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The First Principles of Latin Neoplatonism – Augustine, Macrobius, Boethius

Neoplatonism is undoubtedly a systematic philosophy.[1] A "systematic" philosophy might be defined as one in which *a.* everything that is discussed can be derived from a single principle (or relatively few principles), and in which *b.* the "principles" involved are understood either *i.* in the ontological sense as causes or *ii.* in the logical sense as premises. Neoplatonism in general can be held to satisfy all these criteria except the last and, if one takes account of a work like Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica,* certain types of Neoplatonism might be held to satisfy the last criterion as well. What kinds of principle are characteristic of Neoplatonism? In the first instance, it is the threefold hierarchy consisting of the One (or Good), Intellect, and Soul that is employed by Plotinus as the methodological framework within which almost every philosophical question is tackled and which is presented in summary form in *Enneades* V. 1 and V. 2. We may perhaps concede a point to A. Hilary Armstrong who prefaced his edition and translation with an observation to the effect that the Plotinian writings make "an extremely unsystematic presentation of a systematic philosophy."[2] Nevertheless, in comparison with many other philosophies, Neoplatonism is systematic.

Historians of philosophy normally consider Neoplatonism as a variety of Greek philosophy, although there is also a parallel tradition of Latin Neoplatonism that exercised an enormous influence from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The aim of this essay is to turn aside from the more concrete study of individual writers, doctrines,

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[1] The term "Neoplatonism" will be used in the conventional way in this essay, *i.e.* as signifying in the first instance the metaphysical doctrine of Plotinus and his successors within the Greek tradition, and by analogy the similar ideas derived from the latter by Latin authors of late antiquity. Of course, the term "Neoplatonism" itself is modern. For a recent explanation of such terms as "Platonism" and "Neoplatonism," see Stephen Gersh, "Platonism, Platonic Tradition," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 2nd edition, ed. Donald M. Borchert, Detroit: Macmillan Reference 2006.

[2] *Plotinus*, translated by A. Hilary Armstrong, vol. 1, p. viii, Cambridge / MA: Heinemann / Harvard University Press 1966.

and sources to consideration of the broader and more abstract question whether this *Latin Neoplatonism* is systematic philosophy in the manner defined above.[3]

We will first attempt a brief summary of what one might term "the doctrine of first principles in Latin Neoplatonism, the points here summarized being justified in our subsequent discussion of a group of selected texts. This doctrine of first principles consists of various ideas regarding the hierarchy of hypostases in general, of certain ideas concerning specific hypostases, and of a various ideas regarding the causal relations between hypostases. The first two sets of ideas convey a relatively static view of reality and the third a relatively dynamic one. They are complemented – as a kind of objectivity is complemented by a kind of subjectivity – by a variety of epistemological teachings.

The doctrine concerning the hierarchy of hypostases in general includes primarily the presentation in Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* of the system of the three hypostases of the One (or Good), Intellect, and Soul articulated along Plotinian lines. It is also represented by another system loosely based on the same doctrine but configured especially with a view to interpreting Plato's *Timaeus* in which there is a paternal god who has intimate relations to the Good, to Mind, and to the paradigm, and in which there is an equally close relation between a universal Soul and particular souls. This system is stated in a famous poem of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae.* The doctrine concerning the hierarchy of hypostases in general also includes a conflation of the classic Plotinian theory in Augustine's *De Vera Religione*, where the triadic structure of One (or Good), Intellect and Soul overlaps with a further triadic structure of Intellect, Soul, and Logos. Moreover, Augustine replaces the original Plotinian theory with two simplified arrangements: a structure consisting of God, Intellect, and Body in *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV, and a structure comprising God, Soul, and Body in *De Musica*, book VI. It should be noted that neither the pagan nor the Christian versions of the hierarchy of hypostases in Latin Neoplatonism includes any reference to the doctrine of henads or gods characteristic of the Greek Neoplatonic school of Syrianus and Proclus.[4]

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[3] The method to be adopted in this essay will therefore be substantially different from that pursued in the present author's *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism. The Latin Tradition,* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986, although these two approaches are intended to be complementary.

[4] The only traces of this doctrine of henads or gods in the Latin tradition are perhaps in Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* where a commentary on the "Chaldaean Oracles" that is no longer

Among the ideas concerning specific hypostases that are expounded in Latin writings of late antiquity, those dealing with the second hypostasis or Intellect are fairly prominent. In Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV Intellect – assimilated to angelic mind – is characterized by the multiplicity of notions that it contains and by its simultaneous cognition of all its objects. In his *De Trinitate,* book IX Intellect – now assimilated to human mind – is characterized by a mutually-implicative triad of partly substantial and partly relational terms: mind, knowledge, and love. In the writings of Macrobius, Augustine and Boethius, the traditional doctrines concerning the un-knowable or ineffable nature of the One, and concerning the distinction between universal and particular intellects (or souls) are reduced in importance.

The doctrine regarding causal relations between the hypostases includes two distinct versions of a basic set of ideas in Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* and Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV respectively. Both versions see causality as having a fundamentally two-fold articulation: namely, a downward or outward motion of procession and an upward or inward motion of reversion. However, Macrobius' version follows Plotinus in conceiving several motions of procession and reversion as sequential, whereas Augustine's parallels later Greek Neoplatonism in treating several motions of procession and reversion as overlapping. It is notable that the causal relation between the hypostases in Latin Neoplatonism generally follows the model in which the cause confers on the effect what it pre-contains rather than that – most typical of Plotinus -- in which the cause confers on the effect what it does *not* contain. This feature is clearly illustrated by the doctrine of enfolding and unfolding stated in Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae.*

The doctrines concerning the hierarchy of hypostases and the causal relations between them are complemented by certain epistemological teachings. In Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis*, the unknowable natures of the One (or Good) and Intellect means that we can depict them only by means of analogies. There are also important teachings regarding the distinction between the non-discursive thinking of intelligence and the discursive thinking of reason in Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram,*

extant seems to have been a source. On this point, see Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism* [n. 3], vol. 2, pp. 609-614.

book IV, and regarding the determination of modes of perception according to the nature of the perceiving subject in Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae.* Finally, in Augustine's *De Vera Religione* the hierarchy of hypostases itself becomes dependent on the three modes of perception whereby the human mind grasps the unity-in-trinity of the highest God.

At this point, we will turn to a group of selected passages illustrating the doctrines of Latin Neoplatonism summarized above, taking these in a methodological rather than chronological order. Some of the passages represent compact statements of philosophical doctrine, whereas others constitute doctrinal threads running through longer texts. In each case, we will attempt to isolate a kind of philosophical nucleus or *philosepheme* that can be employed as a building-block in our attempted reconstruction of the "system" of the Latin Platonists.[5]

1. Boethius: *De Consolatione Philosophiae* [6]

The first philosopheme is drawn from Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. In the ninth verse of book III especially, the writer presents a complete cosmological doctrine of Neoplatonic provenance which is explicitly attributed to Plato himself. This explicit attribution is made when he cites the injunction to call upon God's assistance with the words "as it pleases our Plato in the *Timaeus*"[7] near the end of the preceding text.

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[5] The term *philosopheme* has become relatively common in late twentieth-century French philosophy (*e.g.* in that of Derrida). Originating in the context of structuralism, where it is analogous with the *mytheme* discussed by social anthropologists or the *sememe* invoked by semioticians, the *philosopheme* is a kind of minimal unit of philosophical discourse. It differs from the "doctrine" to which historians of philosophy normally refer in two main respects: *1.* It does not have to be entirely conscious on the part of the writers who employ it (as a doctrine is normally assumed to be); and *2.* It does not have to be capable of demonstrative formulation (as a doctrine is at least by aspiration). Thus, *philosophemes* can appear (and disappear) or be emphasized (and *de-*emphasized) as the author weaves his discourse in crossing the boundaries between logical argument and semantic association. The deeper semantic implications of studying medieval philosophy in terms of *philosophemes* have been explored in the present author's *Concord in Discourse. Harmonics and Semiotics in Late Classical and Early Medieval Platonism,* Mouton-De Gruyter 1996. See especially the methodological remarks on pp. 13-21.

[6] *Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae, Opuscula Theologica,* ed. Claudio Moreschini, BT, München – Leipzig: K. G. Saur 2005.

[7] *DCP* III, pr. 9, 94-95 *uti in Timaeo Platoni... nostro placet*

The cosmological summary in *DCP* III, verse 9 deals with the dynamic-logical causal principles underlying the structure of reality in the manner typical of post-Plotinian thought. Given a hierarchical relationship between any cause and its effect or product, causation involves an initial "remaining" constituting stability or identity between cause and effect, followed by a "procession" or motion of differentiation between cause and effect, and followed by a "reversion" or motion of assimilation between cause and effect. Boethius refers to the first moment by speaking of the Father of the cosmos as "remaining stable" (*stabilis manens*),[8] to the second by describing him as "ordering to go" (*ire iubere*), as "conferring motion on all things" (*dare cuncta moveri*), and as "leading all things from a higher paradigm" (*cuncta superno ducere ab exemplo*),[9] and to the third by speaking of him as "making things return towards him" (*conversas facere reverti*).[10]

DCP III, verse 9 where the cause is God (or *a* god)[11] and the effects or products are souls and physical objects, and where the dynamic aspects of the remaining, procession, and reversion are most prominent should be compared with two further texts in which the logical aspects of the remaining, procession, and reversion are also apparent. The first text is *DCP* IV, prose 6 where the cause is Providence and the effect or product is Fate. At one point in this argument, Boethius speaks of the first moment by observing that the unity of Providence and the multiplicity of Fate are in a certain sense "identical" (*eadem*), and of the second by observing that this unity and multiplicity are "different" (*diversa*) although "one depends on the other" (*alterum pendet ex altero*).[12] The second text is *DCP* IV, verse 6 where the cause is the Creator God (or *a* producing god) and the effects or products are created things in general. Towards the end of this verse, Boethius speaks of the third moment by noting that things have continuance only to the extent that they exhibit a "shared" (*communis*) love whereby they flow back to the cause that gave them being with a return of that love.[13]

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[8] *DCP* III, m. 9, 3.
[9] *DCP* III, m. 9, 3, 6-7.
[10] *DCP* III, m. 9, 21. The reference here is specifically to souls.
[11] The interpretation adopted here would depend on the extent to which Boethius is seen as continuing to speak within the register of Plato's teaching – referring to the "Demiurge" (*dēmiourgos*) of the *Timaeus* – or already modifying the latter in the direction of Christian monotheism.
[12] *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 34-42.
[13] *DCP* IV, m. 6, 44-48.

The cosmological summary of *DCP* III, verse 9 adopts a kind of post-Plotinian interpretation of the structure of reality itself that is underpinned by the dynamic-logical causal principles described.[14] According to this viewpoint, there is a hierarchical order of terms comprising God (or *a* god), Soul and souls, Body and bodies, and Matter – the first three terms presumably being substantial in character – and in this hierarchy God (or *a* god) is the cause of all the subsequent terms,   Boethius refers to this god as the "Father" (*pater*) who has an unspecified but intimate relation to the Good.[15]   He is characterized as "the instantiated Form of the supreme Good" (*insita summi forma boni*) and perhaps as himself the "fount of goodness" (*fons boni*).[16] The writer also refers to this paternal god's unspecified but intimate relation to intellect and reason. He is characterized as "the deep Mind" (*mens profunda*) and as the one who "governs all things with reason" – perhaps *"his* reason" -- (*ratione gubernare*) and "sustains things with mind" – perhaps "*his* mind" -- (*mente gerere*).[17] Boethius further refers to this paternal god's unspecified but intimate relation to the paradigm by speaking of him as "leading things from the exemplar" (*ducere ab exemplo*).[18] The metaphysical characterizations of Soul, Body, and Matter are less detailed. Soul is characterized either singly as "the mediate soul of threefold nature" (*triplicis media naturae anima*) or collectively as "souls and lesser lives" (*animae vitaeque minores*),[19] whereas Body and Matter appear in the text as "the elements" (*elementa*) and as "flowing matter" (*materia fluitans*) respectively.[20]

It is perhaps only because Boethius' dependence on Proclus has been established beyond reasonable doubt with respect to both the doctrine of Providence and Fate in *DCP* IV, prose 6 and the teaching regarding Love in *DCP* IV, verse 6 that we are really justified in treating the cosmology of *DCP* III, verse 9 as a summary not of Plato's

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[14] On the question of Boethius' dependence on the Latin tradition of Platonism (as represented by Calcidius, Macrobius, and Martianus Capella) see Béatrice Bakhouche, "Boèce et le Timée," in *Boèce et la Chaîne des Savoirs. Actes du Colloque International de la Fondation Singer-Polignac, Paris 8-12 juin 1999*, ed. A. Galonnier, Louvain-la-Neuve / Paris: Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie / Peeters 2003, pp. 5-22. For Boethius' dependence on the Greek tradition see below.
[15] *DCP* III, m. 9, 22.
[16] *DCP* III, m. 9, 5, 23.
[17] *DCP* III, m. 9, 1, 8, 16.
[18] *DCP* III, m. 9, 7.
[19] *DCP* III, m. 9, 13-14, 18.
[20] *DCP* III, m. 9, 5, 10.

Timaeus but of Proclus' commentary on that dialogue.[21] The dependence on the later Platonist explains the highly schematic presentation of the dynamic-logical causal principles underlying the structure of reality itself. However, the hierarchical order of terms underpinned by these dynamic-logical causal principles is much simpler than that assumed in Proclus' commentary. Here as elsewhere, Boethius seems to be reducing the complex hierarchy of his pagan source – where the Demiurge / Zeus is the third intellect of the intellectual order of gods, and is preceded by the One or Good and the higher divine orders and followed by the hyper-cosmic gods and the lower divine orders – to the simpler arrangement standardized in Augustine's writings.

2. Augustine: *De Genesi ad Litteram, Book IV* [22]

In book IV of *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Augustine outlines a theory of angelic cognition that is designed to explain the six days of creation. The theory is clearly inspired by certain Neoplatonic metaphysical ideas although, since it evolves strictly in response to certain problems of biblical exegesis, it is nowhere explicitly associated with either Plato or a later Platonist.

Augustine states the first exegetical problem as follows. Since the book of *Genesis* refers to an alternation of day and night before the making of the heavenly bodies on whose motion this alternation depends, the "day" referred to must correspond not to the movement of corporeal light around the earth but to the conversion of a spiritual light towards God.[23] The latter motion must represent the angels' reception of form. Moreover, since the sacred writer speaks of creation as having taken place in six of these days and as involving also the evening and morning of each day, the nature of the

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[21] The relationship between the two texts was correctly understood although perhaps not sufficiently demonstrated by Friedrich Klingner, *De Boethii consolatione philosophiae,* Berlin 1921, repr. Hildesheim: Weidmann 2005, p. 38-67. For further elaboration of the theory that Boethius is primarily dependent on Proclus for the Platonism of this hymn see Werner Beierwaltes, "Trost im Begriff. Zu Boethius' Hymnus 'O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas,'" in *Commentatio Fidei. Festschrift für Eugen Biser zum 65. Geburtstag,* eds. H. Bürkle, G. Becker, Regensburg: Pustet 1983, pp. 241-251. More recently, Jean-Luc Solère, "Bien, cercles et hebdomades. Formes et raisonnement chez Boèce et Proclus," in *Boèce ou la Chaîne des Savoirs* [n. 14], pp. 55-110 has argued persuasively for a more extended range of metaphysical and methodological parallels between Proclus and Boethius.

[22] [Augustinus] *De Genesi ad Litteram*, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL 28/1, Wien: Tempsky 1894.

[23] *DGAL* IV. 22. 39.

spiritual light's conversion must be specified according to some modalities corresponding to these phases. Augustine explains his theory in more detail with respect to the first three days.[24] The first day represents the angelic light's knowledge of itself received "from the Word of God" (*de verbo dei*), the evening of the first day the light's knowledge of itself "in its own nature" (*in natura ipsius*), and the morning of the second day the light's knowledge of itself "for the purpose of praising God" (*ad laudandum deum*).[25] The second day represents the angelic light's knowledge of the next thing in the order of creation received from the Word of God – *i.e.* the firmament --, the evening of the second day the light's knowledge of the firmament in the latter's own nature, and the morning of the third day the light's knowledge of the firmament for the purpose of praising God. The third day represents the angelic light's knowledge of the next thing in the order of creation received from the Word of God – *i.e* the water and dry land --, the evening of the third day the light's knowledge of the water and dry land in the latter's own nature, and the morning of the fourth day the light's knowledge of the water and dry land for the purpose of praising God.

The second exegetical problem arises from the fact that *Genesis* 1. 1-31 speaks of God as having created the world in six days whereas *Ecclesiasticus* 18. 1 speaks of him as having created all things together.[26] Augustine introduces this problem by considering a hypothetical objection to the effect that the angelic knowledge does not consist of three phases but grasps everything in simultaneity. Having granted that the angels themselves do have simultaneous cognition *at the present time*, he argues that their knowledge consisted of the three phases *at the time of creation*[27] on the grounds first, that there must be an "order" (*ordo*) and "connection" (*connexio*) among prior and posterior causes and secondly, that it is necessary that "things to be known" (*cognoscenda*) precede

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[24] See *DGAL* IV. 22. 39 for discussion of the second and third moments and for the first three days in the sixfold sequence. See *DGAL* IV. 24. 41, IV. 26. 43, IV. 29. 46, IV. 31. 48, IV. 32. 49-50 for summary statements of the three moments. I have combined these accounts in my paraphrase of Augustine's doctrine.

[25] At *DGAL* IV. 22. 39 Augustine further explains that the morning of each day is a "returning of the light" (*conversio lucis*) and at *DGAL* IV. 24. 41 that the evening of each day is a "looking downwards" (*insuper despicere*).

[26] *DGAL* IV. 33. 52.

[27] *DGAL* IV. 29. 46 and IV. 31. 48.

"knowledge" (*cognitio*).[28] In order to understand the account of creation in *Genesis*, we must therefore accept both the sequential and the simultaneous accounts of angelic knowledge as equally true: a position recommended by the fact that, if our vision seems to grasp a distant object in instantaneity although in reality executing a spatial and temporal movement, this will be even more true of our mind's gaze and the angelic knowledge.[29]

Augustine's explanation of the angelic knowledge of created things is a clever adaptation of pagan Neoplatonic doctrine. Whereas Plotinus had understood Intellect as a unity-in-multiplicity established with a tendency to turn towards the One, Augustine explains the collectivity of angelic minds as a unity-in-multiplicity created together with a tendency to turn towards God.[30] Of course, the significant shifts between the pagan and the Christian theory cannot be ignored. Whereas Plotinus distinguishes the sequential movement of Intellect with respect to the One from Intellect's simultaneous understanding of all its intelligible objects,[31] Augustine treats the sequential movements of the angelic minds as modalities of their simultaneous understanding of created things as such.

3. Augustine: *De Trinitate, Book IX* [32]

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[28] *DGAL* IV. 32. 49. There is a further argument that briefly alludes to Augustine's doctrine developed at *DGAL* II. 6. 10-II. 8. 19 to the effect that God's *temporal* creation of the world consists of four phases: 1. production of the things to be made in the Word, 2. production of the things to be made in angelic knowledge, 3. production of the things to be made in actuality, 4. God's satisfaction with his work The three phases of angelic knowledge therefore mirror and intersect with the four phases of actual creation.

[29] *DGAL* IV. 34. 54. At one point Augustine seems to go beyond advocating our acceptance of both the positions *a*. that the angels have sequential knowledge and *b*. that the angels have simultaneous knowledge to recommending our acceptance of the hypothesis *c*. that the angels themselves have *simultaneously sequential* knowledge. See *DGAL* IV. 33. 51-52 and IV. 35. 56. Position *c*. is supported with the analogy of evening and morning being at different times in different parts of the world. See *DGAL* IV. 30. 47

[30] The metaphysical character of Augustine's doctrine is shown unmistakably by his statement that creation takes place not in a corporeal circuit but "in spiritual knowledge" (*cognitione spiritali*), the entire process being according not to time but to "spiritual power" (*potentia spiritalis*). See *DGAL* IV. 26. 43 and IV. 32. 49.

[31] For example, see *Enn.* V. 1. 5, 3-19; V. 1. 6, 37-45; V. 2. 1, 5-11, for the former and *Enn.* V. 1. 4, 10-30; V. 1. 11, 5-13; V. 9. 5, 1-5 for the latter.

[32] [Augustinus] *De Trinitate*, eds. William J. Mountain and François Glorie, CCSL 50/50A, Turnhout: Brepols 1968.

Book IX of Augustine's *De Trinitate* is devoted to the study of the trinity of "mind" (*mens*), "knowledge" (*notitia*), and "love" (*amor*) in the human soul. Having stated at the outset that our faith in the higher Trinity must be the foundation for any understanding of the psychological Trinity,[33] Augustine argues that his earlier analysis of love as consisting of three terms: "lover" (*amans*), "beloved" (*quod amatur*), and "love" (*amor*) must be understood as applying not to the higher Trinity but to its inferior image, and also as applying not to something corporeal but to the mind itself.[34] He further argues that, since there are two things involved in the mind's loving of itself -- mind and love – and also two things involved in the mind's knowing of itself -- mind and knowledge --, there is a trinity of mind, knowledge, and love.[35] But here, love and knowledge are not in the mind as accidents in a substance, or as parts of a whole, or as components of a mixture. In the first case, they would not be able to extend as they do beyond the substance itself, in the second case, they would not be able to become as they do equal to the whole, and in the third case, they would not be able to maintain as they do their separate characters.[36] Thus, love and knowledge must be in the mind in some other manner that remains to be determined more precisely.

The task of determining the precise relation between mind, knowledge, and love is taken up in chapter 5 of *DT*, book IX which begins by stating that there is "no confusion by blending" (*nulla commixtione confundi*) among the terms. Augustine next argues that all of these terms "are both [*a*] "singly in themselves" (*singula in se ipsis*) and [*b*] "wholly in all the others" (*tota in totis*), and that [*b* 1] "each single term is in the other two" (*singula in binis*) and [*b* 2] "each pair of terms is in the other one" (*bina in singulis*). The manner in which each of the terms is "in" itself or "in" another is dependent on a kind of relative attribution. For example, according to *a.* there is mind "said in relation to itself" (*ad seipsam dici*) where there is simply mind. However, according to *b.* there is mind "said in relation to its knowledge" (*ad suam notitiam relative dici*) where there is a "knowing" (*noscens*) mind. Similarly, according to *b.* 1 there is mind "in both its love and knowledge" (*in amore et notitia sua*) where there is mind that "knows and loves

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[33] *DT* IX. 1. 1.
[34] *DT* IX. 2. 2.
[35] *DT* IX. 2. 2-4. 4.
[36] *DT* IX. 4. 5-7.

itself" (*se novit et amat*). However, according to *b*. 2 there is also mind, "together with its knowledge, in love" (*cum sua notitia in amore*) where the same mind "knows and loves itself" (*se novit et amat*). The chapter concludes by noting that each of the terms "is a substance" (*substantia est*), that all together constitute one substance or essence, and that each of the terms "is said relatively to the others" (*relative dici ad invicem*).[37]

Augustine does not associate the doctrine of mind, knowledge, and love that constitutes our third philosopheme with the teaching of any pagan Platonist, although he does elsewhere suggest that representatives of this philosophical tradition had partial illuminations regarding trinitarian doctrine. Undoubtedly some such assumption explains the striking parallel between Augustine's triad of mind, knowledge and love within the human mind and the Greek Neoplatonists' triad of "being" (*on*), "life" (*zōe*), and "intellect" (*nous*) within the hypostasis of Intellect The latter doctrine is frequently employed as a structural principle from Iamblichus onwards, having been seemingly first proposed in Porphyry's interpretation of the *Chaldaean Oracles*.[38] Augustine agrees with the Greek Neoplatonists in treating the three terms as simultaneously substances and relations in a manner transcending the normal usage of such terms, but disagrees with them in treating the three terms as having a consubstantiality of the type required by the Christian dogma of the Trinity.

4. Augustine: *De Vera Religione* [39]

In *De Vera Religione*, Augustine pursues a trinitarian analysis of created things in general in order to demonstrate, within the context of a detailed account of fall and redemption, the superiority of Christian over pagan doctrine. His analysis proceeds along unmistakably Neoplatonic lines although, since it is developed in the context of anti-pagan polemic, the influence of either Plato or any later Platonist over its formulation is not acknowledged.

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[37] *DT* IX. 5. 8.

[38] For detailed discussion of this question see Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, Paris: Études augustiniennes 1968, pp. 258-272.

[39] [Augustinus] *De Vera Religione,* ed. Klaus D. Daur, CCSL 32, Turnhout: Brepols 1962.

Having addressed the dedicatee Romanianus near the beginning of the treatise, Augustine explains how every intellectual, rational, and corporeal thing derives from the highest Trinity its "being to the degree that it is" (*esse inquantum est*), its "possession of its form" (*speciem suam habere*), and its "being governed in the most ordered way" (*ordinatissime administrari*).[40] In order to preclude a typical misunderstanding, he immediately adds that the Trinity simultaneously produces the three aspects of structure – the Father did not simply confer the first, the Son simply the second, and the Holy Spirit simply the third – while the creature simultaneously receives those three elements of composition.[41] Augustine then expands his initial statement by saying that each created thing derives from the highest Trinity the facts that it "is some unitary thing" (*unum aliquid sit*), that it "is distinguished from other things by its proper form" (*specie propria discernatur a ceteris*), and that it "does not exceed the order of things" (*rerum ordinem non excedat*).

The trinitarian analysis is developed further by discerning three aspects of God himself correlative with the three aspects of created things. In one passage, Augustine argues that any corporeal thing has a certain "harmony" (*concordia*) with respect to its parts and a certain "peace" (*pax*) with respect to its form or species, and that these aspects – the third and second in the original enumeration -- are derived from a principle which is "uncreated form" (*forma infabricata*) and is "most beautiful / formal" (*formosissima, speciosissimus*).[42] The relation between God and creation is further specified – adding the first aspect in the original enumeration – with the observation that the Creator is "one" (*unus*) and is the "first and highest being" (*prima atque summa essentia*) "in derivation from which" (*ex qua*) everything created "*is* to the degree that it is (exists)" (*est inquantum est*), and "*is good* to the degree that it is (exists)" (*inquantum est...bonum est*). Similar ideas are developed in two further passages. At one point, the three persons of the Trinity are discerned as "highest being" (*summe esse*), as "highest wisdom" (*summa sapientia*), and as "highest beneficence" (*summa benignitas*) respectively.[43] Augustine here focuses on the process of creating corporeal things by associating the first

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[40] *DVR* 7. 13.
[41] By speaking of the "simultaneity" (*simul*), Augustine is here precluding not only the temporal separation of the three persons' actions but also any kind of separation of those actions.
[42] *DVR* 11. 21-22. There is, of course, a word-play here: *forma→formosus, species→speciosus.*
[43] *DVR* 18. 35-19. 37.

person with the transition of such things from "nothingness" (*nihil*) to "being" (*esse*), the second person with their transition from "un-formed" (*informis*) to "form" (*forma*), and the third person with the "goodness" (*bonum*) inherent in both transitions. Elsewhere, the first two persons of the Trinity are discerned as "being" (*esse*) and "life / wisdom" (*vita, sapientia*) respectively. The focus here is again on the process of creating corporeal things by associating the first person with the "unity" (*unum)* that all things seek and the second person with the "rule / form / paradigm" (*regula, forma, exemplum*) by which all things are made, the relation between the first two persons having been further specified as that of "being" (*esse*) to its "likeness" (*similitudo*).[44]

Augustine's explanation of the trinitarian structure of created things is another skilful adaptation of pagan Neoplatonic doctrine. Whereas Plotinus had understood the relation between providence and contingency in terms of the operation of a triad of Intellect, Soul, and Logos, Augustine's explains the history of fall and redemption in terms of the operation of a triad of Being, Form, and Order, the derivation of the third term from both the first and the second being common to the two accounts.[45] Of course, there are significant shifts between the pagan and Christian theories. For Plotinus, the three terms constitute a hierarchy of distinct principles on the basis of which physical reality may be understood by human beings, whereas for Augustine they represent three aspects of a unitary godhead discerned by human beings through their reflection on the status of corporeal things.

5. Macrobius: *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* [46]

The fifth philosopheme is drawn from Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis.* At various points in his discussion, this writer presents a complete metaphysical doctrine of Neoplatonic provenance and also cites Plotinus as a unique

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[44] *DVR* 31. 57-58 with continuation at *DVR* 33. 61-36. 67.
[45] Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect, Soul, and Logos is stated in *Enneads* III. 2-III. 3 *On Providence.* The double derivation of the Logos is described at *Enn.* III. 2. 16, 1 ff.
[46] *Macrobe, Commentaire au Songe de Scipion, Livre I,* ed. and tr. Mireille Armisen-Marchetti, Paris: Les Belles Lettres 2001.

authority. The citation reads: "But Plotinus, the leader among teachers of philosophy alongside Plato, in his book *Concerning Virtues...*"[47]

The metaphysical doctrine concerned is that of the three hypostases which Macrobius usually names "the Highest God" (*summus deus*), "Mind" (*mens, nous*), and "Soul" (*anima*), each of these principles producing the next in sequence and Mind additionally producing and containing the "Forms / Ideas" (*species, ideae*).[48] The writer is careful to distinguish this later Platonic doctrine from that of Cicero – for example, where Cicero's understanding of the "highest god" as the celestial sphere[49] or his application of the term *animus* to both Mind and Soul[50] is contrasted with the corresponding usages implied in the three-principle theory – although he obviously holds that the later variety of Platonism provides a useful commentary on the earlier. Especially characteristic of Macrobius is his approach to the doctrine of three principles through numerology. For example, the "monad" (*monas*) can be applied to each of the principles in turn -- an interpretation that reveals the unity of the Highest God, and the co-presence of unity and multiplicity in both Mind and Soul, the multiplicity of the second and third principles being that of the Forms and of the animated universe respectively.[51] Moreover, the "number 5" (*quinarius numerus*) can be applied to the three principles when enumerated together with the celestial and terrestrial spheres.[52]

In one passage, Macrobius provides a detailed explanation of the doctrine of three hypostases in which both the structure of reality itself and the dynamic-logical principles underlying it are explained along Plotinian lines. According to this account, God produces Mind from himself with the "overflowing fertility of his power" (*superabundanti maiestatis fecunditate*). Mind, "as long as it contemplates its father" (*qua patrem inspicit*), preserves the complete likeness of its cause, but "when it turns towards lower things" (*posteriora respiciens*), produces Soul. Soul "as long as it contemplates its father" (*patrem qua intuetur*) is filled from him, but "when its vision is gradually diverted" (*paulatim regrediente respectu*), produces bodies. The same passage

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[47] *CISS* I. 8. 5 *sed Plotinus inter philosophiae professores cum Platone princeps libro De virtutibus..*
[48] *CISS* I. 2. 13-16; I. 6. 8-9; I. 6. 19-20, I. 14. 2-8, I. 14. 15. Cf. *CISS* I. 17. 12-15.
[49] *CISS* I. 17. 12.
[50] *CISS* I. 14. 2-8.
[51] *CISS* I. 6. 8-9. This mode of interpretation is said to be justified because the monad is itself derived from the first principle.
[52] *CISS* I. 6. 19-20.

further describes God as "unitary" (*unus*) and as the "first cause" (*prima causa*), and also characterizes Soul as having a double derivation. "From Mind" (*ex mente*) it derives the faculty of reasoning – which is its divine element – and "from its own nature" (*ex sua natura*), the faculties of sensation and growth.[53]

Elsewhere the doctrine of three hypostases is explained specifically from the viewpoint of our mode of expression. According to Macrobius, since the Highest God and Mind "transcend not only human language but also human thought" (*non sermonem tantum modo sed cogitationem quoque humanam superant*), any discourse regarding these things must resort to "analogies" (*similitudines*) and "models" (*exempla*).[54] When writing the present commentary, moreover, he is fairly consistent in applying this rule. In the same passage, he describes an analogical approach to the first principle – here called "the Good" (*tagathon*) in the manner of the Greeks. He reports that Plato held this principle to be "unknowable to man in its essential nature" (*sciri quale sit ab homine non posse*) and therefore referred to it by analogy with the sun. In a later passage, he fashions an analogical account of the interconnection of the three principles with one another. Here, the presence of a "single irradiation" (*unus fulgor*) is compared to the reflection of a single face in mirrors placed in a row, and the presence of a "single bond" (*una connexio*) to the golden chain of Homer.[55]

It can be established beyond reasonable doubt that Macrobius is dependent upon Porphyry's edition and commentary on Plotinus on the basis of the Latin writer's explicit citation with title of *Enneads* I. 1: *On the Animate and the Man*, I. 2: *On the Virtues*, I. 9: *On Suicide*, II. 1: *On the Heaven*, II. 2: *On the Motion of the Heaven*, and II. 3 *On Whether the Heavenly Bodies are Causes,* and also on the basis of exact verbal parallels between *CISS* I. 14. 6-7 and *Enneads* V. 2: *On the Origin and Order of Beings after the First*, and III. 4: *On the Demon Assigned to Us.*[56] However, Macrobius' treatment of the doctrine of the three hypostases in the last-mentioned passage of the *Commentarius*

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[53] *CISS* I. 14. 2-8.

[54] *CISS* I. 2. 13-16.

[55] *CISS* I. 14. 15.

[56] For a detailed discussion of the evidence regarding a textual relation between Macrobius and Plotinus see Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism* [n. 3], pp. 507-509, 518-520, and 543-546. A full discussion of the Platonic doctrine and sources of Macrobius can also be found in Maria Di Pasquale Barbanti, *Macrobio. Etica e psicologia nei "Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis"* Catania: C.U.E.C.M 1988. See especially pp. 60-84 on dream as myth and pp. 149-158 on the hypostasis of Soul.

simplifies Plotinus' teaching. In particular, Macrobius depicts Mind as producing Soul by turning towards the lower rather than towards the higher,[57] thereby bringing the dynamic structure of Mind into parallel with that of Soul. Plotinus and other Greek Neoplatonists avoided such a doctrine presumably on the grounds that it would introduce the possibility of moral defect into the intellectual sphere.

6. Boethius: *De Consolatione Philosophiae*

In *DCP* IV, pr. 6 we encounter a philosopheme of a distinctly Neoplatonic type that is neither explicitly attributed to Plato or a later Platonist nor assimilated fully into the context of Christian thought. In this text, where Boethius begins his discussion of providence and fate, the philosopheme of interest is not the two terms themselves but the relation between them. We will consider this relation in a manner that might be defined as "objective" or "ontological."

According to Boethius in this important text, providence is the divine reason that "enfolds" (*complectitur*) all things. Moreover, the same "unfolding" (*explicatio*) of mutable things to the extent that it is "unified" (*adunata*) in the divine reason represents providence and to the extent that it is "unfolded" (*explicata*) in the mutable sphere is called fate.[58] In addition to their status as providence and fate, that which is enfolded and that which is unfolded are characterized in a number of ways. First, the enfolded is intelligence, mind, and reason.[59] In addition, the enfolded is unity whereas the unfolded is multiplicity.[60] Moreover, the enfolded is "eternity" (*aeternitas*) and whatever "is seen in presence" (*praesentarie prospici*) whereas the unfolded is "time" (*tempus*) and whatever exhibits "temporal order" (*temporalis ordo*).[61] Again, the enfolded is "all together" (*pariter*) whereas the unfolded is whatever pervades "spaces / places" (*loci, spatia*).[62] Finally, the enfolded is infinite.[63]

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[57] See *CISS* I. 14. 6-7.
[58] *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 34-40.
[59] See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 23, 26, 30, 37, etc.
[60] See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 24-25, 45-47.
[61] See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 44-45, 75-76.
[62] See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 34-36, 66-67.
[63] This may be concluded from *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 34-35 where providence is said to enfold all things "albeit the infinite" (*quamvis infinita*).

In the same prose, the relation itself between the enfolded and the unfolded is described with considerable care. It is particularly important to note that, since "the same uniting as it is distributed" (*eadem vero adunatio digesta*) is fate,[64] the enfolded and the unfolded are not two completely different things. In the manner of Neoplatonic emanative causality, that which is unfolded "depends on" (*pendet*) that which is enfolded,[65] while everything that is "subject to" (*subesse, subiecta esse*) the unfolded is subject to the enfolded although the reverse is not the case.[66] Boethius somewhat allusively characterizes the relation that we are discussing as that between the "remaining" (*manere*) of what is enfolded and the "proceeding" (*procedere, proficisci*) of what is unfolded[67] – this being the point at which the doctrine of causality stated in *DCP* IV, pr. 6 is identified precisely with the doctrine articulated in *DCP* III, m. 9. Also in accordance with a Neoplatonic model, that which is unfolded "is more entangled" (*maioribus nexibus implicari*) by subordinate causes than that which is enfolded,[68] the enfolded being relatively "liberated from fate" (*fato liberum*).[69] Using the analogy of a rotating astronomical sphere, the enfolded may finally be considered as relating to the unfolded as "a certain pivot around which they turn" (*cardo quidam circa quem versentur*).[70]

Although Boethius considers the relation between providence and fate that yields our philosopheme of enfolding and unfolding in a context lacking specific reference to either pagan Platonism or Christian thought, modern scholarship has drawn attention to similar ideas in Proclus whose doctrines were known to Boethius either directly or through the mediation of an Aristotelian commentator such as Ammonius. In fact, it seems most likely that Proclus' treatises *De Decem Dubitationibus circa Providentiam* and *De Providentia et Fato* provided Boethius with the core of his argumentation in the final proses of *DCP*. With respect to the philosopheme of enfolding and unfolding one may usefully compare Proclus' references to the enfolding of the un-embodied and embodied

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[64] *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 38-39.
[65] *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 40-41.
[66] *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 57-60.
[67] See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 42, 84-88.
[68] *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 69-71.
[69] *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 71-72.
[70] *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 62-65.

souls in one another that reflects their freedom or lack thereof,[71] and to the unfolding of the power pre-existing in providence by things subject to providence according to their differing capacities.[72]

7. Augustine: *De Musica* VI [73]

A fundamental feature of most types of Platonism, and especially of Neoplatonism, is to understand reality as a form of transcendence. In late antiquity, philosophers in this tradition reveal a propensity to seek more extreme forms of transcendence and more intermediaries between the transcendence and the non-transcendent. Augustine provides many examples of these tendencies and nowhere more than in the sixth book of *De Musica*.

Our seventh philosopheme – which is not explicitly associated with either Plato or any later Platonist and seems like an original theory of Augustine – is the notion of seven levels of number. Since this doctrine is introduced as the culmination of a lengthy study of metrics, the "numbers" (*numeri*) involved here are of the nature of "times" (*tempora*),[74] although the temporal sphere is eventually transcended. The hierarchy of numbers is built up gradually in the course of the book and comprises:[75] *1.* "sounding" (*sonantes*) numbers or numbers in the sound of a verse that is recited,[76] *2.* "encountering" (*occursores*) numbers or those in the sense of someone who hears the verse, *3.* "progressive" (*progressores*) numbers or numbers in the action of someone who recites the verse, *4.* "recollective" (*recordabiles*) numbers or those in the memory of someone who recites the verse, *5.* "sensual" (*sensuales*) numbers or numbers that are evaluated according to sense,[77] *6.* "judicial" (*iudiciales*) numbers or those that are evaluated

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[71] Proclus, *DPF* 2. 4, 10-19 – Moerbeke's translation uses the term *complicatio* here.
[72] Proclus *DDD* 3. 10, 30-41.
[73] *Aurelius Augustinus, De musica liber VI,* ed. and tr. Martin Jacobsson, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell 2002.
[74] *DM* VI. 2. 2.
[75] See *DM* VI. 2. 2 for levels *1-4* of numbers; *DM* VI. 4. 5 and VI. 6. 16 for levels *1-5*: and *DM* VI. 9. 23-24 for levels *1-6*.
[76] These numbers are initially called "sounding" but later renamed "corporeal" (*corporales*). Cf. *DM* VI. 2. 2 and *DM* VI. 9. 24.
[77] These numbers are initially called "judicial" but later renamed "sensual" (*sensuales*). Cf. *DM* VI. 4. 5-6 and *DM* VI. 9. 24.

according to reason,[78] and *7.* "eternal" (*aeterni*) numbers or numbers that are given to the soul by God.[79]

However, the main concern of the present inquiry is not so much the types of number themselves but the types of transcendence that they imply. Augustine attempts to express this transcendence in a variety of ways, albeit without using a single technical term for "transcendence."..

In one set of passages, he establishes a distinction between a specific type of transcending and transcended term, and then applies this distinction to number. For instance, when the transcending term is identified with "that which makes" (*faciens*) and the transcended term with "that which is made" (*factum*), it is possible to argue that the judicial numbers are superior to the recollective numbers: an idea provisionally accepted by Augustine,[80] although one could also conclude that sounding numbers are superior to encountering numbers: a notion that he immediately rejects.[81] Elsewhere, the transcending term is identified with that which is "not in local or temporal spaces" (*non in spatiis locorum et temporum*) and the transcended term with that "in bodily forms or temporal intervals" (*in corporum formis...aut in temporum intervallis*),[82] so that Augustine can discuss the questions whether sensual numbers are immortal and numbers inferior to these mortal,[83] and whether judicial numbers are immortal and the numbers inferior to these mortal,[84] and then conclude that only the eternal numbers are completely immutable.[85]

In other passages, Augustine applies *two* levels of transcending and transcended term to the seven levels of number, the transcending term being either God with respect to soul or soul with respect to body.[86] Thus, sounding numbers are associated with body and

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[78] These numbers are initially called "judicial" but later renamed "rational" (*rationis*). Cf. *DM* VI. 9. 23 and *DM* VI. 11. 31.

[79] *DM* VI. 12. 34-36

[80] *DM* VI. 4. 6.

[81] *DM* VI. 4. 7. The rejection of this position is achieved by the elaboration of an active theory of sensation in *DM* VI. 4. 7-VI. 5. 12.

[82] *DM* VI. 12. 34. For the most part, transcendence of time is emphasized. However, transcendence of space and time is at issue in *DM* VI. 7. 19 and *DM* VI. 12. 34.

[83] *DM* VI. 7. 17-8. 20.

[84] *DM* VI. 9. 23.

[85] *DM* VI. 12. 36.

[86] For the hierarchy of God, Soul, Body see *DM* VI. 4. 7, VI. 5. 13-6. 16; for that of Soul and Body *DM* VI. 5. 8-12; for that of God and Soul see *DM* VI. 12. 36.

therefore placed below the encountering numbers (and by implication the numbers above the encountering) associated with soul,[87] the transcendence of the encountering numbers being established within an argument demonstrating the impassivity of soul with respect to body. Similarly, the eternal numbers are associated with God[88] and are therefore placed above the judicial numbers (and by implication the numbers below the judicial) associated with soul,[89] the transcendence of the eternal numbers being established within an argument demonstrating their uniquely introspective character.

In a further set of passages, Augustine explains the transcendence of certain types of number over certain other types through an analysis of their relative dependence on one another. For example, the processes of sense-perception are examined in order to determine which of the four lowest types of number are dependent on which others, and it is concluded provisionally that sounding numbers "can exist without" (*sine...esse posse*) encountering numbers, progressive numbers without encountering numbers, and recollective numbers without progressive numbers.[90] Elsewhere, the degree of our dependence on the sounding, encountering, progressive, and recollective numbers is determined not by the static relations between levels of reality that are assumed in the earlier stages of Augustine's discussion but by the extent of our movement away from God in the direction of body when making ethical choices.[91]

8. Boethius: *De Consolatione Philosophiae*

Another important philosopheme of a distinctly Neoplatonic type that is neither attributed explicitly to Plato or a later Platonist nor assimilated fully into the context of Christian thought occurs in *DCP* V, pr. 4-6. In these texts, where Boethius continues his discussion of providence and fate, the philosopheme of interest is again not the two terms

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[87] *DM* VI. 5. 8-12.
[88] However, they are not identical with God but given by God. In perceiving them the soul operates through its highest part: the "mind" (*mens*). See *DM* VI. 12. 35-36.
[89] *DM* VI. 11. 33-12. 36.
[90] *DM* VI. 2. 3-3. 4.
[91] *DM* VI. 13. 37-42.

themselves but the relation between them. We will now consider this relation in a manner that might be termed "subjective" or "epistemological."[92]

In *DCP* V, pr. 4, Boethius makes two statements of an axiomatic nature. The first is that everything known is comprehended not "according to its own power" (*secundum sui vim*) but "rather according to the power of those faculties that know it" *secundum cognoscentium potius...facultatem*).[93] The second is that "the superior power of comprehending embraces the inferior" (*superior comprehendendi vis amplectitur inferiorem*) whereas "the inferior in no way attains the superior" (*inferior vero ad superiorem nullo modo consurgit*).[94] Given that a standard hierarchy of faculties – in ascending order: "sense" (*sensus*), "imagination" (*imaginatio*), "reason" (*ratio*), and "intelligence" (*intellegentia*) – is assumed here and elsewhere,[95] Boethius can conclude from the two axioms that intelligence can, "formally beholding all things in the mind's single flash of intuition" (*illo uno ictu mentis formaliter...cuncta prospiciens*),[96] grasp the universal that is the proper object of reason, the visible shape that is the proper object of imagination, and the immanent form that is the proper object of sense.[97] On the other hand, sense cannot grasp the immaterial shape, nor imagination the universal, nor reason the simple Form.[98]

The same argument is applied to the distinction between the "divine mind" (*divina intellegentia / mens*) and "human reason" (*humana ratio*) in *DCP* V, pr. 5.[99] Since the divine mind can grasp the objects proper to the human reason although the reverse is not the case, human reason cannot comprehend, for example, how future events could be

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[92] That Boethius sees the discussion to be summarized in the next paragraphs as the "subjective" counterpart of the "objective" discussion examined earlier is indicated by his comments at *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 74-78 where the duality of *ratio / intellectus* parallels that of *fatum / providentia.*

[93] *DCP* V, pr. 4, 72-75. The same axiom is stated more briefly at *DCP* V, pr. 6, 1-3.

[94] *DCP* V, pr. 4, 89-91.

[95] Cf. *DCP* V, pr. 5, 12-20.

[96] Or "in the manner in which it comprehends the Form that could not be known by any other" (*eo modo quo formam ipsam, quae nulli alii nota esse poterat, comprehendit*). Cf. *DCP* V, pr. 4, 86-88 where the "eye of intelligence" (*intellegentiae oculus*) contemplates the simple Form "with the pure gaze of the mind" (*pura mentis acie*). Also cf. *DCP* V, pr. 5, 17-20.

[97] *DCP* V, pr. 4, 94-100. Similar arguments with respect to reason and imagination follow at *DCP* V. pr. 4, 101-111.

[98] *DCP* V, pr. 4, 91-93. Cf. *DCP* V, pr. 4, 5-7. For the epistemological consequences of this situation see *DCP* V, pr. 5, 21-37.

[99] *DCP* V, pr. 5, 38-39. At *DCP* V, pr. 5, 16-18 Boethius argues that intelligence is peculiar to God and reason peculiar to mankind. However, human reason does have some way of assimilating itself to the divine intelligence, as we shall see in the passages to be cited below.

observed in a manner different from that in which we observe them, or how there might be a certain fore-knowledge of events that have no certain outcome.[100] However, a remedy for this situation can be sought. According to Boethius, it is perhaps possible to overcome the restrictions imposed by the normal hierarchy of faculties by rising to the "height of the supreme intelligence" (*summae intellegentiae cacumen*) where human reason may see what it cannot see "in itself" (*in se*).[101] The attempt to carry out this project with special reference to the problem of future contingents fills the final pages of *De Consolatione Philosophiae.* .

Although Boethius considers the relation between providence and fate that yields our philosopheme of subjective determination in a context lacking specific reference to either pagan Platonism or Christian thought, modern scholarship has again drawn attention to parallels in Proclus' *opuscula* concerning providence and fate. Arguments in *De Decem Dubitationibus circa Providentiam* to the effect that knowledge in the knower is characterized according to the latter's essential nature,[102] that this principle applies to different faculties such as intellect, reason, imagination, ad sense,[103] and that the One knows all things according to its own proper nature can all be cited as significant illustrations of the philosopheme of subjective determination.[104]

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It is perhaps time to draw some general conclusions about the eight philosophemes that have been juxtaposed in order to formulate what we have termed the doctrine of first principles in Latin Neoplatonism. One might reasonably ask whether the implied conceptual unity of such a doctrine was apparent to the original writers and the earliest readers of such texts or is rather the product of a modern exegete's imagination. We will therefore conclude by looking briefly at what the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of the eight philosophemes tells us about the systematic character of the doctrine of first principles in Latin Neoplatonism.

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[100] *DCP* V, pr. 5, 38-54.
[101] *DCP* V, pr. 5, 48-50. The same point is made more briefly at *DCP* V, pr. 6, 3-5.
[102] Proclus, *DDD* 2. 7, 20-23.
[103] *DDD* 1. 3, 6-17.
[104] *DDD* 2. 7, 29-48.

Historically speaking, the doctrine stated in text *1* from Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* stands apart from the other philosophemes. Study of an extensive medieval glossing tradition shows that the ninth verse of book III was understood as a definitive statement – perhaps *the* definitive statement – of Boethius' philosophy. However, as a consequence of certain ambiguities in the text itself, two opposite ways of reading *De Consolatione Philosophiae* came into circulation.[105] According to one interpretation – represented by Remigius of Auxerre -- *DCP* III, verse 9 summarized a Christian doctrine of first principles also derivable from St. John's Gospel, the Pauline *Epistles*, and Augustine's *Genesis* commentaries.[106] According to the alternative reading – formulated by Bovo of Corvey – it was the Platonic doctrine of first principles also stated in Virgil's *Aeneid* book VI and in Macrobius that was encapsulated in this verse.[107]

All the other philosophemes play important roles in establishing the tradition of Platonism – a substantial part of which is formed by *Neo*-Platonism -- that is dominant between the ninth and twelfth centuries and revived in the period of transition into the Renaissance.

The work of Iohannes Scottus Eriugena during the ninth century exploits several of the Latin Neoplatonic doctrines that we have discussed. For example, philosopheme *2* from Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV reappears in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, book I where the angels' contemplation of the causes of all things in themselves is contrasted with their contemplation of them in God and in lower creatures, and is combined with Maximus the Confessor's doctrine of theophany.[108] Philosopheme *7* from Augustine's *De Musica*, book VI is exploited in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, book III where the human soul's handling of the images initially formed in the sensory instruments is

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[105] On this controversy see most recently Susanna E. Fischer, "Boethius Christianus sive Platonicus. Frühe mittelalterliche Kommentare zu *O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas*," *Boethius Christianus? Transformationen der* Consolatio Philosophiae *in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. R. F. Glei, N. Kaminski, F. Lebsanft, Berlin: De Gruyter 2010, pp. 157-177. On the reception of Boethius' Platonism more generally during the Carolingian era see also Adrian Papahagi, *Boethiana Mediaevalia. A Collection of Studies on the Early Medieval Fortune of Boethius'* Consolation of Philosophy, Bucharest: Zeta 2010, pp. 37-72.

[106] For a partial edition of this text see H. F. Stewart, "A Commentary by Remigius Autissiodorensis on the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius," *Journal of Theological Studies* 17, 1915-1916, pp. 22-42. See especially pp. 30-35.

[107] For a partial edition of this text see R. B. C. Huygens, "Mittelalterliche Kommentare zum 'O qui perpetua'," *Sacris Erudiri* 6, 1954, pp, 373-426. See especially pp. 383-384.

[108] Eriugena, *Periphyseon* I, 446A-451C in Eriugena, *Periphyseon,* ed. E. Jeauneau, CCCM 161-165, Turnhout: Brepols 1996-2003.

discussed in terms of eight distinct levels of number, and is combined with Gregory of Nyssa's theory of the relation between soul and body.[109]

Near the end of the eleventh century, the *Monologion* of Anselm of Canterbury attempts to demonstrate what is held by faith regarding the existence and the nature of God by using rational arguments. Trinitarian notions are introduced in a gradual manner and apparently without dependence on dogmatic assumptions in the course of this argumentation. Most prominent among these trinitarian notions is the ambivalently substantial and relational triad of mind, knowledge, and love derived from Augustine's *De Trinitate*, book IX that represented our philosopheme *3*.[110] Anselm goes beyond Augustine somewhat, in that his triad of mind, knowledge, and love is a formula applicable to the supreme principle itself as well as to that principle's image in the human soul.

In the early part of the twelfth century, the *Glosae super Macrobium* of William of Conches provide one of the most extensive elaborations of Latin Neoplatonic doctrine in general.[111] The hierarchy of the three hypostases of God, Mind, and Soul derived from Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* that represented our philosopheme *5* is mentioned frequently in these glosses, and the commentator is careful to explain the similarities and dissimilarities between the pagan triad and the Christian Trinity.[112] In dealing with Macrobius' application of the monad to the first principles, he notes that the manner in which Mind is born from God is for us to believe rather than to prove, and that the identity between God and Mind allows us to refer the monad to both.[113] He also notes that Soul has been identified with the Holy Spirit by certain people, and that its relation to the prior term intimates a procession *ab utroque*.[114]

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[109] Eriugena, *Periph.* III, 731B-732A, ed. cit. For a detailed discussion of this material see Gersh, *Concord in Discourse. Harmonics and Semiotics in Late Classical and Early Medieval Platonism* [n. 5], pp. 97-103.
[110] Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* chs. 48. 63. 12-63, 74. 27 in *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia*, 1, ed. F. S. Schmitt, Seckau-Rome-Edinburgh: Nelson 1938-1961, repr. Bad Canstatt 1968. In actual fact, Anselm concentrates on the similar psychological trinity of memory, understanding, and love also drawn from Augustine.
[111] On the influence of the Macrobian in the eleventh and twelfth centuries see most recently Irene Caiazzo, *Lectures médiévales de Macrobe. Les Glosae Colonienses super Macrobium. Étude et édition*, Paris: Vrin 2002, pp. 27-85.
[112] For a partial edition of these glosses see Helen R. Lemay, *The Doctrine of the Trinity in William of Conches' "Glosses on Macrobius,"* Diss. Columbia University 1972.
[113] 1A, 3A, *ed. cit.*
[114] 3A, 6A, *ed. cit.*

The work of Thierry of Chartres during the twelfth century also exploits several of the Latin Neoplatonic doctrines that we have discussed. Thus, philosopheme *6* stated in Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, book IV, prose 6 reappears in Thierry's *Lectiones in Boethii De Trinitate* where the distinction between the enfolding and unfolding of all things is applied both to the distinction between God and the projection of his Forms and to that between Matter and the derivation of sensible things.[115] A more elaborate development of the same doctrine occurs in Nicholas of Cusa's *De Docta Ignorantia.*[116] Philosopheme *8* stated in *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, book V, proses 4-6 also reappears in Thierry of Chartres' *Lectiones* where the comprehension of things known according to the faculty of the knower is employed as the basis for distinguishing between the cognitive objects of theology, mathematics, and physics.[117] Nicholas of Cusa's *Idiota de Mente* includes a more extensive development of the same doctrine.[118] Finally, the doctrine stated in text *4* from Augustine's *De Vera Religione*, although not repeated precisely in the Latin Church Father's terms, underpins the trinitarian cosmology of the entire Thierrian corpus.

These examples drawn from the philosophical tradition between the ninth and fifteenth centuries constitute a modest sampling of the uses to which the eight philosophemes have been put by medieval thinkers. However, the chosen examples are perhaps sufficient to show that the eight philosophemes established the architectural foundations of a continuous tradition of philosophical reflection in the Neoplatonic manner. Now, even in conceding the usefulness of the analyses of the individual philosophemes studied in this essay, it is possible to raise at least two objections to the method that we have pursued as a whole,[119] and we should perhaps conclude by

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[115] Thierry of Chartres, *Lectiones in Boethii De Trinitate* 2. 10, 157. 8-158. 16 in *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and his School*, ed. Nikolaus M. Häring, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 1971.

[116] See Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia* II. 9, 91. 18-93. 3 in *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia. Iussu et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis,* 1, ed. E. Hoffmann and R. Klibansky, Leipzig: Meiner 1932.

[117] Thierry of Chartres, *Lect.* 2. 30, 164. 58-2. 33, 166. 2, *ed. cit.*

[118] See Nicholas of Cusa, *Idiota de Mente* 7, 100. 1-107. 14 in *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* 5, ed. L. Baur and R. Steiger, Hamburg: Meiner 1983.

[119] A third objection is perhaps less serious. This would be that the present essay has treated non-Christian and Christian authors as being on the same footing – a position which might be valid with respect to authors of the twelfth but hardly with respect to authors of the fifth century. In response to this objection, one should point out that the Latin Neoplatonic "system" has been constructed from *philosoph*emes and not

considering the possible weight of such objections. The first likely objection would be that there is no single medieval thinker who can be shown explicitly to employ all eight philosophemes in the elaboration of his doctrine. The response to this objection would be that the "system" of Latin Neoplatonism whose existence has been posited by the present author takes the form of a family resemblance rather than that of a Platonic-Aristotelian universal. Therefore, the presence of certain philosophemes in one set of authors, other philosophemes in another set, and various philosophemes in both sets in no way diminishes the validity of the notion of a "system" of Latin Neoplatonism as a hermeneutic device. The second likely objection would be that the isolation of precisely these philosophemes depends on a retrospective reading of the late ancient milieu from the horizon of medieval philosophy. To this objection the response would be that the Latin Neoplatonic "system" whose significance has been emphasized in the present essay was intended to be seen as a dynamic historical trajectory rather than a static conceptual paradigm from the start. Therefore, the dependence of the eight philosophemes on the active process in which readers respond to writers and in that very fact become writers in their turn, likewise fails to limit the validity of the notion of a system of Latin Neoplatonism as a hermeneutic device. Indeed, one could argue on both these counts that the late ancient and medieval authors themselves, irrespective of the different theoretical position that might have followed from their understanding of themselves as Christian thinkers informed by the Platonic tradition, *in practice* handled their own sources somewhat along the lines argued by this essay.[120]

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*theolog*emes, and that writers such as Augustine and Boethius knew perfectly well that they were arguing "philosophically" (*i.e.* dependent on philosophical sources) in the contexts described in this essay.

[120] I am grateful to various colleagues (and especially to Claudio Moreschini and Lodi Nauta) who raised questions of the kind discussed in our final paragraph in response to both an oral and a written presentation of this text.