which is not merely *telos*, a goal sought, but *eschaton*, an end whose finality is assured⁹¹. This fulfilment is made possible by *caritas*, for adherence to God is prerequisite to unbroken contemplation ; but it is not identical with *caritas*. Love for God, however intense, would remain a mere desire without the further actuality of *impletio* through knowledge⁹². The function of *caritas*, then, is to perfect the mind and apply it to God ; but it is through apprehension that God is possessed.

In contemplation the creaturely mind is so transformed through participation in eternal Wisdom that it " becomes light ". The motif of participation, which occurs so frequently in the passages on contemplation, is introduced in order to emphasize the contrast between divine and creaturely life and to indicate that, whatever degree of perfection may be achieved in creaturely life, it is derived from God and is constantly dependent upon him. But in the life of the mind participation takes place in a unique way, through acts of understanding. These acts are constitutive of a new being. The finite spirit " becomes light " in the very act of knowing the Word ; its *lux fieri* consists in its *cognoscere* or *agnoscere*⁹³. True wisdom or luminosity of mind is attainable in creaturely life, but only through a ceaseless contemplation in which eternal Wisdom illuminates the mind as the sun illuminates the atmosphere⁹⁴.

91. *De civ. Dei*, XI, 11 (C.C., 48, 332) : « ... excellentiam sapientis beataeque uitae, quae procul dubio non nisi aeterna est aeternitatisque suae certa atque secunda... ».

92. *Ibid.*, XII, 9 (C.C., 48, 363) : « ... quid aliud ostenditur nisi uoluntatem quamlibet bonam inopem fuisse in solo desiderio remansuram, nisi ille, qui bonam naturam ex nihilo sui capacem fecerat, ex se ipso faceret implendo meliorem, prius faciens excitando audidiorem ? » This is Augustine's version of the Plotinian doctrine that the lower being ceaselessly desires union with the higher, and remains dependent upon it for full actualization (cf. note 36 above).

93. *De Gen. ad litt.*, III, 20, 31 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 86-87) : « ... ipsa primo creabatur lux, in qua fieret cognitio uerbi dei, per quod creabatur, atque ipsa cognitio illi esset ab informitate sua conuerti ad formantem deum et *creari atque formari*... ». The same holds true of man, since he also is a « natura intellectualis » : « hoc est ei fieri, quod est agnoscere uerbum dei, per quod fit ». Warrant for this high estimate of the importance of knowledge came, we should note, not only from Plotinus but from the Bible, especially Ephesians, IV, 24, which is discussed extensively in this passage.

94. *Ep.* 118, 3, 15 (P.L., 33, 439) : « Da item qui cito videant animum quoque ipsum, non suo bono beatum esse, cum beatus est, alioquin nunquam esset miser... Cum vero perspicit se esse mutabilem, vel hoc uno saltem quod de stulto sapiens efficitur, sapientiamque esse incommutabilem cernit, simul oportet cernat esse illam supra suam naturam, eiusque participatione atque illustratione se uberius et certius gaudere quam seipso ». *De Trin.*, XIV, 12, 15 (P.L., 42, 1048) : « ... propter quod scriptum est, Ecce Dei cultus est sapientia : ut non sua luce, sed summae illius lucis participatione sapiens erit, atque ubi aeterna, ibi beata regnabit. Sic enim dicitur ista hominis sapientia, ut etiam Dei sit. Tunc enim vera est : nam si humana est, vana est ». *Ibid.*, XIV, 19, 26 (P.L., 42, 1056) : « ... contemplativam sapientiam ... duntaxat hominis, quae quidem illi non est, nisi ab illo cuius participatione vere sapiens fieri mens rationalis et intellectualis potest ». *De civ. Dei*, XI, 10, 2 (C.C., 48, 331) : « Anima quoque ipsa, etiamsi semper sit sapiens, sicut erit cum liberabitur in aeternum, participatione tamen incommutabilis sapientiae sapiens erit, quae non

Through apprehension God's own eternal life in wisdom and beatitude can be possessed in its full reality and in such a way that it remains undivided and unconsumed, enjoyed in common by all who behold it, and transforming their minds into a reflection of the object of their knowledge⁹⁵.

It is only in the unceasing contemplation of God that finite life finds complete stability. Although *caritas* can give steadfastness to the changeable will while it is still in the grip of temporal succession, the intrinsic mutability of finite life is overcome ("cohibetur") only through the possession of the eternal God and certitude that this possession will not come to an end⁹⁶. This inhibition of temporality is not to be understood

est quod ipsa... Ut non inconuenienter dicatur, sic inluminari animam incorpoream luce incorporea simplicis sapientiae Dei, sicut inluminatur aeris corpus luce corporea ; et sicut aer tenebrescit ista luce desertus..., ita tenebrescere animam sapientiae luce priuatam ». Cf. the sensitive phenomenological study of the image of light in F.-J. THONNARD, *La notion de lumière en philosophie augustinienne*, in *Recherches augustinienes*, II (Paris, 1962), pp. 125-75, in which it is shown that 'illumination' is usually understood as an intuition of the light in which the consciousness also becomes luminous (p. 169).

95. *De lib. arb.*, II, 14, 37 (P.L., 32, 1261) : « Habemus igiturque fruamur omnes aequaliter atque communiter : nullae sunt angustiae, nullus in ea defectus. Omnes amatores suos nullo modo sibi invidios recipit et omnibus communis est, et singulis casta est... Cibus eius nulla ex parte discerpitur ; nihil de ipsa bibis quod ego non possim. Non enim ab eius communione in privatum tuum mutas aliquid ; sed quod tu de illa capis, et mihi manet integrum ». *De div. quaest.* 83, q. 35, n. 1 (P.L., 40, 24) : « Et ideo non amandum est, quod manenti et fruenti amoris auferri potest. Cuius ergo rei amor amandus est, nisi eius quae non potest deesse dum amatur ? Id autem est, quod nihil est aliud habere quam nosse ». *Conf.*, VII, 10, 16 (Skutella, 141) : « et inveni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis, tamquam audirem vocem tuam de excelso : 'cibus sum grandium : cresce et manducabis me. Nec tu me in te mutabis sicut cibum carnis tuae, sed tu mutaberis in me ». *In Joann. ev.*, tr. 97, n. 1 (P.L., 35, 1878) : « In ipsa ergo mente, hoc est in interiore homine, quodammodo crescit, non solum ut ad cibum a lacte transeat, verum etiam ut amplius atque amplius cibus ipse sumatur. Non autem crescit spatiosa mole, sed *intelligentia luminosa : quia et ipse cibus intelligibilis lux est*. Ut ergo crescat, eumque capiat, et quanto magis crescat, tanto magis magisque capiat... ».

96. *Conf.*, XII, 9, 9 (Skutella, 299) : « nimirum enim caelum caeli, quod in principio fecisti, creatura est aliqua intellectualis, quamquam nequaquam tibi, trinitati, coaeterna, particeps tamen aeternitatis tuae, valde mutabilitatem suam prae dulcedine felicissimae contemplationis tuae cohibet et sine ullo lapsu, ex quo facta est, inhaerendo tibi excedit omnem volubilem vicissitudinem temporum ». *Ibid.*, XII, 11, 12 (Skutella, 301) : « Item dixisti mihi voce forti in aurem interiore, quod nec illa creatura tibi coaeterna est, cuius voluptas ut solus es teque perseverantissima castitate hauriens mutabilitatem suam nusquam et numquam exierit et te sibi semper praesente, ad quem toto affectu se tenet, non habens futurum quod expectet nec in praeteritum traiciens quod meminerit, nulla vice variatur nec in tempora ulla distenditur ». *Ibid.*, XII, 15, 19 (Skutella, 305) : « ... sublimem quandam esse creaturam tam casto amore cohaerentem deo vero et vere aeterno, ut, quamvis ei coaeterna non sit, in nullam tamen temporum varietatem et vicissitudinem ab illo se resolvat et defluat, sed in eius solius veracissima contemplatione requiescat, quoniam tu, deus, diligenti te, quantum praecipis, ostendis ei te et sufficis ei, et ideo non declinat a te nec a se ? » *Ibid.*, XII, 15, 21 (Skutella, 307) : « inest ei tamen ipsa mutabilitas, unde tenebresceret et frigeresceret, nisi amore grandi tibi cohaerens tamquam semper meridies luceret et ferveret ex te ».

physically but existentially : the concern of finite spirit with the problems of its own existence is brought to a satisfying resolution, so that it finds joy in God and is distracted by no fond memories or bitter regrets concerning the past, no hopeful anticipations or restless wishes concerning what might still come to be, and no anxiety or uncertainty concerning its own unending possession of beatitude⁹⁷.

The perfection of this state comes chiefly from the eternality of the object of contemplation and enjoyment. But there is also a self-referencing aspect of beatitude, for it includes not only an awareness of possessing the highest good but the certitude that this possession will be without end. And the mutability of the finite will may be assumed to present a certain problem even here, for Augustine makes a special point of discussing the divine faithfulness which guarantees the stability of this final state. Thus there are anticipations of the notion of confirmation in the good which will become explicit later. The generosity of God toward his creation is seen not only in his leading it to the most perfect mode of life of which it is capable (" ut fieret "), but in his enabling it to continue in this state (" ut maneat "). In the case of lower beings the sustaining role of God is manifested only in the ordered and unified texture of the cosmic process ; but in the case of intelligent life it is manifested in an unending adherence to God⁹⁸.

These suggestions are expanded in what Augustine says in the fourth book of the Genesis commentary about the sanctification of the seventh day. He asks in what sense God, for whom creation is no labor, can be said to rest, and his answer is built up in three stages.

a) God's complete freedom from dependence upon his creation is attested by Scripture when it reports that, even after completing his

97. Augustine does suggest, however, that until the resurrection there remains in the human soul a desire for a body to administer, « quo adpetitu retardatur quodammodo, ne tota intentione pergat in illud summum caelum, quamdiu non subest corpus, cuius administratione adpetitus ille conquiescat ». (*De Gen. ad litt.*, XII, 35, 68 ; *C.S.E.L.*, 28¹, 422).

98. *De Gen. ad litt.*, I, 5, 11 (*C.S.E.L.*, 28¹, 10) : « ... subiacebat scilicet bonae uoluntati creatoris quicquid illud erat quod formandum perficiendumque inchoauerat ut dicente deo in uerbo suo : fiat lux, in bona uoluntate, hoc est bono placito eius pro modo sui generis maneret, quod factum est ». Ibid., I, 8, 13 (*C.S.E.L.*, 28¹, 11) : « ... placuit enim quod factum est in ea benignitate, qua placuit, ut fieret. Duo quippe sunt, propter quae amat deus creaturam suam, ut sit et ut maneat. Ut esset ergo, quod maneret, spiritus dei superferebatur super aquam ; ut autem maneret, uidit deus, quia bonum est. Et quod de luce dictum est, hoc de omnibus. Manent enim quaedam supergressa omnem temporalem uolubilitatem in amplissima sanctitate sub deo, quaedam uero secundum sui temporis modos, dum per decessionem successionemque rerum saeculorum pulchritudo contextitur ».

external works, he finds his rest *in himself* and not in them⁹⁹. The primary sense of God's rest is therefore his own eternity and self-existence, in which he knows and enjoys himself¹⁰⁰.

b) Another meaning of divine rest can be derived from a distinction between two modes of divine operation *ad extra* : at the beginning God created and finished all that he intended to create, at least in the *rationes seminales* (this presupposes, of course, Augustine's singular doctrine that all creation occurred at the first moment of time) ; God's " rest " is then his preservation and administration of all that has been posited at the beginning¹⁰¹. In him all things live and move and have their being, not in the sense that they are identical with him, but in the sense that he holds them together through time (" continet "), and without his sustaining influence they would straightway be dissipated¹⁰².

c) These two meanings of divine rest gain concrete unity through the theory of participation. God finds rest in himself and not in his works, but his creation finds rest beyond itself in God's rest¹⁰³. It is one thing for creatures to " ex-sist " as other than God in the shifting and fragmentary life that they have within themselves, and another thing for them to participate in God's eternal rest by being given duration and being set in ordered patterns of change and relationship with other creatures and being drawn toward their appropriate fulfilment¹⁰⁴. No

99. *Ibid.*, IV, 15, 27 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 112) : « ... insinuat nobis deus per hanc scripturam, qua dicitur requieuisse ab omnibus operibus suis, quae fecit, nullo opere suo sic delectatus, quasi faciendi eius egerit, uel minor futurus, nisi fecisset, uel beator, cum fecisset. Quia enim ex illo ita est quidquid ex illo est, ut ei debeat, quod est, ipse autem nulli, quod ex ipso est, debeat, quod beatus est, *se rebus, quas fecit, diligendo praeponit*, non sanctificans diem, quo ea facienda inchoauit, nec illum, quo ea perfecit, ne illis uel faciendis uel factis auctum eis gaudium uideretur, sed eum, quo ab ipsis in se ipso requieuit ».

100. *Ibid.*, IV, 17, 31 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 114) : « et ubi requiescens nisi in se ipso, quia beatus nonnisi se ipso ? quando, nisi semper ? »

101. *Ibid.*, IV, 10, 21.

102. *Ibid.*, IV, 12, 24 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 109) : « et quod scriptum est de sapientia eius : pertingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit omnia suauiter, de qua item scriptum est, quod motus eius agilior celeriorque sit omnibus motibus : satis adparet recte intuentibus hunc ipsum incomparabilem et ineffabilem, et si possit intellegi, stabilem motum suum rebus eam praebere suauiter disponendis, quo utique subtracto, si ab hac operatione cessauerit, eas continuo perituras... Cum aliud sumus quam ipse, non ob aliud in illo sumus, nisi quia id operatur, et hoc est opus eius, quo continet omnia... ».

103. *Ibid.*, IV, 16, 28 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 112-113) : « requies igitur dei recte intellegendis ea est, qua nullius indiget bono ; et ideo certa et nobis in illo est, quia et nos beatificamur bono, quod ipse est, non ipse bono, quod nos sumus ».

104. *Ibid.*, IV, 17, 30 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 114) : « magnum est enim nobis ab illo *existisse*, sed maius erit in illo *quieuisse*, sicut ipse non ideo beatus est, quia haec fecit, sed quia etiam factis non egens in se potius quam in ipsis requieuit ». *Ibid.*, IV, 18, 34 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 117) : « quoniam rei cuiusque perfectio non tam in uniuerso, cuius pars est, quam in eo, a quo est, in quo et ipsum uniuersum est, pro sui generis modulo stabilitur, ut quiescat, id est, ut sui momenti ordinem teneat. Ac per hoc ipsa uniuersitas creaturae, quae sex diebus consummata est, aliud habet in sua

matter what degree of order they have achieved, by themselves they tend toward disharmony and dissolution ; but through participation in God's rest they also live in the seventh day, which has no end¹⁰⁵.

Grace thus has its origin in the freedom and generosity of God in recalling his creatures to himself ; it begins to take effect in creaturely life with their conversion and the infusion of *caritas*, by which they are borne on their journey ; but it reaches its intended goal only in eternal life, sustained by the faithfulness of God.

Grace is a gift freely given, for it is neither claimed as a matter of right by the intelligent creature nor required lest its life be absurd. The intelligent creature possesses within itself and in its natural relation to God all the resources needed to lead a fitting and meaningful life, and it has neither a claim upon nor an exigency for further aid. The function of grace, when it is offered, is to invite the temporal to seek the eternal as its own destiny, and to sustain a finite and changeable life in order that it might come to enjoy the unending contemplation of God. If, in the case of sinful man, grace is needed if the mind is to be purified and enabled to endure the vision of eternal Light, grace is also needed if the finite spirit, even in the freshness of its original creation, is to find true beatitude, for its own changeable will can never guarantee stability of life. Final and full beatitude is therefore the gift of God, for his grace is the only adequate foundation of steadfastness during the time of striving and of assurance at the stage of consummation. With the hazards of mutability thus overcome, there is a participation not only in the wisdom of God (for this might be attained momentarily and then lost) but in the beatitude of God as well : the secure enjoyment of all the riches of the divine being.

natura, aliud in ordine, quo in deo est, non sicut deus, sed tamen ita, ut ei quies propriae stabilitatis non sit nisi in illius quiete, qui nihil praeter se appetit, quo adepto requiescat. Et ideo, dum ipse manet in se, quidquid ex illo est retorquet ad se, ut omnis creatura in se habeat naturae suae terminum, quo non sit, quod ipse est, in illo autem quietis locum, quo seruet, quod ipsa est ».

105. *Ibid.*, IV, 18, 32 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 115) : « ac per hoc requies dei non ipsi deo, sed rerum ab eo conditarum perfectioni inchoatur, ut in illo incipiat requiescere, quod ab illo perficitur, et in eo habere mane — in suo enim genere tamquam uespera terminatum est — sed in deo uesperam habere iam non potest, quia non erit aliquid illa perfectione perfectius ». *Ibid.*, IV, 18, 33 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 115-16) : « neque enim caelum et terra et omnia, quae in eis sunt, uniuersa scilicet spiritalis corporalisque creatura in se ipsa manet, sed utique in illo, de quo dictum est : in illo enim uiuimus et mouemur et sumus, quia, etsi unaquaeque pars potest esse in toto, cuius pars est, ipsum tamen totum non est nisi in illo, a quo conditum est. Et ideo non absurde intellegitur sexto die completo post eius uesperam factum mane, non quo significaretur initium condendae alterius creaturae, sicut in ceteris, sed quo significaretur initium manendi et quiescendi totius, quod conditum est, in illius quiete, qui condidit. Quae quies deo nec initium habet nec terminum ; creaturae autem habet initium, sed non habet terminum. Et ideo septimus dies eidem creaturae coepit a mane, sed nullo uespere terminatur.

Cf. the anticipations of this theme, at least with respect to intelligent life, in the discussion of *pondus* and *requies* in *Conf.*, XIII, 9, 10 (quoted above, p. 118).

III. THE WAY TOWARD BEATITUDE

What changes can be discerned between Augustine's first complete statement of his interpretation of the creation narrative (about 400) and his later presentation of it in *The City of God* (about 416-20)? He retains most of his earlier insights, presenting them, however, much more briefly and therefore somewhat more dogmatically. But he quietly changes the emphasis. While the general pattern remains, most of the details which had made his interpretation such a tour de force are gone. He does not press the identification of *caelum* with the angels, and he drops out entirely the identification of the *abyssus* with their indeterminate life in themselves. He only states that the angels, if they are not omitted from the narrative, must be mentioned either under the designation of *caeli* or (even more likely) under that of *lux*¹⁰⁶. In place of a discussion of spiritual matter we find inserted, without explicit linkage with any of the details of the creation narrative, a chapter contrasting the simplicity of God with the compositeness of creatures¹⁰⁷. The details of the *exposition*, then, are softened; but the essential *doctrine* remains and indeed is developed further under the stimulus of two new interests: the theme of the two cities, and the Pelagian controversy.

Because the framework is now the theme of the two cities, Augustine must discuss the origin of the difference between the good and the evil angels¹⁰⁸. He suggests for the first time that reference is being made to the two societies of angels when the text states that God divided the light from the darkness. He notes that the narrative omits to state that God saw that it was good, lest it appear that the evil angels are approved by God, whereas in the report of the creation of lights in the firmament to distinguish day from night it is added that God saw that it was good, suggesting that, in contrast to the evil angels, there are "tenebrae inculpabiles"¹⁰⁹. All mention of the ambiguous darkness over the deep has disappeared, and in its place there is a new interest in the darkness which

106. *De civ. Dei*, XI, 9.

107. *Ibid.*, XI, 10.

108. The theme of the two cities among men, which Augustine acquired from the exegetical writings of Tyconius, appears as early as 390, in *De vera religione*, 27, 50. But the extension of this theme to the angelic realm takes place slowly. The fact that an exegesis of the first chapter of Genesis and a discussion of the heavenly "city" concludes the *Confessions* suggests that the topic of *The City of God* was already being rehearsed. In *De Gen. ad litt.*, XI, 15, 20, written about 411-12, he announces his intention to write a larger work on the subject: "Hi duo amores ... praecesserunt in angelis, alter in bonis, alter in malis, et distinxerunt conditas in genere humano ciuitates duas sub admirabili et ineffabili prouidentia dei ... de quibus duabus ciuitatibus latius fortasse alio loco, si dominus uoluerit, disseremus".

109. *De civ. Dei*, XI, 20.

was divided from the light on the first day, the evil state of the rebellious angels¹¹⁰.

Of course Augustine never regarded the formative conversion of the mind to God as a foregone conclusion. Although his discussions of the "fiat lux" in the earlier expositions of Genesis often make it seem to be an inevitable process by stressing the simultaneity of creation and conversion and in most passages omitting any mention of the fallen angels, it is always assumed that the mind's conversion toward God is its own act, following upon a divine invitation. The role of free decision in separating some angels from others is mentioned from time to time in Augustine's earliest writings¹¹¹. And it is not absent from the passages written about 400, though it is incidental to his interpretations at that period¹¹². Only later, after the projecting of *The City of God* and after the outbreak of the Pelagian controversy, does Augustine concern himself expressly with the role of free decision and its relation to grace.

The alternative hypotheses are formulated first in book XI of the Genesis commentary and then in *The City of God*¹¹³. Were all the angels created in a state of wisdom and beatitude, or not? Even if they were, it could not have been perfect wisdom and beatitude in the case of those angels who fell, for it came to an end. In what, then, did its imperfection consist? Did they know with certainty that they would fall, or were they deceived by a false confidence, or were they uncertain and therefore anxious about their future? And what is it that differentiates the good angels from the others? Were they established from the first in a state of perfect beatitude, or were they of a different nature, or were they given superior gifts, or is the disparity in destinies solely the result of free decision? Augustine's preference is clear from the first, but he examines all the options, and it is only in the writings after 420 that he firmly declares himself in favor of the view that all spiritual beings were created in the same state, and that the disparity in their destinies was determined by their own choice: there was a possibility of defection, but ardor and perseverance were ultimately rewarded by confirmation in beatitude, beyond all possibility of loss¹¹⁴.

110. *Ibid.*, XI, 9.

111. *De ver. rel.*, 13, 26, quoted in note 10 above. Cf. *De lib. arb.*, III, 5, 14 (*P.L.*, 32, 1278): « Nam ita quidam cum ratione verissima videant meliorem esse creaturam, quae quamvis habeat liberam voluntatem, Deo tamen semper infixa, nunquam peccaverit... ».

112. *Conf.*, XIII, 8, 9 (Skutella, 333): « Defluxit angelus, defluxit anima hominis et indicaverunt abyssum universae spiritalis creaturae in profundo tenebroso, nisi dixisses ab initio: fiat lux, et facta esset lux, et inhaereret tibi omnis oboediens intelligentia caelestis civitatis tuae et requiesceret in spiritu tuo... ».

113. *De Gen. ad litt.*, XI, cc. 13-26; *De civ. Dei*, XI, 13; XII, 9.

114. *Enchir.*, cc. 104-7; *De corr. et gr.*, II, 27 - 12, 32; *De civ. Dei*, XXII, 1. Cf. Gérard PHILIPS, *La raison d'être du mal d'après saint Augustin* (Louvain: Éditions du Museum Lessianum, 1927), pp. 202-4.

And how is the initial state of the angels to be understood ? In the later books of the Genesis commentary he indicates a preference for the hypothesis that spiritual beings were created in a condition of indeterminacy, and that the possibility of attaining to true wisdom was simultaneously presented to them in the form of an offer, received from the first by some but rejected from the first by others. This hypothesis seems to be suggested, he thinks, by such texts as John VIII, 44 ("diabolus homicida erat ab initio et in veritate non stetit")¹¹⁵. Stated in the language of later theological discussion, it would be an *initial* state of pure nature, indeterminate and prior to elicited activity, and thus not incompatible with the offer of grace which is juxtaposed with it.

This view of the primitive state is the one which Augustine seems to assume (despite his professions of incertitude) through much of his career. It is explicitly stated as early as *De libero arbitrio*, III, 24, 71-73, in a discussion of the *primus homo*. There he finds difficulty both with the view that the first man was created wise (for then his yielding to temptation would become inexplicable) and with the view that he was created unwise (for then God would be made the author of sin). He suggests, therefore, that the first man was created in a middle state which is neither the one nor the other, and that he could become either wise or foolish through his own free enactment¹¹⁶. The same line of reasoning is to be found as late as the work *De spiritu et littera* (412), where he argues that the actual situation of men, in which some will the good and some fall into sin, cannot be accounted for if willing comes either from God alone or from the creaturely will alone ; on either hypothesis the question will always arise, why not all ?¹¹⁷ God must be the source of the good act, and the finite will must be the source of the evil act. The will, then, must be a *media vis*, whose finite freedom gives it the possibility of turning toward either good or evil ; but the act of turning toward the good must be called forth by some *vocatio* or *suasio* in which the good is presented

115. *De Gen. ad litt.*, XI, 23, 30 (C.S.E.L., 28¹, 355) : « sed factus continuo se a luce ueritatis auertit, superbia tumidus et propriae potestatis delectatione corruptus. Unde beatae atque angelicae uitae dulcedinem non gustauit : quam non utique acceptam fastidiuit, sed nolendo accipere deseruit et amisit. Proinde nec sui casus praescius esse potuit, quoniam sapientia pietatis est fructus. Ille autem continuo inpius consequenter et mente caecus non ex eo, quod acceperat, cecidit, sed ex eo, quod acciperet, si subdi uoluisset deo... ».

116. *De lib. arb.*, III, 24, 71 (P.L., 32, 1305) : « Multum enim sibi videntur acute proponere quaestionem qui dicunt : Si sapiens factus est primus homo, cur seductus est ? Si autem stultus factus est, quomodo non est Deus auctor vitiorum, cum sit stultitia maximum vitium ? Quasi vero natura humana praeter stultitiam et sapientiam nullam *mediam* recipiat affectionem, quae nec stultitia, nec sapientia dici possit. Tunc enim homo incipit aut stultus esse aut sapiens, ut alterum horum necessario appelletur, cum iam posset, nisi negligeret, habere sapientiam, ut vitiosae stultitiae rea sit voluntas ». Cf. *ibid.*, 24, 73.

117. *De spir. et litt.*, 33, 57 (P.L., 44, 238) : « Si natura, quare non omnibus, cum sit idem Deus omnium creator ? Si dono Dei, etiam hoc quare non omnibus, cum omnes homines velit salvos fieri, et in agnitionem veritatis venire ? ».

to the will through the intellect in such a way as to arouse interest and delight in that which is offered¹¹⁸. During this period, then, Augustine was operating with a distinction between the *exercise* of the act of willing, which emerges from the finite subject, and the *specification* of the act, which, because it comes from the apprehension of some good to be enjoyed or pursued, is not always within the power of the subject and may by its character be an entirely "gratuitous" offer¹¹⁹.

While Augustine held to this view as late as the beginning of the Pelagian controversy, the terms of the debate quickly gave him a new perspective upon the problem of nature and grace. Although these new insights arose in relation to anthropology, they are pertinent to our discussion, for they form the background of the further development of his interpretation of the creation narrative¹²⁰.

Augustine found himself in agreement with Pelagius' statement of the question: "De posse et non posse, non de esse et non esse contendimus"¹²¹. The point at issue, in other words, was not whether sin is universal (for Pelagius was ready to acknowledge that all men may in fact have sinned) but whether sinful men have the ability to recover from sin. Pelagius asserted that in all men the capability, the *posse non peccare*, remains what it was in Adam, for it belongs to human nature and cannot be lost. Augustine argued, however, that the grace of Christ would be superfluous if men had the possibility of leading sinless lives without it¹²².

In defending this position he was forced to reflect extensively upon the meaning of "nature" in relation to human activity (and the problem

118. *Ibid.*, 33, 58 (P.L., 44, 238) : « Prius igitur illud dicamus, et videamus utrum huic satisfaciatur quaestioni, quod liberum arbitrium naturaliter attributum a Creatore animae rationali, illa media vis est, quae vel intendi ad fidem, vel inclinari ad infidelitatem potest : et ideo nec istam voluntatem qua credi Deo dici potest homo habere quam non acceperit ; quandoquidem *vocante Deo* surgit de libero arbitrio, quod naturaliter cum crearetur accepit ». *Ibid.*, 34, 60 (P.L., 44, 240-41) : « ... non ideo tantum istam voluntatem divino muneri tribuendam, quia ex libero arbitrio est, quod nobis naturaliter concreatum est ; verum etiam quod *visorum suasionibus* agit Deus, ut velimus, et ut credamus ... sed consentire vel dissentire propriae voluntatis est. His ergo modis quando Deus agit cum anima rationali, ut ei credat ; neque enim credere potest quodlibet libero arbitrio, si nulla sit *suasio vel vocatio* cui credat ; profecto et ipsum velle credere Deus operatur in homine, et in omnibus misericordia eius praevenerit nos : consentire autem vocationi Dei, vel ab ea dissentire, sicut dixi, propriae voluntatis est ».

119. *De lib. arb.*, III, 25, 75 (P.L., 32, 1308) : « Qui enim vult, profecto aliquid vult : quod nisi aut extrinsecus per sensum corporis admoneatur, aut occultis modis in mentem veniat, velle non potest ». *Ibid.*, III, 25, 74 (P.L., 32, 1307) : « ... voluntatem non allicit aut faciendum quodlibet, nisi aliquod visum ; quid autem quisque velumat vel respuat, est in potestate, sed quo viso tangatur, nulla potestas est... ». Cf. *De div. quaest. ad Simpl.*, q. 2, nn. 21-22.

120. See especially F.-J. THONNARD, *La notion de 'nature' chez saint Augustin. Ses progrès dans la polémique antipélagienne*, in *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 11 (1965), pp. 239-65. I wish to thank P. Thonnard for discerning and calling to my attention the importance of the anti-Pelagian works to the present topic.

121. *De nat. et gr.*, 7, 8 (P.L., 44, 251). Cf. *ibid.*, 44, 51.

122. *De nat. et gr.*, 10, 11 ; 44, 51.

of nature is chiefly a problem of man's *posse*, his usable active powers, as Augustine suggests repeatedly)¹²³. Pelagius had taken a position which seemed, at first glance, to be entirely credible : human nature remains the same, and the *posse non peccare* is part of the equipment which belongs to man *necessitate naturae* and therefore cannot be lost ; although the exercise of this *posse* depends upon free decision and thus may never come about, the *posse* will issue into *agere* or *facere* whenever man chooses to act. Pelagius had set up a neat distinction, then, between *necessitas naturae*, which always includes a *posse facere*, and *voluntas*, which can always be exercised freely and be brought to effective completion in *facere*. Augustine replied by citing facts from experience which destroy the distinction as a credible philosophical position, for on the one hand there is an aspect of necessity even within the free activity of the will, and on the other hand what the will commands is not always accomplished, for the activities of a finite agent are conditioned both by external circumstances and by internal modifications of its being. With such widespread evidence in many other fields of human activity, there is no reason to deny the same thing when it comes to man's relation to God.

The question, then, is whether the possibility of leading a righteous life, free from sin, belongs inseparably and inamissibly to man's nature. To Pelagius it does. To Augustine it does not ; on the contrary, man's nature is susceptible of a change for the worse : " *natura vitari potest* " ¹²⁴. Augustine recognizes that it is not enough merely to assert this on the basis of Pauline texts or arguments from general experience ; some account must be given of the way in which human nature can be changed for the worse. He acknowledges the force of Pelagius' query how sin, which is not substantial but accidental, can alter and weaken human nature, and he answers with an analogy : to refrain from eating food is accidental, but it affects the substance, for it is the abstention from something that is needed for its healthy functioning, and the consequences can even be irreversible, weakening the body so that it is no longer able to take food. It will be noted that the understanding of finite beings here expressed is intensely relational, for while the distinction between substance and accident is acknowledged to be meaningful in all discourse about finite

123. See especially *De nat. et gr.*, 45, 53 - 51, 59.

124. *De nat. et gr.*, 51, 59 (*P.L.*, 44, 275-76) : « Ideo Dei gratiae tribuit [Pelagius] non peccandi possibilitatem, quia eius naturae Deus auctor est, cui possibilitatem non peccandi inseparabiliter insitam dicit. Cum vult ergo facit, quia non vult non facit. Ubi enim est inseparabilis possibilitas, ei accidere non potest voluntatis infirmitas, vel potius voluntatis adiacentia et perfectionis indigentia. Si ergo ita est, unde venit, ' Velle adiacet, perficere autem bonum non adiacet ' ? Si enim iste qui hunc librum scripsit, de illa hominis natura loqueretur, quae primo inculpata et sana condita est, utcumque acceptaretur hoc dictum : quanquam inseparabilem habere possibilitatem, id est, ut ita dicam, inamissibilem, non debuit illa natura dici, quae vitari posset, et medicum quaerere, qui caecos oculos sanaret, et videndi possibilitatem restitueret, quae fuerat amissa per caecitatem : quoniam caecus puto quod velit videre, sed non potest ; si autem vult et non potest, inest voluntas, sed amissa est possibilitas ».

things, it is not interpreted as setting up a barrier between an unchanging "thing in itself" and merely external relations with other things. Through accidents, substance is related to substance. Substance is itself dependent upon other beings for sustenance and growth; and the relatedness is all the more intense in finite spirits, whose being is open to the entire field of reality and whose perfect fulfilment is to be found only in the knowledge and love of God¹²⁵.

Because of the intrinsic mutability and relativity of finite spirit Augustine's use of the term "nature" acquires a certain complexity¹²⁶. At times it is used in such a way as to be equivalent with the category of substance, expressing the being or continuity or self-identity of the subject throughout all its changes of state. So, for example, the "body of death" of which Paul speaks is not the *substantia corporis* but only the *vitia corporis*¹²⁷. The nature of even the demons is good, though their sins have an effect which is directly contrary to their natural good and harmful to it¹²⁸. But the term "nature" is also applied, with equal propriety, to the variety of concrete states in which the same substance (or at least the same species) may find itself from time to time during its history; and when nature is viewed in its concrete states the emphasis falls not upon continuity but upon contrast¹²⁹. Thus nature in the first

125. *De nat. et gr.*, 20, 22 (P.L., 44, 257) : « ... nec existimemus peccato naturam humanam non posse vitiari, sed divinis credentes Scripturis peccato eam esse vitiatam, quomodo id fieri potuerit inquiramus. Quoniam peccatum iam didicimus non esse substantiam; nonne attenditur, ut alia omittam, etiam non manducare, non esse substantiam? A substantia quippe receditur; quoniam cibus substantia est. Sed abstinere a cibo non est substantia, et tamen substantia corporis, si omnino abstinetur a cibo, ita languescit, ita valetudinis inaequalitate corrumpitur, ita exhaustur viribus, ita lassitudine debilitatur et frangitur, ut si aliquo modo perduret in vita, vix possit ad eum cibum revocari, unde abstinendo vitata est. Sic non est substantia peccatum: sed substantia est Deus, summaque substantia, et solus verus rationalis creaturae cibus; a quo per inoboedientiam recedendo, et per infirmitatem non valendo capere quo debuit et gaudere, audis quemadmodum dicat: Percussum est sicut fenum et aruit cor meum, quoniam oblitus sum manducare panem meum (Ps. LI, 5) ».

126. For a fuller discussion of many aspects of this problem, see THONNARD, *art. cit.*, pp. 250-57.

127. *De nat. et gr.*, 55, 65 (P.L., 44, 279). In the same passage not only « substantia » but « natura » is used: e.g., « ... cum etiam corporis, sicut animae, natura Deo bono auctori tribuenda sit ». Cf. THONNARD, *art. cit.*, p. 255, n. 55.

128. *De civ. Dei*, XII, 3 (C.C., 48, 357) : « Dicuntur autem in scripturis inimici Dei, qui non natura, sed utiis aduersantur eius imperio, nihil ei valentes nocere, sed sibi... Porro autem bonum est et natura quam utiis: unde et huic bono utique contrarium est; sed Deo tantummodo tamquam bono malum, naturae uero, quam utiis, non tantum malum, sed etiam noxium ».

129. *De nat. et gr.*, 3, 3 (P.L., 44, 249) : « Natura quippe hominis primitus *inculpata et sine ullo vitio* creata est: natura vero ista hominis, qua unusquisque ex Adam nascitur, iam medico indiget, quia *sana non est*. Omnia bona, quae habet in formatione, vita, sensibus, mente, a summo Deo habet creatore et artifice suo. Vitium vero, quod ista *naturalia bona* contenebrat et infirmat, ut illuminatione et curatione opus habeat, non ab inculpabili artifice contractum est; sed ex originali peccato, quod commissum est libero arbitrio. Ac per hoc *natura poenalis* ad vindictam iustissimam pertinet ».

sense is equivalent with substance ; nature in the second sense is not substance alone, but concrete being with specific possibilities for action which are already shaped by its posture toward its wider situation. As soon as there is activity there is some definite relation to other beings, which then has consequences for its own future possibilities of action. And yet the changes of state, however drastic and however lasting, remain "accidental", destroying nothing of the "substantial" being¹³⁰.

All of Augustine's discussion of the nature of an intelligent being, whether in the first or the second sense of the term, finally comes to a focus in volition, which is the controlling center of mental life. The problem of nature as it was discussed during the Pelagian controversy is the problem of *posse facere*, and this turns out to be, in the last analysis, nothing other than a problem of willing. The contrast between willing and doing, derived from several Pauline texts, is not between distinct faculties but between two dimensions of the life of the will. It is one thing to have the wish or the momentary intention to follow a course of action, but it is another thing to carry the intention into effect through faithful and wholehearted application over a span of time. Thus even the problem of "nature", of *posse facere*, is a problem that must be understood from an existential perspective, from within, looking forward with responsibility for one's own activity¹³¹. Likewise the debility of sinful man is a problem within the will : the power of *consuetudo*¹³² or the *gluten amoris*¹³³ in the case of personal sin, the suggestiveness of *concupiscentia* in the case of original sin¹³⁴ ; for just as the free acts of an individual man can so influence him through long association as to place a certain necessity upon his subsequent actions which can be described as "second nature", the free act of the first man has an analogous influence upon the nature of his descendants¹³⁵.

130. *De gratia Christi*, 19, 20 (P.L., 44, 370) : « Qui defectus non aliam naturam malam initiat, sed eam quae bona condita est vitiat. Sanato autem vitio nullum malum remaneat ; quia vitium naturae quidem inerat, sed vitium natura non erat ».

131. *De gr. et lib. arb.*, 15, 31 (P.L., 44, 899-900) : « Per hanc etiam fit ut ipsa bona voluntas, quae iam esse coepit, augeatur, et tam magna fiat, ut possit implere divina mandata quae voluerit, cum valde perfecteque voluerit ». *Ibid.*, 17, 33 (P.L., 44, 901) : « Qui ergo vult facere Dei mandatum et non potest, iam quidem habet voluntatem bonam, sed adhuc parvam et invalidam : poterit autem, cum magnam habuerit et robustam ».

132. *Conf.*, VIII, 9, 21.

133. *De Trin.*, X, 8, 11.

134. Cf. THONNARD, *art. cit.*, p. 263 and n. 78.

135. *Contra Iulianum op. imp.*, I, 105 (P.L., 45, 1119) : « Qui enim, ut istam patiatur necessitatem, non nisi peccandi consuetudine premitur ; procul dubio priusquam peccaret, nondum necessitate consuetudinis premebatur. Ac per hoc, etiam secundum vos, peccandi necessitas unde abstinere liberum non est, illius peccati poena est, a quo abstinere liberum fuit, quando nullum pondus necessitatis urgebat. Cur ergo non creditis tantum saltem valuisse illud primi hominis ineffabiliter grande peccatum, ut eo vitaretur humana natura universa, quantum valet nunc in homine uno secunda natura ? »

The fact that it is linked with free will does not make it any less a problem about "nature" — and in both senses of nature. Augustine is interested in the aspect of *necessity* that is found even within the free exercise of the will. He denies that freedom can ever have the complete arbitrariness ascribed to it by Pelagius. But he does not thereby make freedom an illusion. He is concerned only to point out certain constant traits of all willing. However malicious it may appear, willing is always for the sake of some *value*, though that value may be insignificant or inappropriate¹³⁶. And however foolish or disastrous his course of action may be to the agent, he cannot will something which appears to him to be contrary to his own *happiness*, though his understanding of happiness may be shortsighted and influenced by the passion of the moment¹³⁷. P. Thonnard has appropriately called attention to the similarity of Augustine's views with the Thomist notion of "voluntas ut natura", and this suggestion finds quite explicit support in several passages where an element of inevitability is said to belong to the will even in its free exercise¹³⁸. There is also something corresponding to the Thomist notion of "voluntas ut electio libera", especially when it is understood in the sense of the Blondelian "option fondamentale", the self-orientation of the subject, the decision whether to follow to its end the natural inclination toward value and thus be guided by the supreme norms that cast their light upon the mind, or alternatively to succumb to the distractions of lesser values. To Augustine this fundamental decision is so momentous that, by the nature of the case, it can be exercised only under certain conditions. It can be exercised by intelligent creatures in the freshness of their creation, but sinful humanity is not in a position to exercise it prior to the offer of redeeming grace.

Respecting such a decision, Augustine does not deny that an indeterminate "possibilitas utriusque partis" is presupposed by the actual willing and doing of both good and evil. The question concerns the importance of this possibility. Pelagius had stated, rather eloquently, that the "possibilitas utriusque partis" is always present as a fertile root from which either flowers or weeds may issue forth, according to the choice of the man who is its gardener. The eloquence turns out to have

136. Cf. the extensive discussion in *Conf.*, II, 4, 9 - 8, 16.

137. Cf. the passages cited in the following note, and especially the long discussion in *Contra Iulianum op. imp.*, VI, 11-12.

138. *De nat. et gr.*, 46, 54 (*P.L.*, 44, 273) : in answer to Pelagius' statement that « voluntatis enim arbitrio ac deliberatione privatur, quidquid naturali necessitate constringitur », Augustine says, « ... absurdum est, ut ideo dicamus non pertinere ad voluntatem nostram quod beati esse volumus, quia id omnino nolle non possumus, nescio qua et bona constrictio naturae, nec dicere audemus, ideo Deum non voluntatem sed necessitatem habere iustitiae, quia non potest velle peccare ». *Enchir.*, 105 (*P.L.*, 40, 281) : « Neque enim culpanda est voluntas, aut voluntas non est, aut libera dicenda non est, qua beati esse sic volumus, ut esse miseri non solum nolumus, sed nequaquam prorsus velle possumus ».

been singularly unfortunate, however, for Augustine retorts that when the Lord speaks of fruit-bearing trees they are characterized as either good or evil, and when Paul speaks of roots which sprout forth he mentions only cupidity, which is the root of evil acts, and *caritas*, the root of good¹³⁹. Therefore he puts forward an alternative image : the *radix*, the source of action (or, to change the figure, the center of gravity of human life) is not to be found in the indeterminate " *possibilitas utriusque partis* " but in the fundamental orientation that is actually taken by each man, either *caritas* or *cupiditas*. The *possibilitas* in question is related not proximately but remotely to the actual behavior of men, for the fundamental orientation of the will intervenes ; therefore the possibility is not itself the root of action but is merely " *capax utriusque radicis* " ¹⁴⁰.

In addition to the " necessity " intrinsic to the nature of all willing, then, there is also a further " necessity ", a determination to a definite horizon of possibilities that is marked out by the fundamental orientation of the subject. Willing, wherever it is found, combines free choice with necessity ; and the difference between true freedom and bondage is not between arbitrariness and constraint, but between responsiveness to authentic value and self-will. There is always free choice, says Augustine, but it is not always *good* choice : the horizon of choice may be marked out by an evil orientation, and then it is only freedom from righteousness ; but if the horizon of choice is marked out by obedience, it is true freedom from sin¹⁴¹.

These reflections on the mutability of intelligent nature, its susceptibility to changes which, though accidental, have an enduring effect upon its active powers, raised new questions for Augustine concerning the primitive state and the relation of nature and grace. In the course of the debate with Pelagius two points were established by common agreement concerning the primitive state : (1) that finite agents had a genuine *posse non peccare* which was subsequently lost through sin, and (2) that there was a place for fully free decision between good and evil, an " option fondamentale ", one might say, which would determine the destiny of the creature.

The latter point, taken by itself, would if anything tend to reinforce the theory that intelligent beings were created in an initial state of " inde-

139. *De gratia Christi*, 18, 19.

140. *Ibid.*, 20, 21 (*P.L.*, 44, 370) : « Illa ergo possibilitas non, ut iste opinatur, una eademque radix est bonorum et malorum. Aliud est enim charitas radix bonorum, aliud cupiditas radix malorum ; tantumque inter se differunt, quantum virtus et vitium. Sed plane illa possibilitas utriusque radicis est capax... ».

141. *De gratia et lib. arb.*, 15, 31 (*P.L.*, 44, 899-900) : « Semper est autem in nobis voluntas libera, sed non semper est bona. Aut enim a iustitia libera est, quando servit peccato, et tunc est mala : aut a peccato libera est, quando servit iustitiae et tunc est bona. Gratia vero Dei semper est bona, et per hanc fit ut sit homo bonae voluntatis, qui prius fuit voluntatis malae. Per hanc etiam fit ut ipsa bona voluntas, quae iam esse coepit, augeatur, et tam magna fiat, ut possit implere divina mandata quae voluerit, cum valde perfecteque voluerit ».

terminate pure nature", ready to issue forth in elicited activity toward either God or lesser values. But when the first point, concerning the *posse non peccare*, is taken into consideration, an objection to that theory arises: can the creature, with its own powers alone, be said to possess a *posse non peccare*? As soon as Augustine begins considering the notion of *natura integra* (which is, to him, bound up with the possibility of remaining free from sin), we find him assuming that men were established in a posture of uprightness, *rectitudo*, with their wills actively oriented toward God in love and all their powers moderated and ordered by perfect submission to the righteous will. *Natura integra* is not pure nature, for grace has already been at work; but grace takes effect not in conferring superadded virtues but in initiating all the activities of man in their proper balance or temperament¹⁴². And the creation of nature in a state of integrity is only the beginning: finite spirit is placed from the first in a position of *posse non peccare*, but the role of free decision, while it is in a sense preempted, is not diminished, for faithful performance is still required and this can be accomplished only if the creature depends upon continued divine aid, just as a healthy eye cannot see without the light of the sun. Divine aid is offered ("se praebet") to those who will use it, and because it supports them ("praestat") in their freely elicited activity they remain without sin¹⁴³.

These two points — that nature is created in a state of integrity, and that it remains dependent upon divine aid if it is to remain free from sin — are first set forth in *De natura et gratia* (415), and the appropriate terminology is gradually worked out in the distinction between operating and cooperating grace¹⁴⁴. The new insights are applied specifically to the

142. In *De nat. et gr.*, 54, 63 (*P.L.*, 44, 278), he states that soul and body *may* come into conflict with each other, but that such conflict is not inevitable, for it is not a conflict between incompatible substances but between their accidental qualities, and even qualities which are diametrically opposed can be brought into equilibrium. « Possunt enim et contraria non invicem adversari, sed ex alterutro temperari et bonam valetudinem reddere: sicut in corpore siccitas et humiditas, frigus et calor, quorum omnium temperatione bona corporalis valetudo consistit. Sed, quod contraria est caro spiritui, ut non ea quae volumus faciamus, vitium est, non natura... ». Cf. THONNARD, *art. cit.*, p. 255.

143. *Ibid.*, 48, 56 (*P.L.*, 44, 274): « Si de integra et sana hominis natura loqueretur, quam modo non habemus..., nec sic recte diceret, quod non peccare nostrum tantummodo sit, quamvis peccare nostrum esset: nam et tunc esset adiutorium Dei, et tanquam lumen sanis oculis quo adiuti videant, se praeberet volentibus. Cf. *ibid.*, 26, 29 (*P.L.*, 44, 261), a passage which, though discussing the justified man, makes an analogous point: « Sicut enim oculus corporis etiam plenissime sanus, nisi candore lucis adiutus non potest cernere: sic et homo etiam perfectissime iustificatus, nisi aeterna luce iustitiae divinitus adiuvetur, recte non potest vivere. Sanat ergo Deus, non solum ut deleat quod peccavimus, sed ut praestet etiam ne peccemus ».

144. *De gr. et lib. arb.*, 17, 33 (*P.L.*, 44, 901): « Et quis istam etsi parvam dare cooperat charitatem, nisi ille qui praeparat voluntatem, et cooperando perficit, quod operando incipit? Quoniam ipse ut velimus operatur incipiens, qui volentibus cooperatur perficiens... Ut ergo velimus, sine nobis operatur; cum autem volumus, et sic volumus ut faciamus, nobiscum cooperatur... ».

initial situation of the angels in *The City of God*, book XII, written not long after *De natura et gratia*. Here Augustine reconsiders and rejects his own earlier opinion that the angels who adhered to God were first created without active love for him and then elicited it by their own choice (though in response to a divine invitation), for that would imply that they made themselves better than they had been made by God¹⁴⁵. He expresses dissatisfaction with a conception of divine influence which would merely juxtapose the finite will and a divine offer. God does not merely supply the conditions of possibility whereby the creature can then raise itself to a state higher than that in which it left the hand of its Creator; simultaneously with the creation of its nature, and prior to any decision on the part of the creature, a good will is conferred by *gratia operans*¹⁴⁶.

The role of *gratia operans* is rather different in the primitive state, however, from its role in the conversion of sinful men, for its effect is not to reverse the orientation of the will but only to initiate its activity in a posture of righteousness rather than indifference. Because free decision still has an indispensable role, grace is significant in the primitive state chiefly as cooperating grace, *gratia adiuvans*¹⁴⁷. Although creatures are established in a condition of uprightness and provisional beatitude by prevenient grace, their initial state has the character of a "iustitia retinenda", and the task set for them is to persevere until they are finally confirmed in righteousness and beatitude¹⁴⁸.

The *adiutorium sine quo non* which is discussed in the important work *De correptione et gratia* finds its place, therefore, between the inauguration of a good use of the will by operating grace and the final attainment of beatitude as the *debita merces meriti*. Although finite spirit has been created upright and stands under the promise of eternal life, it must persevere if it is to gain perfect beatitude. And the *adiutorium* of grace is indispensable to perseverance. Only through dependence upon divine aid can the creature accomplish what it wills. But this aid is only offered,

145. *De civ. Dei*, XII, 9 (C.C., 48, 363) : « Si autem boni angeli fuerunt prius sine bona uoluntate eamque in se ipsi Deo non operante fecerunt : ergo meliores a se ipsis quam ab illo facti sunt ? Absit ».

146. *Ibid.*, XII, 9 (C.C., 48, 363-64) : « At si non potuerunt se ipsos facere meliores, quam eos ille fecerat, quo nemo melius quicquam facit : profecto et bonam uoluntatem, qua meliores essent, nisi operante adiutorio Creatoris habere non possent... Et istam quis fecerat nisi ille, qui eos cum bona uoluntate, id est cum amore casto, quo illi adhaerent, creauit, simul eis et condens naturam et largiens gratiam ? Unde sine bona uoluntate, hoc est Dei amore, numquam sanctos angelos fuisse credendum est... Confitendum est igitur cum debita laude Creatoris non ad solos sanctos homines pertinere, uerum etiam de sanctis angelis posse dici, quod caritas Dei diffusa sit in eis per Spiritum sanctum, qui datus est eis... ».

147. Cf. *De corr. et gr.*, 13, 33 (P.L., 44, 936) : « Prima [beatitudo] erat perseverantiae potestas, bonum posse non deserere : novissima erit felicitas perseverantiae, bonum non posse deserere ».

148. *Enchir.*, c. 106 (P.L., 40, 282).

and the decision to use it or not is left in the creature's own hands : it is a " *gratia quam reliquit in eius libero arbitrio* " ¹⁴⁹, which the creature can abandon but upon which it must rely, in humility and without self-exaltation, if it is to persevere in the state in which it was created ¹⁵⁰.

In the writings of the later period it is constantly reiterated that the free will of the creature is sufficient for evil, but that without grace it cannot persevere in the love of God ¹⁵¹. The meaning of these assertions is not spelled out ; but a number of possibilities must be rejected. (1) It cannot be supposed that such passages assert a mere *concursum*, for the dependence of creaturely acts upon God is assumed, not made a point of controversy. (2) They do not suggest that the finite will is completely unable to do the good without grace. Nor (3) do they suggest that grace abolishes the hazards of free choice, for it is asserted that in the primitive state grace was given in such a way that the place of free choice was preserved, for better or worse ¹⁵². Nor (4) is there any question of " elevating " the will to acts of which it would otherwise be incapable, for *amor Dei* or *caritas* is equated with *bona voluntas*, the unambiguously good exercise of the will in turning toward unchanging Good ¹⁵³. The one problem with which they are concerned is steadfastness and perseverance in willing and doing the good, and the context is set by a problem which

149. *De corr. et gr.*, 12, 31 (P.L., 44, 935).

150. For a fuller discussion of these matters, cf. Charles BOYER, *Le système de saint Augustin sur la grâce, Essais sur la doctrine de saint Augustin* (Paris : Beauchesne, 1932), pp. 206-32 ; Guy de BROGLIE, *Pour une meilleure intelligence du 'De correptione et gratia'*, in *Augustinus Magister*, III, 317-37 ; Athanase SAGE, *Les deux temps de grâce*, in *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 7 (1961), 209-30.

Augustine summarizes his doctrine in the following way in *De corr. et gr.*, 12, 32 (P.L., 44, 935) : « Tunc ergo dederat homini Deus bonam voluntatem ; in illa quippe eum fecerat, qui fecerat rectum. Dederat adiutorium, sine quo in ea non posset permanere si vellet ; ut autem vellet, in eius libero reliquit arbitrio. Posset ergo permanere si vellet, quia non deerat adiutorium, per quod posset, et sine quo non posset perseveranter bonum tenere, quod vellet. Sed quia noluit permanere, profecto eius culpa est ; cuius meritum fuisset, si permanere voluisset : sicut fecerunt angeli sancti, qui cadentibus aliis per liberum arbitrium, per idem liberum arbitrium, steterunt ipsi, et huius permansionis debitam mercedem recipere meruerunt, tantam scilicet beatitudinis plenitudinem, qua eis certissimum sit semper se in illa esse mansuros ».

151. *De civ. Dei*, XII, 9 (C.C., 48, 363) : « ... profecto et bonam voluntatem, qua meliores essent, nisi operante adiutorio Creatoris habere non possent ». *Enchir.*, c. 106 (P.L., 40, 282) : « Quia etsi peccatum in solo libero arbitrio erat constitutum, non tamen iustitiae retinendae sufficiebat liberum arbitrium, nisi participatione immutabilis boni divinum adiutorium praeberetur... Homo in paradiso ad se occidendum relinquendo iustitiam idoneus erat per voluntatem, ut autem ab eo teneretur vita iustitiae, parum erat velle, nisi ille qui eum fecerat adiuvaret ». *De corr. et gr.*, 12, 31 (P.L., 44, 935) : « Quoniam liberum arbitrium ad malum sufficit, ad bonum autem parum est, nisi adiuvetur ab omnipotenti bono : quod adiutorium si homo ille per liberum non deseruit arbitrium, semper esset bonus : sed deseruit, et desertus est ».

152. *De corr. et gr.*, 11, 27 (P.L., 44, 932) : « ... sic ordinasse angelorum et hominum vitam, ut in ea prius ostenderet, quid posset eorum liberum arbitrium, deinde quid posset suae gratiae beneficium iustitiaeque iudicium ».

153. *De civ. Dei*, XII, 9, quoted in note 146 above.

appeared early in Augustine's writings and continued to exercise his ingenuity : the asymmetry between sin, for which a sufficient explanation can be found in the finite will, and the persistence of a good use of the will in fidelity to God, for which the mutable will of the creature is not a sufficient explanation.

The development in Augustine's doctrine of grace during the last decade and a half of his life seems, therefore, to confirm the interpretation of his earlier thought already put forward in this essay. If the crucial problem of finite life is not a limitation in the scope of the intellect but the mutability of the will, then the role of grace must be thoroughly explicated in relation to the drama of free decision ; and this is precisely what Augustine achieved in his later writings. God is shown to be gracious to his creatures in inaugurating their life with an upright will, setting them under the promise of eternal life, and offering the sustaining aid upon which they must depend during their pilgrimage ; then remaining faithful despite the defection of the human race, and giving to men as a gift (though not without their own willing) what was to have been their reward (though not without sustaining grace) ; and ultimately confirming them in unceasing beatitude, free of all fear of loss.

Nature and grace is a topic of whose complexities we have been made aware by later theologians ; but it is pertinent to the study of Augustine, and indeed the discussion of this topic in the West gained impetus almost solely from statements made in his works or from problems which arose from them. To return to the source from which the scholastic theologians drew their distinction between nature and grace seems, therefore, to be not only a legitimate undertaking but a most promising one. Augustine, to be sure, did not analyze the problems exhaustively or formulate explicitly the range of possible solutions ; for this the later discussions remain indispensable. He seems, nevertheless, to have a coherent position, one which has a rather different emphasis from any of the classic positions stated by later theologians, and one which may, therefore, remain suggestive even today for theological investigation.

For Augustine nature and grace is a matter of the relationship between the changeable life of creatures and the generosity and faithfulness of God, by which finite life is grounded in God and brought to final stability and coherence through participation in him. Augustine's writings trace the entire " way " of intelligent life : its responsibility for its own destiny in the midst of the broad field of reality ; the hazards and anxieties of its existence in freedom ; the dialectic of personal existence which leads to the conviction that stability of life can be found only in the knowledge of God ; the operation of divine grace in sustaining the finite will and supplying what it could not accomplish by itself ; and the attainment of final beatitude in which the finite subject, adhering to God in love, possesses him through knowledge and participates in his wisdom and stability.

In Augustine's reflections on nature and grace we encounter striking proof of his debt to Plotinus and the strongly neo-Platonic character of his thought, though transformed in important ways by Christian doctrine and by his own experience and meditation. But at precisely this point we also see an even greater influence of the Biblical — indeed, the Hebraic — heritage, for in the midst of the discussion of a topic which invites his most audacious assertions about the range of the mind's abilities and aspirations, the mercy and faithfulness of the God of the covenant finally assume the determinative role.

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