

# Augustine and the Philosophers

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## I Introduction

Because of the immensity of Augustine's corpus and the complex intellectual patrimony that informs it, attempts to place him within the history of philosophical traditions are often partial and in need of supplementation. In treating below of Augustine's engagement with Aristotelianism, Middle Platonism, Neoplatonism, and Stoicism, I shall be drawing attention to particular topics, lexical points, and philosophical arguments that have not received much attention in the literature up to this point, despite their centrality to Augustine's own philosophical interests.

Discovery of the new philosophical material I present here is possible thanks to the use of a method only recently beginning to gain currency: that of looking for philosophical arguments and developments in Augustine's sermons and other exegetical texts (see e.g. Atkins and Dodaro 2001: xi–xii; Byers 2003: 433–4). In the past, philosophical scholarship on Augustine has treated the genre of a text as indicative of its discipline, an approach that has resulted in a fairly strict separation of philosophical research from rhetorical, “theological,” or “pastoral” texts (this approach relies on methodological assumptions more appropriate to medieval scholasticism than to Augustine). In contrast, the alternative “integrative” method employed here yields a more complete picture of Augustine's relationship to various philosophical traditions. The reliability of this method is clear from the fact that its results cohere with what Augustine says on the same topics in his other, more systematic or straightforwardly philosophical works, as we shall see below. Thus the new claims here do not concern whom Augustine read (Plotinus in the translation of Victorinus or someone of similar interests and abilities, Apuleius, Cicero, Varro, Gellius, and Seneca), but rather to what degree he assimilated what he read. We turn first to what is perhaps the most controversial question, that of Augustine's Aristotelianism.

## 2 Augustine the Aristotelian? Soul and Body

The inclusion of Aristotelianism might seem peculiar, given Augustine's (somewhat caricatured) common reputation as a Platonist and the fact that he does not mention having read anything of Aristotle except the *Categories* – which, though he did not reject the ten Aristotelian categories themselves as valid tools for describing corporeal things, did not help him to discover the truth about the most important thing, namely God, who is immaterial (*Conf.* 4.16.28). Yet certain hallmarks of Aristotle's natural philosophy and ethics can be detected in Augustine's work, as has been occasionally noted in the literature (Hadot 2005: 127–8; Chappell 1995: 160–2; Brown 1993: 473, 468–9; Mann 1987: 29–30). He had access to Aristotelian ideas through Varro's syncretized presentations of the “ancients,” as well as through Neoplatonism. With regard to the topics treated in this section, philological and conceptual similarities suggest the influence of Plotinus in particular as a conduit for Aristotelian ideas. (On the larger question of the respective influence upon Augustine of Plotinus and Porphyry, see the overview and recent argument in favor of Plotinus advanced by Rist 1996: 405–7.)

The focus of our attention here will be the extent to which Augustine assimilated the Aristotelian notion of soul as a biological explanans. Recent literature on antiquity and the Middle Ages has seen a preponderance of studies on attitudes toward the body, yet certain aspects of Augustine's philosophical position on the soul–body relationship have not received the attention they deserve. Augustine has been compared to Descartes (Matthews 1992, 1999), who famously rejected the Aristotelian concept of soul as the form and life force of the body, adopting instead an account of soul as mind. Similarly, a reading of Augustine as an ancient “dualist” would assign to him the position of Plato's *Phaedo*, wherein the body is a thing from which the soul longs to escape, rather than a natural concomitant of the body. Though Matthews sometimes flags Augustine's un-Cartesian claim that the soul animates the body (Matthews 1999: 229), almost no notice has been taken of the numerous passages wherein Augustine claims that the soul provides the *form* for the body – a claim the *locus classicus* for which is Aristotle. Hölscher briefly mentions a few of these passages (without reference to Aristotelianism), in a work devoted to phenomenological arguments for the immateriality of the soul (Hölscher 1986: 36); but Augustine still continues to be associated with Platonic dualists and pluralists, who held that the human being has multiple forms and is, in virtue of soul, akin to angels rather than to embodied animals (see O'Callaghan 2007: 119–22). A more comprehensive investigation of Augustine's philosophical position on the body's role in personal identity is therefore in order.

Reviewing Aristotle's arguments for the claim that the soul is the life and form of the body will prepare us to turn to the texts of Augustine himself. In Book 2 of *De anima*, Aristotle contends that the life of all living bodies must be attributed to something other than the material of the body itself (*sōma*), for otherwise there would be no way to account for the difference between an inanimate body and an animate one. Why should one have life and the other not, if the life of the body is itself body? There must be something added to a body that makes it alive, something called the life principle or “soul” (*psychē*; see *An.* 2.1, 412<sup>a</sup>15–20; 2.2, 413<sup>a</sup>20–5, 414<sup>a</sup>15–20). Thus far Aristotle is saying no more than Plato did (the “psychological principle” is a Platonic one; see Gerson 2005: 261); but he goes further. He observes that the life and organization of a body are correlative: when something dies (loses its life), it immediately begins to decompose, becoming a heap of pieces rather than an organized, unified entity; conversely, the radical disarrangement of its

body will cause the death of an organism. He concludes that something's life and its organization as a unified whole, that is, its "form" (*morphē*, *schēma*, *eidos*: *An.* 2.1, 412<sup>a</sup>8, 2.2, 414<sup>a</sup>9 (*morphē*); 2.1, 412<sup>b</sup>5–10 (*schēma*); 2.2, 414<sup>a</sup>15–20 (*eidos*)), must have the same principle. Thus "the soul is the life and form of the body": soul causes metabolism in the organism, a self-induced alteration ("self-motion": *to zōon auto phamen heauto kinein*, *Physics* 8.2, 252<sup>b</sup>22–3; cf. 8.4, 254<sup>b</sup>14–15, 8.6, 259<sup>b</sup>2–3), and causes the organism to be constituted in a certain structure (*An.* 2.2, 413<sup>a</sup>30–413<sup>b</sup>1; 2.4, 415<sup>b</sup>10–15; see Byers 2006a: 730–5).

An additional argument in the *De anima*, which will also serve us in considering Augustine's position, turns on the distinction between "potentiality," possibility or indeterminateness (*dynamis*) and "actuality," full reality or completeness (*entelecheia* or *energeia*). Matter is by definition potentiality (having the ability to be molded into any structure), and form is actuality (that which makes matter actually subsist as some particular kind of thing, that is, as an entity having an essence (*ousia*); so *An.* 2.1, 412<sup>b</sup>10–15; 2.2, 414<sup>a</sup>15–20). Since no bodily substance could exist unless it were composed of both form and matter, and since, as we have already seen, soul is distinct from the matter of the body but identical with the life of the body, soul or life must be the actuality or form in the living substance, that which accounts for the concrete existence of any member of a given biological species (see *An.* 2.1, 412<sup>a</sup>15–23; 2.2, 414<sup>a</sup>15–28). Since loss of life is loss of form – of that by virtue of which a thing is the kind of thing that it is – at death an organism ceases to exist as the kind of thing that it was; thus Aristotle famously claimed that "a dead hand is not a hand" (see *Metaphysica* 7.11, 1036<sup>b</sup>30–5; *Meteorologica* 4.12, 389<sup>b</sup>30–390<sup>a</sup>20).

Augustine shows awareness of both argumentative approaches just outlined. The following portion of his second sermon on Psalm 113, for instance, relies on the first of these, the insight that life and form are correlative for organisms. He uses it to solve the riddle of why anyone would believe that statues of the gods are inhabited by gods themselves; the ridiculousness of this idea, it seems to him, would be obvious to any child. It must be because, in the natural world, the arrangement of bodily parts (*species membrorum*) is always accompanied by vital motion (*vitalis motus*). In other words, because a statue has form, people are wooed into the mistake of believing that a statue also has life. Since the statues are manifestly not everyday living things such as plants, animals, or humans, people find it plausible to infer the existence of some other kind of life in them, namely living pagan gods. People would not mistakenly believe that statues have live gods in them, except that

the form of the limbs, which they have seen to be naturally endued with life in living beings, and which we are accustomed to perceive in ourselves [...] when it has begun to be adored and honored by the multitude, produces in each man a very perverse and deceptive feeling, so that, since he does not find [natural] vital motion [in that arrangement of limbs], he believes there to be a hidden deity [...] he does not think that the image, which is like a living body, is without a living inhabitant, [since he is] being seduced by its form. (*En. Ps.* 113(2).3; trans. Wilkins 1853, adapted)

This point – that life and form are correlative in living beings – is one that Augustine insists upon in many texts, dating from throughout his career. The body remains in its form through its life, he says (*Vera rel.* 11.22: *quantulumcumque manet in specie [corpus], per vitam manet*). Living things have intrinsic efficient causes, which are not only the natural

forms of bodies, but also the animating principles of living things (*Civ. Dei* 12.26: *intrinsicus efficientes causas habet [...] quae non solum naturales corporum species, verum etiam ipsas animantium animas*). The soul holds the body together, preventing it from being dissolved; the soul gives motion through form, and because of this the body is established in a well-proportioned framework of members (*C. ep. Man.* 31.34: *illa [anima] contineret, hoc [corpus] non deflueret; illa moveret in numeros, hoc numerosa membrorum compagine constabiliretur*; cf. 34.37). “Motion” in this last quotation should be taken to refer to nourishment and the resulting growth of the body, and thus it bears comparison with Aristotle’s “self-motion.” We know this because in other texts Augustine speaks of the form (*forma, species*) of the body in connection with the fact that the body is nurtured (*nutritur*), and he makes the internal motion of metabolism and growth the hallmark of the presence of soul, together with other non-intentional life functions such as the growth of hair and nails (*Gen. litt.* 7.16.22, cf. 6.13.24; *C. ep. Man.* 40.46). As we have already seen, this is Aristotle (and compare Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.1.3 l. 26).

When it comes to the actuality–potentiality conception of the soul–body relationship, we can see that Augustine makes use of it, even though he rarely, if ever, uses a technical term for full reality or actuality (*energeia* or *entelecheia*). This is *prima facie* somewhat odd, given that he has a term for potentiality (*potentia*) and that he repeatedly echoes passages of Plotinus containing the term *energeia*, without reproducing the term itself. However, discomfort with the term *entelecheia* among late Latin writers was evidently widespread, and Augustine’s handling of *energeia* at least matches Jerome’s.

Be that as it may, Augustine clearly thinks of the soul as the form that accounts for the actual existence of the bodily organism, as Aristotle did. Soul, we are told, is an efficacious force that prevents the body from lacking form (*species*), by virtue of which it is, insofar as it is (*Imm. an.* 8.14: *qua est in quantum cumque est*; cf. 15.24, *C. Fort.* 14, *C. ep. Man.* 30.33, *Vera rel.* 20.40); and time after time Augustine insists that the form provided by the soul is the *sine qua non* of the existence of the body: the body would not come to be at all, unless it received form through the soul (*Imm. an.* 16.25: *corpus enim nullum fit, nisi accipiendo per animam speciem*; cf. *Imm. an.* 15.24, *Vera rel.* 11.21, *C. ep. Man.* 30.33, *Sol.* 2.18.32). Finally, he asserts the correlation of life, form, and actual existence along the lines of “a dead hand is not a hand”:

Let the body begin to be corrupted; let its whole condition be enfeebled, let its vigor languish, its strength decay, its beauty be defaced, its framework be sundered, the consistency of its parts give way and go to pieces; and let one ask now where the body is tending in this corruption, whether to existence or non-existence [...] to the extent to which something is corrupted, to that extent it approaches decease. But whatever tends to decease tends to non-existence. (*C. ep. Man.* 40.46; trans. Stothert, NPNF I.4, adapted)

Notice that Augustine’s use of this latter argumentative approach particularly rules out his being a body–soul dualist. This is true despite the fact that it is from Plotinus that Augustine seems to have gotten all three Aristotelian claims about soul’s relation to body mentioned above (see e.g. *Enn.* 2.1.3 ll. 24–6; 2.4.2 l. 11; 4.3.10 ll. 10–19, ll. 36–9; 4.7.1 l. 16, l. 23; 4.7.2 ll. 5–6; 4.7.2 l. 21; 4.7.3 ll. 14–28; 4.7.8a ll. 30–3; 5.9.2 ll. 16–18). This point requires some amplification.

Plotinus sees himself as “correcting” Aristotle on one major point: he argues that soul itself is a substance, whereas Aristotle, though allowing that the intellect might subsist without the body (*An.* 2.1, 413<sup>a</sup>5–10; 2.2, 413<sup>b</sup>24–30), had not argued that the soul in

which intellect resides is a substance. Plotinus consequently accuses the Peripatetic position (though not by name) of having made the soul dependent on and inseparable from the body (*Enn.* 4.7.8e). We should therefore ask to what extent Augustine can be “really” Aristotelian, given this medium of transmission.

When Augustine agrees with Plotinus that the rational soul is a substance (*animus substantia est*) and not simply something reducible to the organization that happens to reside in the human body (*Imm. an.* 2.2, 10.17), this agreement does not philosophically force him (nor does it force Plotinus) into a dualist position along the lines of Plato’s *Phaedo*. A dualist position would require that the body be a substance. But Augustine expressly denies that the body is a substance when he insists that the body only has form and existence through the soul. The body cannot exist through itself, so it is not a substance. (This understanding of substance, or existent thing, is given in Aristotle’s *Categories*, and Augustine himself routinely uses those categories for describing the material world.) Hence Augustine’s assertion that human soul and body together make one substance, *homo* (*Civ. Dei* 15.7: *Homo est substantia rationalis, constans ex animo et corpore*) means that soul is a substance and the body itself is not. (Compare a related discussion in Rist 1994: 97–104, 108–12.) A human being is a single substance that is a body–soul compound, because “the body” is simply a name for matter that is enlivened and structured by a soul. This means, of course, that body is for Augustine an accident of the soul, but it is not “merely accidental” to the human being, because it is a *proper* accident of the soul; the soul has a natural desire to form matter into a body, and so death, the separation of soul from body, is unnatural.

Here it is perhaps important also to flag an erroneous “definition” of dualism. A view that says that the soul can survive the death of the body (as Augustine holds) is not by definition a dualist view. Rather, a dualist view is a metaphysical claim that soul and body are two distinctly existing things, conjoined. Now dualism would *imply* that the soul can survive the body. But, as we have seen, it would also imply that the body could survive the soul, which Augustine denies.

Finally, in one important respect, the attitude of Augustine is more like that of Aristotle than like that of Plotinus. In Augustine we find a fascination with biology. He obviously enjoys studying natural processes, such as the metabolism of trees, as an end in itself (see e.g. *Gen. litt.* 5.23.44), and he describes in great detail the ways in which the objects and living things of this physical world are *admirabilia* because they possess form and self-nutrition – he does so especially against the Manichean position, which asserts the existence of absolutely bad realms, having absolutely bad inhabitants (e.g. *C. ep. Man.* 30.33–31.34, 33.36–35.39). Plotinus’ attitude toward individual soul–body complexes, on the other hand, is typically negative or bored. He either highlights the lamentable fact that matter “buries” and eventually overtakes form with its chaotic nature, leading to a dissolution of structure (see e.g. *Enn.* 1.8.8 ll. 18–27), or else he shifts quickly to speaking about the World Soul’s activity of providing form and life throughout the cosmos (*Enn.* 5.9.3 ll. 18–37; 4.3.10 ll. 18–37; 4.3.11 ll. 13ff.; 4.4.37 ll. 11ff.). We should note, too, that Augustine’s enthusiasm here distinguishes him even from more mundanely minded authors such as Pliny, whose *Natural History* has a practical bent, or Seneca, whose occasional reference to trees taking in moisture through their roots does not compare for detail or philosophical probity (*Quaestiones naturales* 3.11.4).

Thus, while Augustine’s account is not identical to Aristotle’s, it is more similar to it than it is to Platonic and Cartesian dualism. Furthermore, it is more similar to

Aristotelianism than it is to Plotinus' view in one respect, despite the lexical evidence that Plotinus is often Augustine's proximate source for Aristotelian ideas about soul.

### 3 Neo-Platonism: God and the Forms

The question of how Augustine understood the relation between Plotinus' account of a tritheistic hierarchy and the trinitarianism of his own *De trinitate*, according to which the three persons are co-equal in essence, is still under discussion in the secondary literature (Gorman 2005; King 2005). A passage of the *De Genesi ad litteram* (*On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis*), which has not yet been brought to bear on the question, suggests a speculative argument from reason (rather than Scripture) for why he would have considered his trinitarian account metaphysically superior to Plotinian subordinationism. Though the entire argument is not explicit in the passage, it is one that he would have accepted, because it rests upon principles that he held, some of which are brought to mind by the passage. Given the lack of an explicitly developed argument, my aim here is to show how certain passages in Augustine lend themselves to the kind of speculative philosophy that he himself enjoyed, rather than simply exposing his words and meaning. Before beginning that task, however, we should briefly contextualize it by attending to the main features of Plotinus' account.

Plotinus' "placement" of the Forms within the second god of a tritheistic hierarchy, divine Intellect, marks an important philosophical improvement over Plato's account. Although Plato's Forms were each supposed to be perfect, intelligible, incorporeal, immutable, and independent of the mutable world, their intelligibility in fact left them merely potential – merely able to be understood – rather than eternally actually understood. This precludes their alleged perfection, if we accept Aristotle's later claim that potentiality is inferior to actuality (see e.g. *Met.* 9.8). Plotinus, who does accept Aristotle's insight, resolves this conflict between the attributes of perfection and intelligibility by making the Forms eternally actually understood, the "contents" of a divine Nous. As he puts it, "we must assume that the First Realities are actual and without deficiencies and perfect" (*dei ta prōta energeiāi tithesthai kai aprosdea kai teleia*; *Enn.* 5.9.4 ll. 7–8; trans. Armstrong 1984); consequently, in his revised theory of the Forms, "the active actuality of thinking is in the Real Beings" (*Enn.* 5.9.8 l. 13: *tēn de energeian kai tēn noēsin epi tois ousin*; cf. 5.9.10 l. 14). The Forms have the same attributes enumerated by Plato (see *Enn.* 5.9.5 ll. 43–6), except that they are no longer simply intelligible, but a kind of intelligence (5.9.5 ll. 45–6).

Above Intellect, Plotinus postulated the Good, now clearly separated out from the other Forms and called the One. It is intelligent – as it must be, if it is to be superior to Intellect. Its understanding of itself, however, is simple and unitary, rather than composed of multiple concepts, as Intellect is (e.g. *Enn.* 5.4.2 ll. 3–19; 6.7.15 ll. 20–2; 6.7.16 ll. 10–13; 3.9.9 *passim*; 5.1.7 ll. 17–24; 5.3.13 ll. 6ff.). This conceptualization, by virtue of which Intellect is separated from the One, is a generation in which the One "makes" (*poiein*) Intellect (*Enn.* 5.3.17 ll. 1–4). Below Intellect is the Soul principle, also immutable, the mediating source of life, of form, and of the "laws of physics" in the mutable cosmos (see e.g. *Enn.* 3.8.1–7).

It should be noted that, according to a principle of classical metaphysics common to Plato and Aristotle and accepted also by Augustine, in Plotinus' schema each god should be essentially distinct from the other; for otherwise there will be no way to

individuate them. Matter could individuate two beings having the same essence, for then they would be distinct by virtue of their distinct material (so e.g. Arist. *Met.* 12.8, 1074<sup>a</sup>31–5; cf. Plot. *Enn.* 2.4.4–5 and Aug. *Trin.* 7.6.11 on matter as individuating), but the One and Intellect do not have matter. Individuation here must take place by way of essence.

Let us see how Plotinus describes this essential difference in the case of the first two hypostases, the One/Good and Intellect. The distinction between the One and Intellect is said to be that between unity and plurality, as already mentioned: “from the Good himself who is one there were many for this Intellect; for it was unable to hold the power which it received and broke it up and made the one power many, that it might be able so to bear it part by part” (*Enn.* 6.7.15 ll. 20–2). Thus Plotinus assumes a sort of prism between the One and Intellect, where the One is to Intellect as white light is to the spectrum. He is here developing Plato’s insight that the Forms are taxonomically related to the Good. (Justice is a kind/form of goodness; similarly, the archetype of some tree is a kind/form of natural goodness, etc.; cf. *Enn.* 6.7.16 ll. 4–6.) However, Plotinus’ account will run into metaphysical difficulties. These are hinted at in a passage of Augustine’s *De Genesi ad litteram*. There Augustine rejects the position of “anyone who says that” divine Intellect, or the Son (see *Civ. Dei* 10.23, 10.28), containing the Forms of natural kinds (cf. *Div. qu.* 46), is a creature made by the Father, and is thus distinct from and inferior to the Father. Whomever he has in mind as a proponent of the view he rejects, his rejection will obviously apply to Plotinus, who held that the One “makes” (*poiein*) the divine Intellect. Augustine’s words are:

But if anyone says that the Measure, Number and Weight by which scripture testifies that God ordered all things are created, and if he ordered all things by those, then by what did he order those things themselves? If by other things, how, therefore, were all things ordered by those themselves, since they themselves were ordered by others? There can be no doubt, therefore, that those things by which all things have been ordered are outside of the things which have been ordered. [...] Where did God see these three things when he was ordering creatures? It was not outside of himself. (*Gen. litt.* 4.4.10 and 4.6.12; trans. Taylor 1982, adapted)

As is clear from earlier on in the text (*Gen. litt.* 4.3.8), he is taking “Measure, Number and Weight” to refer to three different features or functional aspects of the Forms of natural kinds. (In the created realm, *mensura* refers to essence, *numerus* refers to form or organization of the matter, and *pondus* refers to final causality; the Forms are archetypes of these. See O’Donnell 1992 on 5.4.7). That “anyone” who says the Forms are created contradicts Scripture is one of the points Augustine is making here (*Wis.* 11: 21 says that *omnia*, all things, were ordered by measure, number, and weight). However, there are also things of purely philosophical interest in this passage.

Augustine has put to use the implicit premise that everything made is made according to a pattern (“then by what did he order those things?”). This was familiar to him from the account of the demiurge in Plato’s *Timaeus* and from the craftsman argument in Plotinus (*Enn.* 5.9.5; cf. Pl. *Ti.* 28c–9a). His familiarity with this premise allows us, I think, to understand him as alluding to its philosophical implications in the case of the Good and of Intellect (or: in the case of the Father and of the Son). The reasoning would run as follows. Suppose the Forms of natural kinds were created. They must have been created according to a pattern; that is, we would need a model for the Forms. The question then arises: “Where” was the model that was used in this act of making the Forms?

The first option is that the model of the Forms was outside of the creator and was itself also created. But this will lead to a regress of created Forms for Forms. The created Forms, which were the patterns for the creation of mutable things, would themselves need to have been made according to a pattern (Form), and so on. This problem of a regress is suggested in the passage above by Augustine's repetition of what is essentially the same question ("If he ordered all things by those, then by what did he order those things themselves? If by other things, how, therefore, were all things ordered by those themselves, since they themselves were ordered by others?") and by his conclusion that models or Forms, by virtue of their nature as that according to which things are ordered, must be uncreated.

The remaining, speculative option – that the model for the allegedly created Forms was uncreated – may be worked out in two ways. In the first, the uncreated model for the Forms is a being separate from God. This is unattractive, because it violates various metaphysical axioms Augustine accepts. Primarily, if we say there is an independent uncreated model for created Forms, the model seems to be superior to God, who must rely on this model for his knowledge of how to make the Forms. And to say that it is superior to God would mean that God is not the highest thing – a position Augustine had already ruled out at *De libero arbitrio* 2.6.14 and 2.15.39, where God is by definition that than which there is nothing superior. Thus, at *De diversis quaestionibus* 46, it is not surprising to find him saying that it would be sacrilegious to suppose that God was looking at something placed outside himself when he created.

Second, the model for the allegedly created Forms might be the One/Father himself, the creator of the Forms. This is essentially the theory that Plotinus had advanced. This option may be rejected on metaphysical grounds not alluded to by Augustine in the passage, though known to him. Individuation in the immaterial realm must be by way of essence, as already mentioned. There is no matter by which to individuate the Father from the Son (see his *Trin.* 7.6.11 on *individua*). It is also impossible to individuate through accidents, since accidents by definition pertain to mutability, being qualities that may be lost or gained without detriment to the kind of thing that something is (*Trin.* 5.2.3). Thus in the immaterial, immutable realm there is simply no way in which two beings with the same essence could be separate individuals. However, the *complete set* of Forms of Goodness, that is, divine Intellect, cannot be a distinct essence from Goodness itself, because the set has the same content as goodness itself, even though it is "broken apart," or conceptualized into its various species. The Good already "includes" the Forms, just as a genus category contains all the species under it. Just as in the material realm white light "contains" blue, red, and so on, similarly, in the intelligible, immaterial realm Goodness includes all the species of virtue and of natural kinds. There could not be any sort of "prism" in the immutable, immaterial realm, which would yield a different reality; and so to posit an Intellect distinct from the One is to posit something redundant, which is metaphysically impossible here, owing to the lack of the necessary individuating principle. Thus the distinction between the "model" of the Forms and the Forms themselves collapses into only one being – a being that has the Forms as his thoughts about itself.

Gerson and Bussanich raised similar concerns with Plotinus' account, though without addressing the full extent of the difficulty, and drawing different conclusions. Gerson notes: "Intellect does not have an existence on its own prior to or apart from that which is provided by the One. This of course invites the question why the One therefore does not make Intellect superfluous" (1994: 65). His response, on behalf of Plotinus, is that multiplicity and simplicity are not compatible; the criterion of absolute simplicity, applied to the One, excludes the various Forms and "eternal truths," which are really distinct

(pp. 67, 71, 72). This response runs along the lines of Plotinus' own at *Enn.* 6.7.17 ll. 1–14, where he shows some awareness of this type of objection. Yet Plotinus' response there is unsatisfying. He says:

there is no necessity for anyone to have the same thing that he gives but in this kind of situation one must consider that the giver is greater, and that what is given is less than the giver; for that is how generation is among the real beings [...] Intellect therefore [...] had no need of a giver full of variety. (Trans. Armstrong 1988, adapted)

Plotinus is saying here that some gifts undergo a transformation in issuing forth from the giver. The generation of the Forms by Goodness is a case of this (unusual) kind of giving. However, he would still have to establish that the transformation in this case was one of essential content. He has not done so, but has merely asserted that this must be the case; and, to repeat, that seems impossible to establish, given his other doctrines about Intellect and Goodness. Moreover, arguably, multiplicity is not absolutely incompatible with simplicity in this kind of case, owing to the taxonomic relationship that obtains between the set of Forms and the Good: since goodness is the genus of all kinds of goodness, the simplicity of goodness implicitly contains the multiple species.

Now Plotinus will say that there is more to the story, namely that he is positing Intellect as a distinct god because of the inferior nature of its intelligence. I.Q. can be measured by the ability to think in wholes: if I need many examples in order to understand something (in this case, goodness), then I am slower than you, who can understand it without the examples. Yet Intellect is thinking many examples, since it is multiple. So it must be of an inferior kind of intelligence to that of the One – an inferior and therefore distinct god. Two responses might be given to this. First, and most importantly, since Intellect's knowing is an act, Plotinus still must establish that the subject of this act could have separate existence; that is, he cannot sidestep the metaphysical individuation of Intellect just by saying that it *ought* to exist separately because of its act of knowing. He still must show that its separate existence is metaphysically possible. His point about I.Q. complicates matters but does not address the first counter-argument. Second, it is arguable that a multiplicity of ideas does not necessarily entail a difficulty of understanding. Though Augustine himself shows no signs of having thought this matter through, later medieval philosophers would argue that a multiplicity of Forms in God could arise from God's thinking of himself as a pattern for things *other* than himself to be created (so Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I.15.2; *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.53), and not necessarily from a defect in *self*-understanding.

Bussanich also notes the apparent contradiction in Plotinus: the One gives what it does not have and is radically dissimilar to Intellect, yet everything Intellect has and is derives from the One; that is, Intellect's formal cause must be the One (Bussanich 1996: 54–5). Being unwilling to say that Plotinus contradicts himself (p. 54), Bussanich suggests that these two descriptions be taken as descriptions from two different “points of view”: from the point of view of the One, the One gives what it does not have and is radically distinct from Intellect; from the point of view of Intellect, the One is its formal cause. Thus “it is perhaps best to say that both these perspectives on the actualization of Intellect are essential and that neither is primary in every respect” (pp. 54–5). The problem is, however, that the two descriptions are not complementary perspectives, but incompatible assertions about the essential natures of the One and Intellect, as Bussanich seems to acknowledge initially.

Thus, arguing on Platonic and Aristotelian lines, one might conclude that the set of Forms cannot have been made by the One, nor can it be a being distinct from the One. As the argument for this claim is suggested by a passage of the *De Genesi ad litteram* and by other passages from Augustine's corpus, it is reasonable to suppose that he probably thought of himself as having philosophical reasons for asserting that "those things by which all things have been ordered are outside of the things which have been ordered [...] Where did God see these three things [Measure, Number, and Weight] when he was ordering creatures? It was not outside of himself" (*Gen. litt.* 4.4.10, 4.6.12).

## 4 Middle Platonism: *Daemones*

As has recently been noted, medieval angelology is valuable for understanding medieval metaphysics in general (Goris 2003: 88ff.). In medieval accounts, angels are "situated" midway between humans and God in the hierarchy of being: they are bodiless intellects naturally capable of change, unlike embodied humans and the immutable deity. Thus, knowing what a medieval philosopher holds about the nature of angels can help to clarify his views on both God and human nature. Medieval angelology is of course indebted to Augustine, and it is clear from the *De civitate Dei* that this is an area in which Augustine is engaged with Middle Platonism (by which I refer, perhaps somewhat narrowly, to philosophers from 80 BCE to 220 CE who were formatively influenced by the basic tenets of Platonic metaphysics). In this way the study of Middle Platonism promises to improve not only our understanding of Augustine, but of principles operating in the later history of philosophy.

What has not yet received attention is the extent to which Augustine's adaptation of Middle Platonic accounts of *daemones* was motivated philosophically rather than religiously. It is not that he was committed to the existence of demons because of the Bible, and then hijacked Apuleius' conveniently available account, modifying it to fit with his Christian beliefs. Rather he saw in Middle Platonism a metaphysical argument deriving ultimately from Pythagoreanism, for why angels and demons should exist, and made this argument his own.

There is in Platonism an argument for the existence of *daemones* that can be summarized in the maxim "the world does not tolerate a gap." Pythagoreanism's vision of the cosmos as an expression of mathematical relationships lent itself to the views that all the levels in the scale of nature were equidistant (each kind of thing in nature was only one specific difference "away" from the level below it and from the level above it), and that each level existed necessarily (otherwise the cosmos would be "lopsided" and defective in intelligibility). Dillon has drawn attention to the way in which Xenocrates (reported and perhaps elaborated upon by Plutarch) interpreted Plato's *Symposium* 202e as a statement about the nature of the *daimōnes* and their place in the hierarchy of being (*On the Obsolescence of Oracles* 416c–e; Dillon 2003: 129–30; cf. Dillon 1996: 31–2). Plato said that the *daemon* Eros is midway between gods and men, making each supplement the other so that the whole is combined into one (*en mesōi de on amphoterōn symplēroi, hōste to pan auto hautōi syndedesthai*). Plutarch says this means that the race of *daemones* cannot be eliminated from an account of reality without making the relations between gods and men remote and alien: the nature of the gods may be compared to the equilateral triangle (equal in all its lines), human nature to the scalene (unequal in all its lines), and the daemonic nature to the isosceles (partly equal and partly unequal). In other words, without

*daemones*, there would be two specific differences between gods and humans. The existence of *daemones* as a class prevents the world from being torn into two metaphysical halves, two disconnected *scalae naturae*.

What has not yet received attention is that Apuleius once uses the same argument, and that Augustine shows signs of having both noticed and appropriated this usage. At *De deo Socratis* 4.127, the former, in speaking about the place of *daemones* within the natural distribution of things (*naturae distributio*), asks: “What then? Does nature connect itself by no bond, but leave itself separated into the divine and human part, and suffer itself to be interrupted [*interruptam*], and, as it were, disabled?” (trans. Taylor 1997). With this rhetorical question Apuleius apparently alludes to the argument, also preserved in Plutarch, about the need to have *daemones* in the hierarchical structure of the cosmos, where natures are arranged as highest, middle, and lowest (see *summum, medium et infimum* [...] *naturae dignitate*; *Deo Soc.* 1.115). *De civitate Dei* shows that Augustine was familiar with this Middle Platonic hierarchical schema (8.14, 8.16, 8.18, 9.6, 9.8, 12.22; cf. Apuleius *Deo Soc.* 3.123–4.127, 12.146ff., *Apology* 43). Owing to a polemical context, he sometimes focuses on what he takes to be a defect in Apuleius’ view, harping, for example, on the fact that evil *daemones* are not superior to humans in happiness (*Civ. Dei* 8.16), or on Christ’s mediation as different in kind from the *daemones*’ message-carrying (*Civ. Dei* 9.9, 9.15). However, outside of polemical passages it is clearer that Augustine agrees with the general point: in the scale of nature angels do occupy, metaphysically, a middle position between God and humans, and demons are simply a species of angels, being less powerful because less wise (*Civ. Dei* 21.6).

Buried in his sermons are passages indicating that Augustine also knew, and adopted, the philosophical argument for the existence of these beings: that the world does not tolerate a gap. Trying to explain the meaning of the line “Let all your works confess to you, O Lord” (Ps. 144: 10), for instance, Augustine reasons that the entire hierarchy of nature can be said to praise God when a rational creature probes its intelligibility and appreciates its beauty. In the course of describing this hierarchy, he asserts that it is “never interrupted.” He also insinuates that the intelligibility of the cosmos requires that each level of the hierarchy exist:

God has ordered everything and made everything: to some he has given sense and understanding and immortality, as to the angels; to some he has given sense and understanding with mortality, as to humans; to some he has given bodily sense, yet not given them understanding, or immortality, as to cattle; to some he has given neither sense, nor understanding, nor immortality, as to herbs, trees, stones: and even these cannot fail to exist in their own kind [*et ipsa in genere suo deesse non possunt*]; and by certain degrees he has ordered his creation, from earth up to heaven, from visible to invisible, from mortal to immortal. This framework of creation, this most perfectly ordered beauty, ascending from lowest to highest, descending from highest to lowest, never interrupted [*nusquam interrupta*], but duly proportioned from these different kinds of things, as a whole praises God. (*En. Ps.* 144.13; trans. Walford 1857, adapted)

Again, when explicating God’s function as creator in another sermon, he enumerates the items of the scale of nature, explains that each level differs from its proximate levels by one characteristic, and asserts that God has thus made all things by “joining the highest and the lowest by the ones in the middle [*mediis ima et summa coniungens*]” (*Serm.* 214.2). The verbal parallels to Apuleius in these passages are clear. More important is the conceptual similarity to Apuleius, and to Xenocrates–Plutarch before him. Both of

Augustine's passages suggest that angels are the necessary middle term between the divine and human nature, without which the cosmos would not be intelligibly structured.

## 5 Stoicism: Developments on Many Fronts

Despite Augustine's disagreement with Stoic materialism (*Civ. Dei* 8.5) and with the Stoics' insistence that temporal things are not really good (*Civ. Dei* 9.4, 19.4), he makes extensive use of Stoic theories of sensation, epistemology, and moral psychology (for an overview, see O'Daly 1987). Even in the case of Stoic tenets with which he disagrees, he often modifies rather than rejecting them absolutely. Thus the Stoic distinction between what is good (virtue) and what is indifferent (some indifferents being naturally "preferable") is not entirely erased, but recast into a distinction between eternal goods (virtues) and temporal goods (everything else) (see Byers 2003: 439–40). Again, Stoic materialism is rejected, but in the case of the soul Augustine finds a way to retain the primary philosophical benefit attached to that account: the malleability of the soul's moral identity, which is evident in processes of habituation. He opts for the claim that the soul has *quasi materies*, non-corporeal (non-three-dimensional) "stuff" in virtue of which it is subject to changes such as the acquisition or shedding of attitudes constitutive of virtue or vice (*Gen. litt.* 7.6.9, 7.27.30).

Attention has recently begun to be drawn to Augustine's development of Stoic cognitive psychology in the realm of action theory and the emotions (Sorabji 2000: 378–80; Byers 2003, 2006b), as well as to his use of Stoic philosophy of language (e.g. Long 2005). These areas still need additional scholarly work. It is only relatively recently that specialists in ancient philosophy have turned to these areas within Stoicism itself. Consequently, prior to about 1985, scholars specializing in Augustine typically lacked familiarity with the ancient Greek context for the Roman Stoicism found in Cicero and Seneca, which would have allowed them to contextualize better Augustine's own vocabulary and arguments (though there is an earlier study that remains valuable: Holte 1962). This in turn had its repercussions, one of which has been the difficulty in tracking the subsequent history of Stoicism among medieval Latin writers (cf. Inwood 2004: 1 and Ebbesen 2004: 108–9; for illustrations, see Colish 1985 and Verbeke 1983). We may expect that, as with the other philosophical traditions considered above, growth in our understanding of Augustine's reception and development of Stoicism will come by means of an integrating method of research rather than a fragmenting one.

## 6 Conclusion

We have enlarged some of the previously received views about Augustine's relationships to earlier philosophical traditions by using a research method that treats rhetorical and "theological" works of Augustine as complementary, and even essential, to our understanding of Augustine's philosophical positions. The method has allowed us to recognize that Augustine's view of the body–soul relationship shares more with Aristotelianism than has been recognized in the past. Closer attention to strands of Aristotelianism in Plotinus' thought, which themselves have not received sufficient attention from Augustine scholars bent on considering Plotinus and Augustine as Platonists, has made it possible to see Plotinus as a proximate source for this Aristotelianism, although it is also clear that

Augustine preserved a certain independence from Plotinus' (un-Aristotelian) attitudes toward the material body. An exegetical text has contributed to our understanding of Augustine's metaphysics of God, showing in particular that Augustine seems to have believed he had metaphysical (and not merely theological) grounds for holding that his own account of God was superior to that of Plotinus. Despite the antagonistic stance toward Apuleius that characterizes the *De civitate Dei*, the method employed there has yielded texts that show Augustine using Apuleian arguments for the existence of *daemones*. Similarly, even though Augustine often focuses on disagreements with the Stoics in his *De civitate Dei*, exegetical texts, including sermons, show that he often developed Stoic tenets in the areas of ethics, the soul, and psychology rather than rejecting them outright.

## Further Reading

Classic works on Augustine's intellectual formation are Courcelle 1969 and Marrou 1958; but see more recently Hadot 2005, Pollman and Vessey 2005. For an orientation to philosophical questions in Augustine, see Matthews 1999, along with Stump and Kretzmann 2001. Brown 1993 and Mann 1987 provide perhaps the best philosophical-textual arguments for Aristotelianism in Augustine (specifically, Augustine's treatment of causality and predication). Hölscher 1986 is worth consulting on Augustine on the soul (mostly concerning its immateriality), and not as well known as it should be. On the question of Augustine's indebtedness to Plotinus (vs. Porphyry), important arguments and summaries of secondary discussions are found in O'Connell 1991, O'Meara 1992, and Rist 1996, the latter agreeing with Mandouze 1968. Rist 1967 is still an excellent starting place for those seeking an orientation to Plotinus in order to read Augustine. Dillon 1996 serves the same purpose for Middle Platonism (which, however, he defines more broadly than I have done above); on Apuleius, see also the introduction in Harrison, Hilton, and Hunink 2001. O'Daly 1987 is a fine, detailed work providing a substantive introduction to Augustine's psychology and epistemology, discussing both its Neoplatonic and its Stoic roots. Long 2005 is particularly strong on the theme of Augustine's appropriation of Stoic linguistics (and the other essays in that same volume are useful for filling out the intellectual context of Augustine's *De dialectica*). Classic works on Augustine's theory of motivation are Burnaby 1938, Holte 1962, and Bochet 1982, though the prevailing focus on Platonism has recently been complemented by more detailed discussions of Stoicism in Augustine's psychology: Sorabji 2000, Byers 2003 (partly responding to Sorabji), 2006b, 2007, and forthcoming. Inwood 1985 offers an indispensable orientation to Stoic ethics and psychology to anyone wanting to foreground the study of these areas in Augustine.