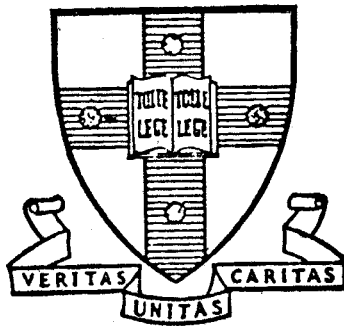


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REGIO BEATITUDINIS

Augustine's Concept of Happiness

Werner Beierwaltes

I

Regio beatitudinis—dimension of happiness:¹ its investigation, concerned as it was with the determination of human nature, was central both for ancient philosophy and for Christian theology. The question, what happiness is, or what constitutes a happy or

1. The title “*regio beatitudinis*” is linguistically justified by analogous formulations from Augustine, e.g. *Beata Vita* 3: *regio beatae vitae*; *Conf.* IX 10,24: *regio ubertatis indeficientis* (as a designation for the divine Being); *Lib. Arb.* II 11,30 (God as the “region” of the “unchanging truth” of number and Idea); *Conf.* VII 10,16: *regio dissimilitudinis* (the world as the dimension of unlikeness [*in* likeness] in contrast to God, based terminologically and materially on *Plat. Polit.* 273 d 6 f and *Plot.* I 8,13,16 f. Cf. E. TeSelle, “‘*Regio dissimilitudinis*’ in the Christian Tradition and its Context in Late Greek Philosophy,” in *Aug. Studies* 6 [1975] pp. 153-179). [Subsequently, by way of confirmation of my title, I found the term ‘*regio beatitudinis*’ in the sermon of Achard de Saint Victor (abbot of St. Victor in Paris 1155-1161) on St. Augustine’s day. Starting from *Conf.* VII 10,16: “*In regione dissimilitudinis, in qua invenit se Augustinus longe esse a Deo*” he develops three ‘*regiones similitudinis*’ (= *increateae trinitatis, aequalitatis, unitatis*): *prima naturae, secunda iustitiae, tertia vitae beatae*. Cf. Achard de Saint Victor, *Sermons inédits*, ed. J. Chatillon, Paris 1970, 101 ff. 107: ‘*regio beatitudinis*’.]

successful or fulfilled life, could be considered only in conjunction with the inquiry into the possibilities and purpose of man, and with the search for the highest good, both in itself and for him. At times—in the Stoa, for example, and in the case of Epicurus—philosophy understood itself as nothing but a comprehensive directive for a happy life, placing reflection upon all other matters in the service of this single consideration. And now, after a period in which the question of happiness, at least as a topic for open discussion (in the sense, that is, of a demand made upon popular philosophy) had been repressed—one thinks, for example, of pure transcendental phenomenology, of Heidegger's thought oriented to the history of Being or of the positivistic theory of science—it has begun again, and quite decisively so, to assert itself in contemporary philosophy.² This is a factor of the widespread rehabilitation of practical philosophy, which has taken place in the conviction that, among its *other* tasks, philosophy must also

2. To indicate just a few examples, of various provenience, including some that are psychologically or sociologically motivated: J. Pieper, *Glück und Kontemplation* (Munich, 1957); W. Tatar-kiewicz, *Analysis of Happiness* (The Hague, 1976) (Polish ed., 1962); H. Kunderl, ed., *Anatomie des Glücks* (Köln, 1971); U. Hommes, ed. *Was ist Glück? Ein Symposium* (Munich, 1976); H. Krämer, "Prolegomena zu einer Kategorienlehre des richtigen Lebens," in *Phil. Jahrbuch* 83 (1976) pp. 71-97; G. Bien, ed., *Die Frage nach dem Glück* (Stuttgart, 1978).

frame concepts for rational action; some would even say its *only possible* task in its contemporary situation is to be Ethics.

Paradigmatic for this renewal of interest—at least in the German-speaking countries—is Walter Schulz' attempt to formulate a “timely ethics”, postulating “the greatest happiness for the greatest number” on the basis of the category of “responsibility.” In contradistinction to utilitarian eudemonism, Schulz understands the ethical activity itself as an essential source of happiness. “The ‘satisfaction’ produced by the feeling of having acted responsibly—whether with success or not—is the happiness truly worthy of a man, since it lies in his nature to take upon himself the task of establishing the Good as the order under which he is capable of living.”³ Thus happiness is accorded a place in the autonomy or autarchy of human subjectivity, which realizes and proves itself in setting norms for responsible communal life.

To be sure, contemporary consideration of the question of happiness has not always manifested itself expressly as such. More commonly it underlies either the formulation or the intention of other—psychologically, sociologically, or politically oriented questions. These are likely to be paraphrased, for

3. W. Schulz, *Philosophie in der veränderten Welt* (Pfullingen 1972) p. 746.

example, in such formulae as: man's search for identity;⁴ emancipation from the coercions of a society which is mechanized, bureaucratic, thoroughly function oriented, and therefore repressive of individuality; elimination of the manifold alienation to which man is exposed in the realm of his work; maximization of desire in the face of suppression of drives;⁵ liberation from political suppression and ideological indoctrination; reestablishment of those aesthetic qualities which shape our existence more humanely. In short: the development of man's true humanity, in which he attains himself and comes into his own; the formation of a society in which "the pursuit of happiness",⁶ as a fundamental right, does not degenerate to little more than an irony.

All these formulae have a more or less strongly pronounced utopian element. They describe not so

4. E. H. Erikson, "The problem of Ego Identity", *Journ. Amer. Psych. Assoc.* 4 (1956) pp. 56-121. Id., *Identity and Life Cycle* (1959).

5. These issues have been investigated by, among others, H. Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston, 1964) and *Eros and Civilization* (Boston, 1955).

6. The assertion of man's "inalienable right" to "the pursuit of happiness" has no equivalent in any European constitution or declaration of rights. Cf. C. L. Becker, *The Declaration of Independence* (New York, 1942²); H. M. Jones, *The Pursuit of Happiness* (Cambridge Mass., 1953), for the sometimes grotesque consequences of this formula in legal judgments.

much what *is* as postulate or anticipate what *could* or *should* be. It has in some sense always been characteristic of the idea of happiness to cast an eye toward the future—*in alium maturescimus partum*, we are ripening toward a new birth (Seneca, *ep.* 102), when we liberate ourselves into our true selves. But the predominance of the utopian element may provoke a just scepticism toward reflection on happiness, particularly in the face of a social context in which the individual's demand for real freedom is entangled in a manifold of coercions; a scepticism as well toward the possibility of ever having unqualified happiness: "It's the same with happiness as with truth: one doesn't *have* it, one is *in* it. Happiness is nothing else than a state of being embraced, an afterimage of the security in the mother. Thus no happy person can ever know that he is so. To see happiness, he must leave it behind: like one who is born."⁷ The psychoanalytic image collapses, however: because we have been "born," because we can neither retain, nor return to, the state of unreflective naiveté. And so man is left with the necessity of *reflecting* upon the idea of happiness. Or we should rather say, it is *precisely* on this idea that he *must* reflect, insofar as he concerns himself, not with utopian extravagances, but with his essential 'telos.'

7. T. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt 1964) p. 143.

Lying upon the water, gazing peacefully at the sky—“*rien faire comme une bête*”—this could hardly serve as an image of the life which is not only constantly challenged by reason, but which finds precisely therein its happiness. Nor may we contrast this at least intended pacification of thought with a plea simply for an ideology of praxis, action, process, or progress as the only source of happiness. On the contrary, even in the contemporary context of society and individual consciousness, happiness seems still to be bound up with a productive synthesis of reflection and of action guided and made meaningful by this reflection.

It may already be evident from these suggestions that, in comparison with Greek and Christian antiquity, contemporary reflections upon happiness have different intentions and different foundations. Nevertheless, a consideration of the former is not a matter of merely historical interest. We may in the process be reminded of something missing from the present, something we *need* to be reminded of. Now as then, it is a matter of determining a responsible concept of man and his realization. Of course, a decision exclusively for one side or the other would be absurd. But the effort to *correct* contemporary thinking by means of, and on the foundation of, its own past, is one of philosophy's central tasks.

II

It is surely not too sweeping a generalization to say that precisely those fundamental positions of Greek philosophy which most enduringly shaped subsequent thought understood the essence of happiness on the basis of the concept of cognition, knowledge, or vision. And in this, philosophy is simply the argumentative form of a conception receiving analogous expression both in poetry and religion. These, too, each working from its own presuppositions, extol the vision of the highest object or event as the state of perfect happiness.

In a threnody of Pindar's, for example, blessedness ('makarismos') appertains to him who has achieved insight through the vision of the mysteries—to him, that is, who has been initiated at Eleusis:

Happy is he who, having seen those things,
passes under the earth;
He knows the end of Life,
And knows its god-given beginning.⁸

8. Frg. 121 (Bowra).

Insight, or knowledge through visionary research, is likewise the source of happiness for Euripides—insight into the origin and the mode of being of the imperishable order of 'PHYSIS'. Indeed, the objective, visibly given order of things, when mediated through insight, becomes the measure for man's ethical life:

Happy he who seeks and achieves knowledge,
and is not moved to the injury of the citizens
or to wrong actions,
but contemplates the undecaying order of im-
[mortal nature,
how and in what way and manner it subsists.
To such the practice of base deeds attaches not.⁹

Roman poetry, as well, celebrates insight, or knowledge, as happiness. Vergil, under the spell of Epicurus, regards the intention and dignity of his own poetry to lie in the common pursuit it shares with the latter's philosophy of nature: through recognition of the inner causes of natural phenomena to free man from fear:

Blessed is he who has been able to win knowledge

9. Frg. (*incertarum fabularum*) 910 (Nauck²), transmitted by Clem. Al. *Strom.* IV 25 and by Themist. *Orat.* XXIV (307 D), can with certainty be considered Euripidean.

of the causes of things, and has cast beneath his
[feet
all fear and unyielding Fate, and the howls of
[hungry
Acheron! Happy, too, is he who knows the wood-
[land gods,
Pan and old Sylvanus and the sister Nymphs!
Him no honours the people give can move, no
[purple
of kings, no strife rousing brother to break with
[brother,
no Dacian swooping down from his leagued Da-
[nube,
no power of Rome, no kingdoms doomed to fall:
he knows nought of the pang of pity for the poor,
or of envy for the rich.¹⁰

In considering a concept as central to Augustine as that of happiness, one must always keep in mind the intellectual context which he inherited from Greek thought by way of Rome. For certain essential elements of this heritage, formed as well by poetry as by philosophy—for example, that happiness is founded upon seeing, or conceiving—remain decisive in

10. *Georgica* II 490 ff., trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, *Vergil*, Vol. I, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1978). Cf. also the interpretation of the conclusion of the second book by Friedrich Klingner, *Virgils Georgica*, (Zurich-Stuttgart, 1963) p. 121 ff.

Augustine's thought even when brought into a new context by Christian revelation and theology.

Because Augustine, despite his differing explication of ancient philosophy and despite goals redefined by the Christian revelation, did continue this philosophical tradition—and this not only formally—I would like to refer paradigmatically to the Aristotelian formulation of the concept of happiness, followed by brief remarks on Plato and Plotinus, in order to map out the historical horizon against which Augustine's new conception of happiness—one shaped by Christian revelation and theology—must be understood.

a. The *Aristotelian* concept of happiness, and the attitude toward knowledge on which happiness is based, were transmitted to Augustine, at least in their elements, primarily by Cicero, albeit in the latter's transformed and abbreviated version of the early Aristotelian works "On Philosophy" and "Protreptikos." So far as we can judge from the remaining fragments of this exhortation to philosophy, it recommended most emphatically not only the legitimacy but the necessity of philosophical activity, and in doing so brought to light both the foundation and the substance of the happy life.

Due to the fragmentary state of both these works, however, not even a very brief consideration of Aristotle can restrict itself to them alone, but must attempt to reconstruct the detailed structure of the

argument on the basis of Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Metaphysics*.¹¹

Aristotle's exhortation to philosophy, in constituting the origin of philosophy in time, seeks to overcome the initial wonder with which it began by leading wonder back to its ground. The ground of wondering, however, and therefore at once the motive force of all philosophy and the goal of human activity, reveals itself to thought in the 'phronesis' which guides it. Thus the exhortation to philosophy is an exhortation to 'phronesis'. Yet 'phronesis' is not just another, arbitrarily interchangeable name for philosophy, but rather that through which we discern the deepest significance of philosophy and as the act of philosophizing. 'Phronesis' or 'phronein', which we may understand generally as insight directed by the Good, is "the goal corresponding to man's nature, the end for which we exist";¹² it is the best of all good things, ἀριστον πάντων,¹³ that power in us most deserving that its latent potential be made real and

11. On the modification of the meaning of *phronesis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in contrast to the *Protreptikos*, which represents a departure from the original Platonic position, see W. Jaeger, "Über Ursprung und Kreislauf des philosophischen Lebensideals," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1923) p. 408; and *Aristoteles* (Berlin, 1923) p. 82 f.

12. *Protreptikos* B 17 (ed. Düring, *Quellen der Philosophie* 9, Frankfurt 1969).

13. B 20. B 40. B 70.

effectual as the soul's proper activity (ἔργον ψυχῆς)¹⁴ both in thought and deed. The origin and realization of 'phronesis' and 'phronein,' however, is 'theoria' or 'theorein' which is inseparably bound up with 'praxis.' This word 'theoria,' which is so fundamental to Greek thought, was translated and interpreted into Latin by means of the concepts *contemplatio*, *cognitio*, *speculatio* and *visio*.¹⁵ It embraces our notions of 'search' and 'inquire,' 'look at,' 'watch' and 'contemplate,' the latter understood as the endeavour to perceive receptively Being as a whole and its ground. Inasmuch as this contemplation is the fundamental disposition of philosophical activity, guiding and upholding the βίος θεωρητικός and at the same time determining the βίος πρακτικός as its principle, it becomes clear just how far removed from a genuine understanding of Greek thought is the statement: 'theoria' is "mere disinterested observation," a basically uncritical, introverted preoccupation of thought with itself, irrelevant to practical life, whose long-range effect, one "theory" has been apotheosized to an absolute, gives rise to modern ideologies and contributes to the affirmation of the status quo.

14. B 70.

15. Vgl. hierzu P. Boesch, *Θεωρός* (Göttingen 1908). F. Boll, *Vita contemplativa* (Heidelberg 1922) pp. 29 f (cognitio, contemplatio, consideratio).

The essence of 'theoria' and the meaning of 'bios theoretikos,' the elements of which Aristotle alludes to only in a general way in the dialogue "On Philosophy" and in the "Protreptikos," are expounded in their fundamentals in the 7th chapter of the 10th book of the *Nichomachean Ethics*.

The prerequisite for the realization of 'theoria' is leisure.¹⁶ Leisure is not only a principle which directs and sustains the act of philosophizing; it is as well a fundamental disposition which first makes possible the act of philosophizing as Aristotle understands it. It stands in contrast to the busy abandonment of the self to multiplicity. In leisure, thought removes itself from whatever is foreign to it, gathering itself into what is properly its own, in the ground of its self. While, for example, the activity of a politician is un-leisurely, and always seeks beyond his political activity proper for power and honor as well; the activity of philosophical thought, the 'energeia theoretiké,' realizing itself in a leisure which can be put to no use and so for just that reason is not freely at one's disposal, seeks nothing beyond itself.¹⁷ It is its own end and is fully self-sufficient ('autarkes'). Since contemplative thought is "pure thought"¹⁸ for

16. *Eth. Nic.* 1177 b 4; *Met.* 981 b 23 (Science develops only in the medium of leisure, without regard for purpose); *Pol.* 1334 a 25 and 1337 b 30 ff.

17. *Eth. Nic.* 1177 b 19.

18. *Protreptikos* B 27.

its own sake, and no other use can or may be sought in it beyond itself,¹⁹ it is in the truest sense *free*: being only itself in itself, for its own sake. For “that man is free who exists for his own sake and not for another’s.”²⁰ It is therefore unfree and unphilosophical to seek beyond the highest end of human existence for some advantage under whose dominion this end stands. Thus Aristotle says in his *Politics*:²¹ “To be always seeking after the useful does not become free and exalted souls,” but is rather the inclination of the βάναντος. And so when contemplative thought—this moment of human freedom—is achieved, and gives itself over to leisure, this is not to be considered “inactive” or “impractical,” but rather as the very highest activity of man it is the perfect unity of ‘theoria’ and ‘praxis’, on the basis of which all ‘praxis’ must be authoritatively determined. We may then correctly define ‘theoria’ as that insight “which as insight for the sake of insight is itself the highest possibility of praxis.”²² Thus the highest activity of human existence is con-

19. *Theoria* is loved for its own sake: *Eth. Nic.* 1177 b 1. It is itself the highest use: *Protreptikos* B 42 f. And, anticipating the argument to follow, cf. Augustinus, *En. in Psalm 90,2,13*: *Tota merces nostra visio est.*

20. *Met.* 982 b 25 f.

21. *Pol.* 1337 b 8 f. 1338 b 2 ff.

22. W. Bröcker, *Aristoteles* (Frankfurt 1957²) p. 17.

templative thought, which fulfills itself in the beholding of truth.

'Theoria' as the highest realization of human nature, in accordance with that power in man which naturally "rules and guides and takes thought of the beautiful and the divine," and "which is itself divine or else the most divine element in us"²³—in short, the life in accordance with the contemplative thought of the spirit—is "perfect *happiness*," "teleia eudaimonia."²⁴ And so that which applies to leisure and 'theoria' applies also to happiness, that it exists only for its own sake. Man yearns for nothing beyond it, for it itself is the realization and the fulfillment of his being. "It is the goal."²⁵ As Aristotle says in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, "We think happiness has *pleasure* mingled with it, but the activity of philosophic wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of virtuous activities."²⁶ Happiness, pleasure and wisdom, then, form a unity whose elements determine one another reciprocally, and which, though we may distinguish them, we may not separate. Pleasure is

23. *Eth. Nic.* 1177 a 13 ff.

24. 1177 a 17. For an understanding of the full significance of the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia*, one should supplement its use in the present context with a consideration of *Eth. Nic.* I 7 ff., 1098 a 25 ff.

25. 1176 b 31. 1177 a 27.

26. 1177 a 22-25.

pleased by that which is loved. Now if man loves the perfection of his existence, the final goal toward which his potential unfolds; and if this love is at the same time his highest activity; that is to say, when his love of wisdom (φιλοσοφία) has become the wisdom of knowledge; then from this wisdom he also receives the greatest pleasure. And so Aristotle correctly says: ἡ θεωρία τὸ ἡδιστον καὶ ἄριστον," the act of contemplation is most pleasant and best."²⁷ Hence real pleasure lies not in continuous search and inquiry, to which perhaps no end or answer is granted, but in steady and pure vision of the truth. "Philosophy offers pleasures marvelous for their purity and their enduringness, and it is to be expected that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire."²⁸

Thus the source of pleasure lies in possessing pleasure's ontological ground. The concept of happiness implies the intention that what is sought and achieved should remain constant and enduring. But if this is to be more than pure illusion, then this intention can only arise from the enduringness and constancy of its ground. And the analogous manner for man to reproduce in himself the atemporal constancy and activity of the ground or principle ('arché') is con-

27. *Met.* 1072 b 24. Cf. also *Protreptikos* B 87. 94. *Eth. Nic.* 1099 a 15. *Eth. Eud.* 1214 a 30-33. 1214 b 4.

28. *Eth. Nic.* 1177 a 25-27.

templative thought. For this is "the most continuous activity, since we can think contemplatively more continuously than we can *do* anything."²⁹ Consequently, only this highest activity of contemplative thought can be "the complete happiness of man," provided it embraces the complete life (= full temporal span) of man.³⁰ "But such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him."³¹

As the "eternal and best living being,"³² whose life is constant and eternal, god is the pure activity of thought. It is precisely the constancy of his thought (τὸ συνεχὲς τῆς νοήσεως)³³ which distinguishes him from all other beings. The mythological notion of a god who never sleeps is here transformed into the philosophical notion of an ever-waking, because continuously thinking god. But *what* does god think? Aristotle argues as follows: If god is himself the best and highest being, then he can only think the best and highest thought. Thus he thinks *himself*. Were he to think something other than himself, the originative unity of thinking and thought would be

29. Ibid. 1177 a 21 f.

30. 1177 b 24. An anticipation of the problem of immortality.

31. *Eth. Nic.* 1177 b 26-28.

32. *Met.* 1072 b 29 f.

33. Ibid. 1074 b 29.

dissolved; a Before and After would temporalize his eternity; a Better and a Less-Good would reduce his one goodness; and a Possibility—that is, a not-yet-thought which was later to become really thought—would nullify the pure reality of his thought.³⁴ What is it, then, that god thinks, when he thinks himself? He thinks his thinking. “He thinks himself, since he is the most excellent of beings, and his thinking of thinking,” αὐτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ, εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον, καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις.³⁵ By means of this continuous thinking, god is the purest, the highest activity or reality, the exclusion of every yet to be completed possibility, the perpetual consummation of his essence as inexhaustible life. In the thinking of the thinking of himself, further, he is always in himself, reflected in himself and therefore self-conscious. Indeed, the conscious possession of himself as that which thinks and that which is thought *is* his reality; ἐνεργεῖ δὲ ἔχων. In view of this originaive unity of thinking and thought we can say: inasmuch as the substance of what is thought is thinking, and thinking moreover has its ground in Being, then that which is thought, taken together with thinking as the Being of what is thought, is the absolute cause. It *is* the

34. 1074 b 15 ff. — Cf. H. J. Krämer, *Grundfragen der aristotelischen Theologie*, in: *Theologie und Philosophie* 44, 1969, 363-382. 481-505.

35. *Met.* 1074 b 33-35.

self-movement of thinking toward itself, self-contained and unchanging. Thus in an absolute sense the separation and the relation of Being, thinking, and its thought is one and the same.³⁶

In contrast to this divine self-thinking, human thinking, with its discursive procedures, is always "secondary philosophy;" for being involved in time it is never in a position to think itself atemporally, continuously, as that which is most excellent. Its essential form is rather propositional: categorical and predicative expression which always says "something about something," τὶ κατὰ τινός, but never speaks the whole. Nonetheless, it can touch in thought the divine ground of Being and thinking which in thinking itself illuminates itself. Since human nature is enslaved in so many ways, only God, as Simonides said, has by his essence the privilege of that continuous thinking which lays the foundation for and embraces all being.³⁷ But the reason man ventures, nevertheless, to live the life of contemplative thought, only therein fulfilling the requirement of his nature and achieving the perfection of his being in happiness, is that he possesses an anticipation of the Divine in him. On this anticipatory trace of the Divine preceding and grounding man's very being, rests his

36. Cf. Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie* II (1842) p. 294.

37. *Met.* 982 b 29 f.

potential for encountering in himself, by means of the glimpse vouchsafed him in 'theoria,' the Divine as such. "If reason, then, is divine in comparison with man, the life in accordance with reason is divine in comparison with human life."³⁸ In the words which follow, the exhortation to philosophy, and thus to true happiness, attains its deepest and most exalted culmination: "But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, think that which is immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us:" ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν καὶ πάντα ποιεῖν πρὸς τὸ ζῆν κατὰ τὸ κράτιστον τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ.³⁹ And so it is precisely the superhuman and divine which proves itself to be in the highest sense human; for man is only then man when he lays hold of the divine potential of his nature, becoming fully himself by means of the divine in him. The imperative to ἀθανατίζειν directs time-bound thinking to find in the midst of all change the timeless structure of Being, and by penetrating change to reach in the act of thinking to its ground. To follow this imperative, and thereby in 'theoria' to recognize the 'theos' as

38. *Eth. Nic.* 1177 b 30 f.

39. *Ibid.* b 31-34. Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 90 c 1: φρονεῖν ἀθάνατα καὶ θεῖα.

pure, perfectly realized thought: therein lies happiness.

b. Even though Aristotle, if one considers his thought as a whole, also refused to sanction an unconditional priority of the theoretical life over the practical, as might appear to be the case at first glance, but aimed rather at their mediation; nonetheless this insistence upon the connection of 'theoria' with happiness actually corresponds to one of the fundamental principles of *Plato's* philosophy. Plato makes clear in a number of contexts that happiness arises from seeing or perceiving the Idea, which is at once unchanging Being and ground of every form in the realm of permanently changing 'genesis.' For example, in the myth of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, Plato claims that on the "plain of Truth,"⁴⁰ i.e. in the realm of the intelligible, of true Being, free of Becoming and therefore truly existent (τὸ ὄν ὄντως), in the realm, that is, of the Divine,⁴¹ the soul beholds a "radiant beauty," "as we, following Zeus ... amidst a happy company, beheld with our eyes that blessed vision; then were we all initiated into that mystery which is rightly accounted blessed beyond all others; whole and unblemished were we that did celebrate it, untouched by the evils that awaited us in days to come; whole and unblemished likewise,

40. 248 b 6.

41. 249 c 4; d 1.

free from all alloy, steadfast and blissful were the spectacles on which we gazed in the moment of final revelation.”⁴² Analogous is the speech of Diotima in the *Symposium*. There beauty is the paradigm of the Idea, which is to say of Being, free of all relativity that could imply a partial non-being; it is identical with itself, wholly itself, and yet still the ground for the participation of the “Other” in it. It is only attainable by a strictly methodical procession through the “hierarchies,” that is, through the realms of knowledge and being which “precede” it; and thus dialectic, as a mediation of the realms, impelled by Eros and the art of inquiry and desire for knowledge, is the presupposition and ‘organon’ of insight. But the very achievement of knowledge itself occurs in an instant: “When he (who has been instructed in the things of eros) comes towards the end he will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty.”⁴³ This state of life, in which thinking attains to Being as its own proper object of knowledge (ἄσιν ὄν, ὃ ἔστι καλόν) and the only object truly worth knowing,⁴⁴ is for man, if any state is, that one worth living for. That is to say, this is a happy life, in that he beholds

42. 250 b 5 ff. *Phaed.* 111 a 3: θέαμα εὐδαιμόνων θεατῶν. For the terminology of the mysteries, cf. also 249 c 7 and *Symp.* 210 a 1.

43. 210 e 4 ff. 211 e 1.

44. 211 c 7. τελευτῆσαι is suggestive of the language of the mysteries. Cf. also note 42.

or contemplates the “divine beauty,” “beauty itself,” “clear, pure, unalloyed” as identical and “one in kind” or simple (μονοειδές).⁴⁵ In principle this is true not only for the Idea of the Beautiful, but for the perception of the Idea as such.⁴⁶ If the Good Itself is understood as the “happiest of Being” (τὸ εὐδαιμονέστατον τοῦ ὄντος) and the Divine as such as the “most blessed,”⁴⁷ then the assimilation of man to God⁴⁸ must be thought of as a training for the happy life. The manner in which this takes place is not pure intellectuality, but rather praxis permeated and determined by the Idea: δίκαιον καὶ ὀσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι.⁴⁹

Without this condition, knowledge in more than just the formal sense of the word would never be achieved, or would deteriorate to mere chatter.⁵⁰

c. We may with good reason doubt the opinion of Willy Theiler, that “in contrast to Augustine and

45. 211 a 2 ff; b 1.

46. The identification of “cognition” (or “perception”) with “vision” (or “seeing”) is made clear particularly by the allegory of the sun and the cave in the *Politeia*, in which the highest object of knowledge is the Idea of the Good, which determines all the other ideas. For the metaphor of “seeing” the Idea, cf. also *Resp.* 511 a 1; 516 a 5; 517 c 1; 518 c 9 f; 519 d 2.

47. Ibid. 526 e 3 f. *Theaet.* 176 e 3.

48. Ibid. 175 c ff.

49. 176 b 2 f.

50. *Menexenus* 246 e 7 ff. *Symp.* 211 e 3.

Porphyrius, the philosophical exuberance of *Plotinus* shows no concern at all for the problem of happiness."⁵¹ Plotinus' testimony regarding this matter, contained in works devoted to just this problem (I 4 and 5), are not to be dismissed as mere academic routine. On the contrary, seen in context with other aspects of his thought, they make quite clear that to behold in reflection the Spirit, i.e. the timeless dimension of the Intelligible, and to behold without differentiation the ground or origin, the One itself, leading as this does to a transformation or a union with both, is pure and simply the fulfillment of human existence, and is thus the happy life.⁵² With unequivocal clarity, and a rigor reminiscent of the stoic *Ataraxia*, Plotinus does not consider happiness threatened by misfortune touching the physical or temporal-historical element of our being: by pain, illness, poverty, disgrace or death of family or friends. But Plotinus did not intend this simply as consolation, based on the unrealistic and therefore useless euphemizing of common opinion. Rather, his attitude arises from the conviction, which he justifies again and again, that man must make it his purpose to grasp the One as the principle of all Being and the

51. *Forschungen zum Neuplatonismus* (Berlin 1966) p. 168.

52. For this problem as a whole, cf. W. Himmerich, *Eudaimonia* (Würzburg, 1959); J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967) pp. 139 ff.

Spirit as the highest form of unity *in* multiplicity or difference; not only to grasp this intellectually, but to *see* (ἀρχὴν ὁρᾶν)⁵³ it, and indeed to unify himself with it non-discursively, *because* this One is *in itself* the “Best” (the Good as such), and as Over-Being it is the highest reality. Only in reference to this highest reality is an analogous reality for human existence possible or even thinkable. One could state the matter as Plotinus sees it wellnigh syllogistically: Happiness consists in possessing the true Good,⁵⁴ the One itself is the true Good, or the Good as such; so whoever has the One, is happy. And the manner of “having” is: unreified, non-objectifying seeing, a seeing which passes over into its object.⁵⁵ (The preconditions for this state or for the dialectical path to it will be dealt with later in analogy with Augustine’s ‘reditio in se ipsum.’) A notion central to Ennead I 4, “On Happiness,” supplements the abovementioned syllogism for the dimension of Spirit: Happiness is an attribute only of life at its highest intensity, of “perfect life,” which is the “Best” of that which exists.⁵⁶ The ground or source, from which

53. VI 9,11,32.

54. I 4,6,4 f: ἐν τῇ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ κτήσει τοῦτό ἐστι κείμενον (τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν). Cf. also the discussion on p. 42 of Augustine’s maxim: *Deum qui habet beatus est.*

55. VI 9,3,23 ff. 11,22 f.

56. I 4,3,25 ff.

all of reality is dependent as being a mere image of its life, is itself “the first and most perfect life.” “If, then, the perfect life is within human reach, the man attaining it attains happiness,”⁵⁷ “when the soul is filled with the life of Being.”⁵⁸ Since Plotinus here speaks of the “Best of that which *exists*,” since he assigns perfect life to “intellectual nature,”⁵⁹ i.e. to the timeless Spirit, which in general he regards as authentic life (ἡ ὄντως ζωή)⁶⁰ because of its self-reflection; and since, further, the dimension of the Intelligible is understood as “Principle” (ἀρχή), whereas Plotinus generally refers to the One as *source* of life, but only with great care as *itself* life (οἶον ζωή⁶¹); therefore the One is not in this context directly called the ground of happiness. The notion is rather an aspect of the historical impact of Aristotelian theology, according to which the reality of the selfthinking spirit *is* life.⁶² The Plotinian transformation of the common identification of “living well” (εὖ ζῆν) with “being happy” (εὐδαιμονεῖν)⁶³ into the life according to νοῦς or in the λογική ζωή does not, however, mean

57. Ibid. 3,39 f. 4,1 f.

58. VI 7,31,32.

59. I 4,3,33 f.

60. VI 7,18,21.

61. VI 8,7,51.

62. *Met.* 1072 b 26 f: ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή.

63. I 4,1,1.

to suggest a fixation upon the Nous. Thought in returning into itself, goes beyond itself into its own ground, the One, which is its proper telos: τὸ ἀληθῶς ζῆν ἐνταῦθα, “true life is there”⁶⁴—that is, in that state in which man, through this movement of transcendence, through this “self-simplifying” self-illumination of thought, becomes a seer or, a “beholder of the source and the One” (of the One *as* source): ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐνὸς θεατής.⁶⁵ Thus Plotinus formulates the summit of human possibility, the end that each man desires, when he “awakens to himself”.⁶⁶

64. VI 9,9,15 f.

65. VI 9,3,22. Dies als Grund des Glücks: ἦς (sc. τῆς ἀρίστης θεας) ὁ μὲν τυχῶν μακάριος ὄψιν μακαρίαν τεθεαμένος · (Plat. Phaedr. 250 b 6) ἀτυχῆς δὲ οὗτος ὁ μὴ τυχῶν (I6,7,33 f).

66. IV 8,1,1.—My treatment of Aristotle, Plato and Plotinus is not so much a matter of tracing the *historical* connection between them and Augustine, but rather an attempt to demonstrate similarities in the *type* of approach employed. Further, I am convinced that Augustine is indebted to both Plotinus and Porphyry also as historical “sources”. Cf. for the discussion about the ‘*Libri Platoniorum*’ the persuasive arguments of J. J. O’Meara, *The young Augustine*, London - New York 1980², pp. 143 f. Id., *Augustine and Neoplatonism*, *Rech. Aug.* 1 (1958) pp. 91-111.

III

In that work of Cicero's which, like Aristotle's *Protreptikos*, apparently contained an exhortation to philosophy to which Augustine fervently responded, and which thus laid a decisive foundation for his later conversion to Christianity⁶⁷—in Cicero's *Hortensius*—there stood the sentence: *Beati certe omnes esse volumus*.⁶⁸ This statement recurs again and again in Augustine like an indubitable axiom.⁶⁹ It is indubitable and incontestable because of its abstract generality; it points to a common possession (*commu-*

67. *Ille vero liber mutavit affectum meum et ad te ipsum, Domine, mutavit preces meas et vota ac desideria mea fecit alia: Conf. III 4,7.*

68. *Trin. XIII 4,7; Beata Vita II 10.* For the significance of the *Hortensius* for Augustine, cf. from the large body of literature on the subject: J. J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine*, pp. 57 ff; M. Testard, *Saint Augustine et Cicéron*, (Paris, 1958), Vol. I, p. 19 ff; R. P. Russell, "Cicero's *Hortensius* and the problem of riches in Saint Augustine", *Augustinian Studies* 7 (1976) pp. 59-68.

69. Cf. e.g. *Op. imp. contra Jul. VI 12,26; c. Acad. I 2,5; Mor. Eccl. III 4; Conf. X 21,31; Sermo 106, 4,4 and 10,9; Trin. XIII 20,25.* For this problem as a whole, see É. Gilson, *Introduction à l'Étude de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1949³) p. 1 ff.; R. Holte, *Beatitude et sagesse* (Paris, 1962).

nis possessio), to a need rooted in the very essence of man, to man's natural longing for a fulfillment which eliminates his condition of restricting finitude. Similarly, the axiom which stands at the beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, "All men by nature desire to know," indicates that man possesses an impetus to inquire and think which recognizes its own ignorance and strives to go beyond it toward knowledge. It refuses, that is, just to accept *that* something is, but wants to know further, *what* it is, and *why* it is what it is. Like the aspiration for knowledge, the striving for happiness corresponds to an indubitable and incontestable structure of human existence. Eminently contestable, however, is the question of the way to happiness; contestable, too, is the ground or cause of happiness, that which itself makes one happy; and no less so the question, how can one hold on to it, whether it really must be fragmentary and fleeting, or will ever continue without change.⁷⁰

From his own historical context, Augustine rightly saw the basic impulse of ancient philosophy to be to grasp the nature of happiness conceptually, and to formulate proposals and establish norms for the

70. *Sermo* 306,3,3: *Beata ergo vita omnium est communis possessio, sed qua veniatur ad eam, qua tendatur, quo itinere tento perveniatur, inde controversia est.* Cf. Seneca, *De vita beata* I 1: *vivere ... omnes beate volunt, sed ad pervidendum, quid sit quod beatam vitam efficiat, caligant.*

method of achieving it. This seemed to be well-nigh the one and only motivation for philosophy:⁷¹ to ground the goal of man's being and action in the *vita beata* and to make this intelligible.

One may be astounded by the confusion of the philosophers in the question of the "highest good" (*summum bonum, finis boni*), and find it absurd that Varro, according to Augustine, was able to reckon 288 different schools of philosophy, distinguished more or less from one another in their definitions of the highest good and thus of happiness.⁷² But historically speaking, these differences could be reduced to a few basic types—the Epicurean, Stoic, Academic, Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neo-Platonic—and even these were by no means mutually exclusive. Moreover, the act of philosophizing requires a decision for *one* form, though this may well be a complex one in itself. And Augustine, too, proceeds in this manner, in that, in distinguishing himself from the philosophers, he attempts to explicate as a *single* dialectical thought both the hope for fulfillment which the Christian already has now and the true blessedness (*vera beatitudo*) which is promised him. This explic-

71. *Civ. Dei* VIII 3: ...*propter quam unam* (scil. *beatam vitam*) *omnium philosophorum invigilasse ac laborasse videtur industria.* XIX 1: *Nulla est homini causa philosophandi nisi ut beatus sit.*—Cicero, *de finibus* V 39.

72. *Civ. Dei* XIX 1.

ation remains in part within the horizon of philosophy, but in part withdraws itself from philosophy, either by transforming certain elements of philosophical thought or by transferring them into a new dimension, one which is no longer the province of reason (*ratio*) alone. Augustine's inquiry into the nature of the happy life shares in common with the philosophical formulation of the problem the fact that it is a *fundamental* inquiry in his thought. Common as well to both is the mode of realization of the happy life: that it is achieved and sustained in cognition, knowledge, vision, contemplation, and love—a realization which does not isolate itself in itself, but rather becomes the standard for reasonable action in accordance with *religio* (analogous to virtue guided by theory). Further, they share in common the orientation of the *vita beata* toward an unchanging, timeless Being, identified with Idea, Absolute Truth, Wisdom, or God. And corresponding to this is the commonly shared ontological assumption—albeit one leading in the event to different ends—according to which man in his temporal life *is* linked, though these transcend him, to Idea, Truth, Wisdom, or God. It is his task, through *reditio in se ipsum* and *transcensus sui ipsius* to become conscious of this condition. Augustine assimilates the function of the Neoplatonic One or of the Spirit in us, in his notion of the *homo interior*, which on the basis of its a priori constitution is in a position to bring forth evidence

of the divine Being subsistent within it. And finally, Augustine remains not least of all allied with the philosophical path to *beatitudo* in considering immortality the precondition for a happy life—though of course, in keeping with Christian doctrine, immortality not of the soul alone, but also of the body.

Along with the contrasts which distinguish Augustine's thought from the philosophers, this one is fundamental: the philosophical conception of happiness, and the means by which it is attained, are decisively transformed by being determined in all their elements by the incarnation of Christ. The concept of idea, of truth, of wisdom, and of vision also receive new valuations. But by no means do they free themselves completely from their substantial philosophical implications and presuppositions. Thus an analysis of Augustine's philosophical assumptions would show that in many respects his formulation of the distinctiveness of his own approach does not entirely correspond to the facts of the matter. For instance, the principal objection by which Augustine demonstrates his distinction from the philosophers touches their *superbia*. Entangled in pride, "each one sets up his happy life however he pleases," as if he were capable of this "on his own" (*a seipsis*) or by virtue of "his own power" (*propria virtus*).⁷³ In contrast

73. *Trin.* XIII 7,10. *Civ. Dei* XIX 4.

to this imputed self-righteousness of philosophical ratiocination stands the conviction that the truly happy life is only possible through assent to the *auctoritas Christi*, which opens the way for His dispensation of grace. Now Plotinus' imperative, "*Fugiendum est igitur ad carissimam patriam, et ibi pater, et ibi omnia. Quae igitur, inquit, classis aut fuga? Similem Deo fieri,*"⁷⁴ by no means *contradicts* the Augustinian way to the happy life; it is merely insufficient in itself. "For our liberation and purification," which is also the goal of Plotinus, we stand in need rather of the Mediator Christ as the "divine aid" (*divinum adiutorium*).⁷⁵ And this is the only way to reach that goal which the philosophers long for as well.⁷⁶ In taking a critical look back at his early work *De beata vita*, Augustine charged himself with having had too little reservation toward the philosophical concept of happiness, which may have concealed the eschatological aspect: that is, that the

74. *Civ. Dei* IX 17. The quotation is from Plotin I 6,8,16 ff.

75. *Ibid.* *Sermo* 306,10,10 and 150,8,10: Christ as the *via* to *beatitudo, per illum. Mor. Eccl.* VII 12. For the interpretation of Augustine's programmatic proposition, *Scientia ergo nostra Christus est, sapientia quoque nostra idem Christus est* (*Trin.* XIII 19,24), with which Augustine seeks to make clear his distinction from the philosophers, cf. G. Madec, in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 10 (1975) pp. 77-85.

76. *Retr.* I.2. This criticism could also apply to *c. Acad.* II 1,1: *nullam beatam vitam, nisi qua in philosophia viveretur.*

happy life is not to be found or achieved in this world, but can only be hoped for as *futura vita*.⁷⁷

With this rough indication of Augustine's own concept of the happy life within the context of the philosophical assumptions and contrasts, I have anticipated somewhat the discussion which is now to follow, in which I should like to present more concretely the essential elements of Augustine's conception of *vita beata* or *beatitudo*. Only then can the assertions regarding the relationship or the disagreement between Augustine's thought and philosophical thought appear in their full legitimacy.

1. Augustine's definition of the happy life has to be seen first of all in reference to its opposite, the unhappy life, wretched with itself, in "this world." It is true that Augustine thinks of the world as one created from the being of the divine ideas,⁷⁸ and therefore understands it as an image of its original model, which, insofar as it *is*, is good, and which, though accessible through the senses, points to its intelligible ground. And yet dissimilarity is placed in the image too, and this may come to dominate the finite and limited human consciousness; but it does so in order to be recognized and, as far as possible, to be trans-

77. Cf. my own reflections on "*Creatio als Setzen von Differenz (Augustinus)*", in *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt, 1980) p. 75 ff.

78. *En. in Psalm.* 143,11. *Ibid.* 83,10. *Trin.* IV prooem.

cended in the movement of assimilating oneself to God.

Augustine describes the condition of man, without smug or indulgently melancholic sentimentality, as *vanitas*, as empty, transitory appearance, characterized by delusion and fear. The relevant metaphors for this situation, this "day of affliction," *dies tribulationis*, are, according to Augustine, "shadows," "night," "vale of tears," or "the pain of the wanderer in exile" (*dolor peregrinationis*). But he does not mean to indicate an insurmountable opposition between the condition suggested by these metaphors and that to which their positive correlates refer: "light," "joy," "rest," "home," "the non-transitory, unaltering truth" of God, whose self-explication in the "I am that I am" shows Himself to be timeless, pure, and true "Being."⁷⁹ In short, the *regio dissimilitudinis*,⁸⁰ insofar as, and as soon as, it is recognized as such, actually provokes its own transcendence to *similitudo* or unity, which is also *regio beatitudinis*.

Analogous to Plotinus' belief that even in the realm of otherness man is not "cut off" from his origin (οὐδὲ νῦν ἀποτετμήμεθα⁸¹), and that, like a child separ-

79. *En. in Psalm.* 143,11. For Augustine's interpretation of Exodus 3,14 (*Ego sum qui sum*) cf. W. Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt, 1972) p. 26 ff.

80. *Conf.* VII 10,16.

81. *Plot.* VI 4,14,16 ff. Cf. also I 7,1,25-28.

ated from his father, he does not, because of his συγγένεια, entirely forget that origin, or that, like a metaphorical Odysseus, he is always striving toward his intellectual homeland, toward the One,⁸² so Augustine says that we, even when straying from the “unchanging joy,” are not “cut off or torn off” (*praecisi atque abrupti*). And to insure that even in temporality and change we do not fail to seek for the eternal, for truth and happiness, signs are set for us, appropriate to our *peregrinatio*. Of these, the clearest and most effective is the incarnation of Christ. This alone is the reason, and this is what makes it possible, that we search for the true happy life—*Deus egit nobiscum*.⁸³ At the same time it stands surety for the hope that happiness can also be realized (*nunc in spe, tunc in re*). In contrast to man’s fundamental impoverishment (*egestas*) stands the fullness (*plenitudo*) of Being and of meaning,⁸⁴ toward which every activity of man is secretly—and *should* be openly, consciously—directed. In that fullness, man has what he wants. But if this is to be a sufficient definition of happiness, then we cannot leave the matter of *what* it is man wants and has in such

82. V 1,1,9 f. 30 ff. I 6,8,16 ff.

83. *Trin.* IV 1,2.

84. On *egestas—plenitudo*: *Beata Vita* 28 ff. On the implications of this notion for the subsequent history of the problem, cf. W. Theiler, *Forschungen zum Neuplatonismus*, p. 192.

indeterminate generality as is suggested by the statement: *omnis, qui quod vult habet, beatus est.*⁸⁵ What is it, indeed, that he wants in order to be happy? From what we have already seen of the direction of Augustine's thought it is at least clear that it cannot be any temporal, finite, fortuitous possession, despite the persistence of man's belief that just here, and perhaps only here, will he find his great happiness: "to have money, a large family, blameless sons, pretty daughters, full cupboards, plenty of cattle, no ruined walls or broken fences, no tumult or quarreling in the streets, nothing but quiet and peace, abundance and wealth, in the home and in the state."⁸⁶ This list, which is based on a Psalm verse, but which also corresponds no less to the inflexible and yet somehow understandable contemporary will, may bring a sort of happiness, but a "left-handed" sort. *Quid est, sinistra? Temporalis, mortalis, corporalis.*⁸⁷ This is just that sort which is always accompanied by the fear of its being lost again.⁸⁸

2. In sharp contrast to the substance of this supposed, apparent happiness, and to the indifferent "happy is he who has what he wants," stands Augustine's

85. *Beata Vita* 10. *Trin.* XIII 5,8.

86. *En. in Psalm.* 89,9. 143,18.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Beata Vita* 11.

thesis: *Deum qui habet, beatus est.*⁸⁹ Both with regard to its subject, which is highest Being and Thought (*Deus*), as well as with regard to the means, or modus, by which this subject becomes and remains present to man (*comparare, habere*), this thesis embraces all those moments which characterize the ground of possibility of happiness. Actually, in order to analyze these moments, and thereby to make clear the richness of the thesis, the basic elements of Augustine's doctrine of God should be presented. But we must be content here, however, with a reference to just those aspects which Augustine himself emphasized in connection with his definition of happiness.

When, therefore, someone "has God," then he has an eternal Being, unchanging, removed from time and space—"Being Itself." Thus the definition: to live happily is nothing else than "having something eternal in cognition," participating in the unchanging Good or highest Good, "enjoying" the unshakeable and unchanging Truth⁹⁰ To be sure, one already

89. Ibid. *Lib. Arb.* II 16,41: *beata vita animae Deus est.* Ibid. 13,36: *Beatus est quippe qui fruitur summo bono.* *Trin.* VI 5,7: *Nos autem ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso beati.* *Solil.* I 1,3. *Sermo* 56,44.

90. *Div. Quaest.* LXXXIII 35,2: *quid est aliud beate vivere, nisi aeternum aliquid cognoscendo habere?* (Cf. Cicero, *Rep.* I 17,28: *sempiternum et divinum animo volutare*). Aug. *Beata Vita* 11 (*quod semper manet*). *Ep.* 140,23,56. 31,74: *participatio incommutabilis boni.* *Lib. Arb.* II 13,35: *frui inconcussa et incommutabili veritate.*

has knowledge of "something eternal" in the Idea as the ground of the individual, time-bound existent; but in God, however, as unchanging Being, one has knowledge of the intellectual ground, the creative site of the ideas itself.⁹¹ The way and the goal of the aspiration toward the happy life is therefore reflection upon that wisdom (*sapientia*) or truth (*veritas*) of God which in thinking itself realizes itself as unchanging unity. This offers us now a further refinement of the thesis, *Deum qui habet, beatus est*: when someone "has God," then he has Truth or Wisdom itself. Augustine gives this idea pregnant formulation: "The happy life is pleasure in truth. But this is pleasure in You, God, who are the truth, my illumination, salvation of my face, my God." Or: "*Sola veritas facit beatos, ex qua vera sunt omnia.*"⁹² The ground of the happy life does not rest on the evidence of some contingent truth or other, which taken together with other truths

91. *Lib. Arb.* II 11,30. *Div. Quaest.* LXXXIII 46,2. *Civ. Dei* XII 19. *Gen. ad Litt.* IV 4,10. 6,12 f.

92. *Conf.* X 23,33: *Beata quippe vita est gaudium de veritate. Hoc est enim gaudium de te, qui veritas es, deus, inluminatio mea, salus faciei meae, deus meus. Hanc vitam beatam omnes volunt, hanc vitam, quae sola beata est, omnes volunt, gaudium de veritate omnes volunt. De Agone Christiano* 33,25. *En. in Psalm.* 4,3. *Sermo* 151,8,10. 307,10.—For the philosophical context, cf. Seneca, *De vita beata* 4,5: *ex cognitione veri gaudium grande et immotum.* 5.2: *Beatus enim dici nemo potest extra veritatem proiectus.*

forms the context of a theory, but is rather absolute Truth, *veritas ipsa*. This is the determining “form” of every individual truth, the universal ground for the truth of what was established in the *creatio*; and as highest *similitudo* it is the “form of all likeness:” ground and source for the fact that existent beings are similar to one another and to their source. But since truth in an absolute sense is the “highest similarity” of the Principle with itself, the highest concurrence (harmony), or absolute self-correspondence, we can think of it both as “form” without any dissimilarity, the highest intensity of unity, and as the shaping “form” of everything that exists.⁹³ Absolute Truth is identical with the unchanging Being previously mentioned, with “Being itself” (*ipsum esse*). “Being itself” is thus God’s Truth itself. But for Augustine, “Being itself” is to be understood as the exegesis of “*Ego sum qui sum*” as God’s expression of his own essence. Accordingly, “Being” is unchangeably itself, in contrast to any deficient form of being, which, as created in the world, is not—and never can be—considered on its own, *itself* in the full sense of the word. “Being” is highest

93. *Vera Rel.* 39,72; 43,81. This and the following passage correspond to my German article “*Deus est veritas. Zur Rezeption des griechischen Wahrheitsbegriffes in der frühchristlichen Theologie*,” in *Pietas. Festschrift für B. Kötting* (= Ergänzungsband 8^{tes} des *Jahrbuches für Antike und Christentum* Münster, 1980 p. 26 f).

Being (*summe* or *maxime esse*), but not as the highest within the same dimension as other beings, but rather as the highest intensity of unity as the ground of multiplicity; it is "authentic" Being, because it is grounded not derivatively, but in itself (*germanum esse*); true or real Being, because it always remains equal to itself and preserves itself so (*verum esse*); or else simple, pure Being, because it is itself, without internal difference and thus is *only* itself (*simplex* or *sincerum esse*).⁹⁴ All these aspects of the *one* divine Being are mutually implied when this is considered as Truth itself: as highest self-correspondence or as pure self-identity. The predicate "truth" applies to God in His "true" Being, which is "Being itself," His unchanging, timeless presence, the pure IS;⁹⁵ but it applies to Him also in His Being as Principle, which in its act of constituting being nonetheless remains in itself. And the "IS" of God becomes the standard measure and the impulse of man's movement of transcendence: *Cogita Deum, invenies est, ubi fuit et erit esse non possit. Ut ergo et tu sis, transcede tempus.*⁹⁶

When someone "has God," then in having Truth he also has Wisdom. And the Wisdom which is identical with Truth and "Being itself" is Christ:

94. W. Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, p. 33.

95. *In Joh.* 38,10 f.

96. *Ibid.* 10.

Verbum Patris, Dei sapientia. On the basis of the more precise characterization of Wisdom, then, for the one who has God—apart from the specifically theological moments—the “highest measure” (*summus modus*) becomes constitutive. Further, the unchanging yet nonetheless creative site of the ideas is present to him in thought.⁹⁷ And participation in the ideas, or their presence in cognition, is the ground of happiness. By means of this series of identities, “Being itself”—Truth—Wisdom—Christ, Augustine assimilates and transforms theologically the philosophical quest for truth and wisdom as the constituents of the happy life. The philosophical concept of “Being itself,” of true Being or of absolute Truth, of the being of the Idea which reflects itself in its ideas, and of the absolute self-correspondent Unity, are taken up into the function of theology. Although Absolute Truth and Wisdom naturally cannot be thought of apart from their philosophical implications, nevertheless their soteriological meaning—which is mediated and proffered not by *ratio* but by *auctoritas*—transcends them, and alters their original significance.

97. *Beata Vita* 33 f.; *Lib. Arb.* II 11,30; 12,33; 19,52; *Ord.* I 11,32; *Retract.* I 3,8: a self-criticism of his identification of *mundus intelligibilis* and *sapientia*, whose reflexive element cannot be eliminated, despite a verbal opposition. The shift in terminology (*vocabulum* [= *mundus intelligibilis*], *quod ecclesiasticae consuetudini in re illa inusitatum est* does not necessarily alter the matter itself.

Another essential implication of the thesis "*Deum qui habet, beatus est*" discloses, at least as much as Truth and Wisdom do⁹⁸, a glimpse at the structure of man, a structure we see to correspond to the quality of that life sought and desired: If someone "has God," then he has immortality. This statement is to be understood in a double aspect: immortality of the soul as a basic element of man bound up in time and mortality, *and* as basic element of the future—eternal—life, which alone is happy in the true and fulfilled sense. Augustine considers the phenomenon of immortality as virtually a condition of the happy life; and likewise, according to Augustine—on the basis of the fact of the soul's immortality, disclosed to us in reflection, and of the body's immortality, promised us by *auctoritas*—we can assume in hope a timelessly enduring happy life, transcending timebound history. "The happy life is not a life of this mortality; there will be no happy life if there is no immortality. If it could in no way be imparted to man, then happiness too would be sought in vain; for it cannot subsist without immortality."⁹⁹ The quest for happiness,

98. Whose relevance for man has still to be shown in greater detail (cf. below p. 63).

99. *Trin.* XIII 7,10: *Sed non est mortalitatis huius haec vita, nec erit nisi quando et immortalitas erit. Quae si nullo modo dari homini posset, frustra etiam beatitudo quaereretur; quia sine immortalitate non potest esse.*—For the problem of immortality as a whole, cf. J. A. Mourant, *Augustine on immortality* (Villanova 1969).

then, is the same as the will to immortality: *cum ergo beati esse omnes homines velint, si vere volunt, profecto et esse immortales volunt.*¹⁰⁰ The aspiration to an eternal, immortally happy life is ontologically grounded in the essence of the human soul. It is, as I will make clearer in a moment, bound up with absolute Truth, absolute Being, Idea, and Wisdom; that is, the soul's temporally immanent act of cognition is able to fulfill its proper function only because it is grounded in that Being itself (Truth, Idea, Wisdom) which is above time, and because the soul is conscious of this. And so it is just precisely by means of this truly existent connection with Being that the soul *is* immortal. The soul has its own being from that which is Being in the first and highest sense (*prima essentia; substantia, quae maxime ac primitus est*); as pure *essentia* or *substantia*, this Being is also absolute Truth and Wisdom; because it *is* in the highest and most intensive degree, it has no opposite (*contrarium*) to itself, i.e. as *essentia*, it cannot *not* be.¹⁰¹ Thus the foundation of Augustine's argumentation is

100. Ibid. 8,11. Cf. also *Sermo* 306,8,7: *tenemus certe non esse beatam, nisi vitam aeternam; immo non esse beatam, nisi vitam, quia si non aeterna et si non cum satietate perpetua, procul dubio nec beata nec vita. Sermo* 150,8,10.

101. This same pattern of thought recurs in the "ontological argument": that God, as that, than which nothing greater can be thought, and thus as "Being itself", cannot *not* be.

the unity of Being and Truth; on this basis Augustine attempts to prove an essential, indissoluble integration of the soul with the Being which "surpasses" it (*praestantior essentia*): "If the soul has its attribute 'of being' from this (highest and primordial) Being ... there is nothing through which it could lose this, since that Being from which it has this attribute has no opposite; and so the soul never ceases to be, ... it cannot perish".¹⁰² On the basis of this ontological connection of the soul with Being or Idea, we can better understand, too, another of Augustine's arguments for the immortality of the soul: No soul lacks or departs from itself; but the soul is life; and life, by definition, lives. "That life which departs from what is mortal (that which dies), does not depart from itself, since it itself is soul" (and here, soul as

102. *Immort. An.* XII 19: *Omnis enim essentia non ob aliud essentia est, nisi quia est. Esse autem non habet contrarium, nisi non esse: unde nihil est essentiae contrarium. Nullo modo igitur res ulla esse potest contraria illi substantiae, quae maxime ac primitus est. Ex qua si habet animus idipsum quod est (non enim aliunde hoc habere potest, qui ex se non habet, nisi ab illa re quae illo ipso est animo praestantior), nulla res est qua id amittat, quia nulla res ei rei est contraria qua id habet; et propterea esse non desinit. ... Non igitur potest interire. X 17: Haec autem quae intelliguntur eodem modo esse habentia, cum ea intuetur animus, satis ostendit se illis esse coniunctum, miro quodam eodemque incorporali modo, scilicet non localiter. Lib. Arb. III 5,13: humana quippe anima naturaliter divinis ex quibus pendet connexa rationibus.*

that which imparts soul or life has to be distinguished from that which possesses a soul); “thus the soul does not die”.¹⁰³ The model for this argumentation is Platonic. In the *Phaedo* Plato develops his third proof of immortality, in the immediate context of his doctrine of ideas, on the basis of the concept of life. Life shares with Idea this characteristic: being identical with itself, it cannot have its own opposite in itself. It is also a basic characteristic of the soul, according to Plato, that it brings life to whatever it takes possession of. Soul, then, is the ground of a being’s self-movement. And the opposite of life is death. If the soul is essentially life, then it cannot take up its opposite, death, into itself. And that which by its nature does not take up death into itself, is the deathless or the undying: ἀθάνατος and ἀνώλεθρος. When the soul separates itself in death from the body, it does not pass away, but passes death by. And its life must be understood entirely in terms of its intellectual participation in the Idea.¹⁰⁴

The immortality-thesis is of such decisive significance for Augustine because the eschatological aspect of his concept of *beatitudo* depends on it. But it is

103. *Immort. An.* IX 16.

104. *Phaedo* 105 d ff. For the problem of opposites: 103 a ff; on the distinction between ὑπεκχωρεῖν (“eluding”, “passing by”) and ἀπόλλυσθαι (“passing away”): 103 d; for the application to the soul: 106 e 5-7.

not so much in this presupposition (*immortalitas animae*) that Augustine distinguishes himself from the philosophical conception of a happy life, as in the intensity of his belief that the final fulfillment of the truly or authentically happy life lies in the future, which will, of course, become the timeless present: the eschatology of happiness, *beatitudo finalis*.¹⁰⁵

Just as man in "this world" is able to see God only "through a glass, darkly" (*in speculo et aenigmate*), but beyond the time and history of the *civitas terrena*, in the "heavenly Jerusalem," will see him "face to face" (*a facie in faciem*), just as he is; so in an analogous manner, the happy life is only attainable truly and in all its fullness beyond the bounds of physical death. "Now" we are only happy in the consolation of hope (*spe beati*), "then," however, in reality: *cuius (vitae beatae) etiam si nondum res, tamen spes eius nos hoc tempore consolatur*.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to the permanent desiderium of the "unquiet heart," to the ceaseless, self-provoking searching and

105. *Civ. Dei* XIX to.

106. *Doc. Christ.* I 22,20. For the eschatological aspect, cf. *Retr.* I 2 (*futura vita*); *Beata Vita* 19 f. 35. *Trin.* XIII 7,10 (*spe beati*). *Conf.* X 20,29. *Civ. Dei* II 29. XIX 4. 10 f. XXII 30. *Sermo* 151,8,10. 307,8,7. *En. in Psalm.* 92,1 (*ante requiem*). 143,9. Cf. also the differentiation between *secutio* and *consecutio* (= *ipsa beatitas*): *Mor. Eccl.* I 11,18. I 6,10: *sequi - assequi*.

finding (*sic quaeramus tamquam inventuri et sic inveniamus tamquam quaesituri*¹⁰⁷) this transcendent and final form of life—the “complete, assured and eternal happiness”¹⁰⁸—realizes itself as rest, leisure, and the insurpassable peace of God.¹¹⁰ Rest and leisure do not, of course, mean inactivity in the usual sense: the rest from the desideria (*finis desideriorum*) is to be understood rather as the highest intensity of being possible to the human spirit and its spiritualized body.¹¹⁰ It consists in the *cognitio, contemplatio, or visio dei*,¹¹¹ in vision of the absolute Truth. “We will ourselves be the seventh day,” “the truly great Sabbath which no evening shall bring to a close.” *Ibi vacabimus et videbimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus. Ecce quod erit in fine sine fine.*¹¹²

At least since the time of Feuerbach’s critique of religion, a conception of happiness like this one, which transfers the fulfillment of human existence not simply into the future, but into the “hereafter,”

107. *Civ. Dei* XXII 30.

108. *Trin.* IX 1,1.

109. ... *ubi nobis talis et tanta pax erit, qua melior et maior esse non possit: Civ. Dei* XIX 10. II 29,2.

110. *Civ. Dei* XX 26. XXII 20 f.

111. Concerning the modus of “having God” cf. below, p. 69. For the subsequent influence of this idea, which Cusanus assimilated to God’s vision of Himself, cf. W. Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt, 1980) p. 144 ff (on “*visio absoluta*”).

112. *Civ. Dei* XXII 30 s.f.

is sure to be exposed as a fiction, consoling us in the face of present calamity with empty hopes of a happiness supposed yet to come. Not only would the concept of God be dismissed as a projection, or hypostatization of a wish whose only existence is in the mind, but the notion of perfect happiness in absolute vision as well. This way of thinking is of course completely foreign to Augustine. *God is real* in Himself, just as He is conveniently effective, as creator and mediator, in our thought. A “psycho-analytic” interpretation—and Feuerbach’s critique of religion is just that—which attempted to reconstruct the unconscious or the unthought element in Augustine would necessitate an evasion both of Augustine’s understanding of himself and of his presuppositions. Of course, one might easily enough conclude that it is sensible or useful in an “age of anxiety”¹¹³ to prescribe religion or the coming happiness as *medicina animi*. But the rationally grounded conviction that the object of both religion *and* philosophy is the highest reality is too strong in Augustine’s age, in contrast with our own, to permit one to restrict that reality to its categories.

3. Though Augustine firmly believed that the truly and authentically happy life only realized itself in the

113. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge 1965).

eschatological future of a *visio beatifica*, he certainly did not mean the *spe beati* to be understood as passively waiting for the grace of God. While they are of course incapable of forcing the longed-for goal “out of themselves,” they are nonetheless challenged to a *bene vivere* as the necessary precondition to a *beate vivere*.¹¹⁴ This precondition should not be narrowly construed as purely moralistic; rather, it refers more essentially to man’s habit of mind, though naturally this becomes the standard for meaningful action: thought has to discover its own precondition, and thereby the possibility structurally present in it to join itself intellectually and cognitively “even now” with the ground of the future *beata vita*, or to participate in it.

I would like now to follow up these brief indications by recalling to mind this characteristic feature of Augustinian thought under the guidance of a few central texts.¹¹⁵ All these texts share in common

114. *Mor. Eccl.* I 6,10.

115. Cf. in particular *De Vera Religione* 39,72; *Conf.* VII 10,16; and *Lib. Arb.* II. For the passage in *Confessiones* cf. F. E. van Fleteren, in *Augustinian Studies* 5 (1974) p. 29 ff. The following passage from *De Ordine* II 18,47 makes it clear that the *reditio*, or self-knowledge, is the precondition for the happy life: *duplex quaestio est: una de anima, altera de deo. Prima efficit, ut nosmetipsos noverimus; altera, ut originem nostram. ... illa nos dignos beata vita, beatos haec facit.* [R. J. O’Connell’s highly enlightening article: “*The Enneads and Saint Augustine’s image of happiness*”],

the postulate that thought must withdraw itself from the entanglement in sensuality and temporality into its own interior, because only here can one inform oneself about sense experience. Thus Augustine opposes the position which holds that sensory experience by itself is in a position to mediate true knowledge. Such a mediation is apparently only imaginable on the basis of a prevenient conceptualization in the senses. And the source, the possibility, and the range of this conceptualization can only be discovered by returning inward. A central statement in *De Vera Religione* points to this inner source of certainty or of truth as an expression characterized by conceptualization: "Do not look outward; retreat into yourself. Truth dwells in the inner man."¹¹⁶ The inner man: this is the thinking self-consciousness, the

in: *Vigiliae Christianae* 17 (1963) pp. 129-164 came to my attention after I had finished this manuscript. It reinforces my view of the connection between Augustine's concept of happiness and that of Plotinus. But it does not discuss the specific formulations and dimensions of 'beatitudo' in Augustine; it does however give a careful comparison of *Conf.* VII 10 especially with *Enn.* V 8, VI 4-5 and VI 9, bringing out the affinities between Augustine and Plotinus. They converge in essential aspects. The concept of 'visio', as described in *Conf.* VII 10, is right at the centre of the concept of happiness and it was precisely my intention to show this.]

116. 39,72: *Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi. In interiore homine habitat veritas.*

mens knowledgeable of its ground, in and through which alone truth is to be found. *Confessions* VII, 10 begins with an analogous postulate: "Under your guidance I entered into my deepest interior, and this I could do because you had become my helper. I entered, and I saw ...".¹¹⁷ If sense experience provides the initial impulse for the return of thought into itself, then there must already be an element of consciousness conveniently active in such thought, directing it to this return; thought must already contain within itself a certain knowledge, albeit unclear and as yet obscure in its character, which is also at work in the act of sense experience, and is capable of recognizing the relativity and insufficiency of such experience. But one should not hastily construe from this reservation in regard to sense experience a hostility toward the world or the body; Augustine's intention, rather, is to grasp the essence of what we experience through the senses, i.e. to pronounce a true judgment on it.

The postulate which directs thought to return into its own interior constitutes with this return the beginning of an inward "ascension" (*ascensus in corde*).¹¹⁸ The inwardness of consciousness proves to be

117. Cf. also *Ord.* I,2,3: *animus sibi redditus*; *Sermo* 330,3: *redi ad te: sed iterum sursum versus cum redieris ad te, noli remanere in te ... et deinde redde te ei qui fecit te*; *Lib. Arb.* II 16,41: *in seipsum redeas* (for the ascertainment and legitimation of judgment).

118. *Ascensus in corde*: *En. in Psalm.* 83,10. *Conf.* XIII 9,10:

regulated by different grades of intensity; Augustine calls these: the eye of the soul, spirit (*mens*) or intellectual soul (*ratiocinans anima*), and the light "above" the *mens*, identical to absolute Truth, the atemporal immutability, identical with that "which is"¹¹⁹.

In thought's return into itself, apparently the self-ascertainment of the intellectual soul is not sufficient; in order to achieve an adequate, universally certain consciousness, it is necessary to pass beyond this dimension of thought into this thought's ground: where reason comes from, "from where the light of reason itself is lit." And this is the Truth itself, which in the temporal act of return into itself becomes visible and intelligible. This truth subsists in thought itself, is present in it as its ground of possibility; but it is also "above" thought. And thus it is not merely the general ground of particular acts of thought, but much rather the a priori ground of consciousness, thought, and cognition, subsistent and active both transcendently in itself and in the inwardness of thought. So in the return of thought into itself, Truth becomes manifest in its dialectical structure as

dono tuo accendimur et sursum ferimur: inardescimus et imus. Ascendimus ascensiones in corde et cantamus canticum graduum. Conf. IX 10,24: ascendebamus interius cogitando. Transcendere: ibid. Transcende et te ipsum: Ver. Rel. 39,72.

119. *Conf. VII 17,23.*

at once In-Being and Beyond-Being. Despite the fact that thought begins and ascends in the inner man, Augustine emphasizes again and again the aboveness and the otherness of this Truth encountered a priori in thought: "The immutable light" (*lux incommutabilis*) which thought discovers "above" itself, is not "of the same kind" as sense experience, only greater; it is "wholly other" (*aliud valde ab istis omnibus*¹²⁰). The Over-Being of this light of Truth or Being which we encounter in thought is determined by the fact that it is apparently the *divine*, absolute Truth itself; and this makes evident the difference between absoluteness (*creator*) and finitude (*creatura*): *Sed superior, quia ipsa fecit me, et ego inferior, quia factus ab ea.*¹²¹ Insight into this Truth which transcends thought, but which is nonetheless active in it to make it possible, must be understood as an accord or a "correspondence" with Truth. If Truth, as I have already indicated, is for Augustine the highest self-correspondence—the exclusion, that is, of all difference in the sense of non-truth, deception, and non-being (*convenientia, qua superior esse non possit*)—then the goal of the intellectual return into the interior is to reach an analogous correspondence with this absolute self-correspondence. So the highest "truth" or *convenientia* possible to man is the iden-

120. *Ibid.* VII 10,16.

121. *Ibid.*

tification with the absolute *convenientia* or Truth, whose transcendence he experiences in himself, and which can then become both the beginning and the measure or norm for all reliable thought and cognition.

When Augustine speaks of a "light" from which reason is lit (*unde ipsum lumen rationis accenditur*¹²²), this does not refer to some purely psychological experience of evidence; *lux incommutabilis* is much rather a statement about the a priori constitution of human knowledge: the timelessly immutable, illuminating light of absolute Truth itself is the ground and measure of the knowledge of truth as experienced in time.¹²³ The presence of the light of the subsistent ideas (*rationes aeternae*) in the interior of the human spirit, the essential integrity of thought with Truth in this light, is thus the medium and absolute ground of possibility through which all human knowledge comes to realization.¹²⁴ Theologically speaking, "illumination" is participation in the Word, in that Life which is the light of man.¹²⁵ The Word which addresses

122. *Ver. Rel.* 39,72.

123. On God's essence as light, besides *Conf.* VII 10,16: *vidi ... supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem*, e.g.: *Solil.* I 1,3: *Deus intelligibilis lux, in quo et a quo et per quem intelligibiliter lucent, quae intelligibiliter lucent omnia. In Joh.* 2,6 ff. 13,5. *En. in Psalm.* 26, s. 2,15. 93,6.

124. Cf. e.g. *Lib. Arb.* III 5,13. *Div. Quaest.* LXXXIII 46,2.

125. *Trin.* IV 2,4.

and illuminates man encounters the inward light that is constitutive for the human personality as an inner Word, and can thus initiate the free *conversio* of *imago dei* into its luminous original. And so *illuminatio* is seen to be an event of insight occasioned by the cooperation of human effort (the return of thought to itself) with the divine activity, manifesting itself as the presence and the accessibility of absolute Truth in thought.

In the intellectual correspondence with the highest self-correspondence (Truth), thought reaches “that which is” “in a moment of trembling aspect.”¹²⁶ The attainment of that which *is*—in thought’s return into itself—thus extends the series of identifications, *veritas—aeternitas—caritas*,¹²⁷ to include “Being itself.” For “that which *is*” can only be understood as this absolute, pure Being, unchangeably itself, which reveals itself in the statement: “I am that I am.” And this “Being itself” is the most certain being of all, so that Augustine would rather say there is better ground for doubting that he himself lives than that Truth, which we recognize as reasonable on the basis of what has been created,¹²⁸ does not

126. *Conf.* VII 17,23: *pervenit ad id, quod est, in ictu trepidantis aspectus.*

127. *Conf.* VII 10,16: *qui novit veritatem, novit eam* (scil. *lucem incommutabilem*) *et qui novit eam, novit aeternitatem. Caritas novit eam. O aeterna veritas et vera caritas et cara aeternitas!*

128. *Conf.* VII 10, 16 s.f.

exist. This conviction remains even though the thinker has to admit to himself that, after the immediate event of this insight, and due to his own weakness, he is thrown back into his accustomed circumstance of image, shadows, and riddles; but he is left with the "loving memory,"¹²⁹ the impulse resulting from this insight, which he holds on to firmly as being constitutive for his being, his cognition, and his action. It is the preliminary glance, so to speak, given to him who is happy in hope, of the coming final happiness, the lasting possession in vision of absolute Truth. Thus man's provisional happiness consists in the abstraction from multiplicity,¹³⁰ from the sensuous, the temporal, the dispersive; and in turning inward into the interior of thought, and so into the Unity and the Truth which grounds it; it consists in the intensification of one's own being, in permitting oneself to be directed by the spirit which is identical with Truth. And in this consists man's freedom—to open himself to "Being itself" and to the highest form of meaning: *Haec est libertas nostra, cum isti subdimur veritati.*¹³¹ This is the highest measure of the happiness which can be attained "here."

129. *Ibid.* 17,23 s.f.

130. *Sermo* 96,6,6: *a multis curre ad unum, dispersa collige in unum: conflue, munitus esto, mane apud unum; noli ire in multa. Ibi est beatitudo. Ver. Rel.* 55,113.

131. *Lib. Arb.* II 13,37.

The question, how can I *search for* what I have “not yet” known—or at least not yet experienced—arises in two forms: in the question about happiness as well as in the question about God; and indeed, these questions belong together essentially: *cum enim te, deum meum, quaero, vitam beatam quaero.*¹³² With regard to happiness, Augustine plays with the Platonic notion of *anamnesis (recordatio)*, which would imply the “forgetting” of a happiness once known or enjoyed; but he never clearly commits himself to this theory as an explanation of searching. Everyone who wants to be happy, those happy in hope, know well enough what it is they love. The beginning of the search may well be unclear, and the question, whether the happy life is “in the memory,” receives only a very general answer, though an adequate enough one for a start: we know it “somehow,” we have a “certain notion” (*certa notitia*) of the happy life which we are to bring to realization; and that notion is the ground of our search.¹³³ Analogously, the presence of Truth and Wisdom in man’s intellectual interior grounds and initiates the search for God:¹³⁴ in Truth, we transcend inwardness and reach

132. *Conf.* X 20,29.

133. *Ibid.* and 21,30 f. *Lib. Arb.* II 9,26: *mentibus nostris impressa est notio beatitatis.* 15,40.

134. *Conf.* X 25,36: *Sed ubi manes in memoria mea, domine, ubi illic manes? quale cubile fabricasti tibi? quale sanctuarium aedificasti tibi?*

toward the Over-Being, as the texts from *De Vera Religione* and *Confessiones* have shown. In the second book of *De Libero Arbitrio* Augustine even attempts a proof of God's existence on the basis of the a priori structure of the spirit, and it is expressly linked to the happy life. I would like to elucidate this briefly.

In the self-reflection or self-exploration of the spirit (*mens*) or reason (*ratio*), something reveals itself to thought which is "higher" than thought itself, which is to say: as the *ground* of thought it exists more intensively.¹³⁵ This experience begins in the encounter with something "unchanging" in us, which seems not to be resolvable or removable either by thought or by sensibility. Here we may understand as paradigmatic—in good Platonic fashion—the ontological structure of number (*ratio et veritas numeri*).¹³⁶ In experiencing this unchanging being in us, we are also shown, unmediated, its source, which is not *identical*

135. *Lib. Arb.* II 6,13: *aliquid ... quod sit in natura hominis ratione sublimius*. 14: *ipsa nostra ratione praestantius ... aliquid supra nostram rationem (= aeternum atque incommutabile)*. 12,34: *excelentior ... quam mens nostra (veritas [ipsa])*. 15,39: *supra mentes (Deus = ipsa veritas)*. ... *Est enim deus, et vere summeque est*.—For the dialectic of "in" and "above" cf. *Conf.* III 6,11: *interior intimo meo (Deus) et superior summo meo*.

136. *Lib. Arb.* II 8,20. 21: *incorruptibilis numeri veritas*. 23: *Hoc ergo quod per omnes numeros esse immobile, firmum incorruptumque conspiciamus, unde conspiciamus?*

with ourselves. It is that Wisdom itself which is one with Truth, and which every thinking being shares in common.¹³⁷ It is not merely the timeless, absolute site¹³⁸ of the numbers, which would only mean that the immutable rules of numbers are also the immutable rules of Wisdom; rather, this Wisdom is also the site of the ideas,¹³⁹ which in their numerically structuring and ordering mode of being are active as the creative design of the world (*Sapientia disponit omnia suaviter*). They are expressed in the Word as the “Wisdom begotten of the Father”:¹⁴⁰ at once as a Being in itself, the inward moment of the divine thought; and as the creative constituents of the world, the divine ground of an “other” being opposite to itself. So when, in thought’s return into itself, man finds an unchanging being, he realizes thereby his

137. *Lib. Arb.* II 9,25. 26: *num aliam putas esse sapientiam nisi veritatem, in qua cernitur et tenetur summum bonum?* 27: *lux ipsa sapientiae ... omnibus sapientibus ... una communis.* 14,38. 19,52. 16,42: *Transcende ergo et animum artificis, ut numerum sempiternum videas; iam tibi sapientia de ipsa interiore sede fulgebit.* (Cf. Plot. I 6,9,13-15: ... και μη παύση τεκταίνων τὸ σὸν ἀγαλμα, ἕως ἂν ἐκλάμψειέ σοι τῆς ἀρετῆς ἢ θεοειδῆς ἀγλαία, ἕως ἂν ἴδῃς σωφροσύνην ἐν ἀγνώ βεβῶσαν βάρφω.)

138. *Lib. Arb.* II 11,30: ... *eius* (scil. *incommutabilis veritatis numerorum*) *quasi cubile ac penetrabile vel regionem quandam ... quasi habitaculum quoddam sedemque numerorum.*

139. *Ibid.* 12,33.

140. 15,39.

relationship with the realm of ideas.¹⁴¹ And the attainment of knowledge of Truth, of Wisdom, of the realm of ideas, of God; the directing of oneself toward that which is “always one and the same” (*unum atque idem semper*),¹⁴² initiated and impelled by the notion of wisdom and happiness imprinted on our spirit (*sapientiae et beatitudinis notio in mente impressa*);¹⁴³ this is, at least in the realm of finitude, the highest form of happiness, and corresponds to the *spe beati*. “For no one is happy unless through the highest good, which is seen and grasped in that Truth which we call Wisdom”.¹⁴⁴ And this is “Being itself”.¹⁴⁵

The philosophical model of this conception, which analogously unites the vision of the source with the highest form of happiness, was developed, as I have already indicated, by Plotinus and the Neo-Platonic

141. 12,33. 19,52: *coaptare animum illis incommutabilibus regulis ...*
III 5,13: *humana anima divinis ex quibus pendet connexa rationibus.*

142. II 16,41.

143. II 9,26.

144. *Ibid.*: *nemo enim beatus est, nisi summo bono, quod in ea veritate, quam sapientiam vocamus, cernitur et tenetur.* 13,35: *quid beatius eo qui fruitur inconcussa et incommutabili et excellentissima veritate?* 13,36. 16,41: *beata vita animae deus est.*

145. 15,19. On this problem cf. W. Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* 30 ff. É. Zum Brunn, “*L’exégèse augustiniennne de ‘Ego sum qui sum’ et la ‘métaphysique de l’Exode’*”, in: *Dieu et l’Etre* (ed. P. Vignaux) Paris 1978, 141-163.

philosophy which followed him. And in order to clarify further the philosophical implications of Augustine's thought it will be necessary now, at least briefly, to sketch out this model.

In its return into itself (ἐπιστροφή), in the act, that is, of self-ascertainment, thought arrives at its own source. As in Augustine's formulation, this is understood as both *in* thinking and *above* it. It is the absolute One itself, without internal relation, which is the source of every form of unity and of thought. Although it may be identified with *theos*, we recognize in its lack of internal relation and therefore in its non-reflexivity, an essential difference from the self-reflective God of Augustine. According to Plotinus, the process of self-ascertainment begins with an ethical imperative similar to Augustine's: that man must free himself from his entanglement in sensuality and multiplicity (ἄφελε πάντα).¹⁴⁶ This return is also an ascent through the various grades of the nous' intensity in the psyche, which is to say, through the various grades of thinking as a whole. In the return into itself, thinking attains for the first time to the true self of man, the "inner man" (ὁ εἴσω ἄνθρωπος), the authentic We.¹⁴⁷ This is grounded in the realm of intelligible, pure Being, but it is active as well in

146. V 3,17,38.

147. VI 4,14,16 ff. V 1,10,10. I 1,7,20. Cf. also VI 7,4. G. J. P. O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self* (Shannon 1973).

man's temporal existence.¹⁴⁸ Not only does thought become aware of its source when it turns inward upon itself; more importantly, it becomes this source itself, it transforms itself into nous.¹⁴⁹ In keeping with its point of departure, this return is also an ever greater simplification, an ever more intense unification, insofar as it allows itself to be determined ever more intensely by its own source. The goal of this process is unification with the One itself. This One cannot, of course, be thought or known as such, because it is above, or prior to, any thing or form accessible only to dianoetic, or discursive, thought. It can only be known and thought as "the One in us," as the ground of unity for our thinking, which points through and beyond itself to its own ground.¹⁵⁰ And so the One, which is conveniently subsistent and active in thought as the ground of its unity, is the precondition for any "experience" of the One itself, an experience which is no longer intellectual. The One, however, does not directly "help" thought to raise itself out of itself—as is the case, for instance, in Augustine's "*duce te;*" thought, rather, transcends itself exclusively on the basis of the ontological convenience of the One *in* thought, that is, by means of the structuredness given thought by the One: by the

148. I 1,7.

149. VI 7,35,4 f.

150. III 8,9,22. 11,19. V 1,11,13 f. V 3,8,41 ff. VI 9,11,31.

One's unifying force in thought.¹⁵¹ In unification with the One, thought passes over into non-thinking, seeing becomes what is seen—a condition in which the difference in thought is annihilated, analogous to the Beyond-Being of the undifferentiated One itself. “In that moment (of union) the seer... no longer sees his object—I grant You, this manner of speaking is daring—he does not distinguish it, does not represent it to himself as two; rather, he becomes something else, no longer himself, no longer his own, he is embraced into the higher world, belongs to that Being (the One), and so is One, center touching center.”¹⁵² Plotinus means, and correctly so, that he can no longer speak of something seen, but can

151. Porphyrios, however, emphasizes the θεός συλλήπτωρ, ἔφορος, ἐπόπτῃς, in *Ad Marcellam* 12,282,6 and 18 (Nauck²), which certainly presupposes the assumption of a direct relationship of assistance on God's part to man, He thus assimilates the early Greek concept of *concursum divinum*, e.g. Aeschylus, *Pers.* 742; Soph. frg. 841 (Nauck²); Eurip. frg. 432 (Nauck²): τῷ γὰρ πονοῦντι καὶ θεὸς συλλαμβάνει; Menander frg. 494 (Körte-Thierfelder II 169), in a just enterprise “God, too, lends a hand”: τόλμῃ δικαία καὶ θεὸς συλλαμβάνει (These passages from Greek tragedy and comedy were kindly brought to my attention by Eckard Lefèvre.) Xenophon, *Mem.* I 4,18: πάντων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι (θεοῦς). IV 3,13: θᾶττον δὲ νοήματος ἀναμαρτήτως ὑπηρετοῦντα (θεόν). Marc Aurel IX 40 (συνεργεῖν). Plotinus restricts this idea to the general presence of the One as ground and goal.

152. VI 9,10,13 ff.

only point to something “unified.”¹⁵³ If Augustine’s way of thinking is inherently analogous to the Plotinian sense of the return and ascent of thought, he nonetheless distinguishes himself from Plotinus—above and beyond the theological context—in never allowing this cognitive, contemplative vision to pass over or merge with its object, but always wants to preserve vision as something absolute, timeless, and enduring. In Augustine’s eyes, the happy life as Plotinus views it could only sustain itself for an instant: in the moment of manifestation and union.

4. Something remains yet to be said about the means by which the ground and object of happiness—Truth, Wisdom, immutable Being itself, God—becomes present to man and stays with him. Just what is implied by the “*habet*” in the statement, *Deum qui habet, beatus est*? Actually this has been considered and stated already in our analysis of the implication of *Deus*. But in these concluding remarks we need to emphasize once more its special modus for the sake of contrasting it to modern attitudes toward happiness.

The way to the happy life, and the act of sustaining it in permanent presence, is cognition (*cogno-*

153. VI 9,11,6 ff; 10,14 f; I 6,7,25 ff. For a more thorough presentation of this question, see W. Beierwaltes, “*Reflexion und Einung*,” *Grundfragen der Mystik* (with H. U. von Balthasar and A. M. Haas), Einsiedeln, 1974.

scere), insight (*intellegere*), knowledge (*scire*), contemplation (*contemplari*), intelligible (spiritual) vision (*videre, visio*), which brings about an illumination.¹⁵⁴ Thus the search for, and the possession of happiness is conceived as a form of thought, a form of the highest possibility and intensity of the spirit; and this alone guarantees that the goal or end is reached. To be sure, this is not to suggest a restriction of this *modus* to some conceivable modern rationalistic operation with concepts. On the other hand, neither is access to the happy life relegated to the realm of diffuse, conceptionally uncontrolled emotions, simply because Augustine identifies cognition, knowledge, and contemplation with love (*amare*), thereby interpreting "having" as "loving": *Beata quippe vita si non amatur, non habetur*.¹⁵⁵ The happy life is loved only *because* it is known or recognized.¹⁵⁶ This

154. *Cognoscere, contemplari* e.g.: *Mor. Eccl.* I 19,35. *Ag. Christ.* 33,35. *Div. Quaest.* LXXXIII 35,2. *Sermo* 363,29,30 f. *Ep.* 187,6.21. — *scire*: *Trin.* XIII 4,7. *Retr.* I 2. — *videre, visio* e.g.: *Civ. Dei* XX 21,1. XXII 29 f. *Gen. ad Litt.* XII 16,54. *De Sermone Domini in monte* II 12,34. *En. in Psalm.* 83,8. *illustrati*, e.g.: *Mor. Eccl.* XI 8. For the concept and problem of *illuminatio* cf. V. Warnach, "Erleuchtung und Einsprechung," *Augustinus Magister* (Paris, 1955), I pp. 429-450, and the articles "Einsprechung," "Erleuchtung," and "Irradiatio," *Hist. Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (ed. J. Ritter), Vols. II and IV.

155. *Civ. Dei* XIV 25. *Mor. Eccl.* I 3,4.

156. *Trin.* XIII 4,7; VIII 4,6; X 1,3. On the triadic self-ascer-

conviction is the consequence of Augustine's concept of triadic self-penetration of the spirit: *Mens, notitia* (cognition as a conceptualizing act of the spirit) and *amor* penetrate one another to form a unity in which each retains its individuality, and yet the whole is indissoluble.¹⁵⁷ Love is constitutive both for the spirit's relation to itself and for its impulse beyond itself, its movement of transcendence. But love *remains* a mode of knowing: as *philosophia cordis*, the highest form of the unity of thought and emotion. Happiness, as a loving which knows and sees, and a seeing or knowing which loves, is equivalent to the "enjoyment" of the highest good or of God (*frui deo*): *Beatus est quippe qui fruatur summo bono (sive deo)*.¹⁵⁸ In contrast to "use" (*uti*), i.e. to the exploitative use of a thing, or to the appropriation of one thing for the sake of something else (because of some end one wishes to achieve), "enjoy" means a possession which is really directed to the object itself: "to cling to a thing in love for its own sake," "to have present what one loves."¹⁵⁹ Today the word "en-

tainment as *analogia trinitatis* of the spirit, cf. R. Berlinger, *Augustins dialogische Metaphysik* (Frankfurt, 1962) pp. 171 ff.

157. *Trin.* IX 4,7.

158. *Lib. Arb.* II 13,36. 35 (text n. 144). *Beata Vita* 34. *Mor. Eccl.* I 3,4. 19,35. *Ord.* I 8,24. *Doct. Christ.* I 22,20.

159. *Doct. Christ.* I 4,4: *frui est enim amore inhaerere alicui rei propter se ipsam.* *Mor. Eccl.* I 3,4. Cf. Plot. I 6,7,27: ἀπολαύειν (scil. αὐτοῦ τοῦ καλοῦ).

joy” or “enjoyment” has a completely hedonistic sound, suggesting mere passive consumption of that which for its own sake stands much rather in need of the exertion and precision of the concept, and this not in despondency. That sort of enjoyment is more an abuse.¹⁶⁰ “Enjoyment,” as Augustine uses the word, describes on the contrary—and precisely in relation to the *vita beata*—the most intensive activity of spirit, which comprehends as it *is—sicuti est*—the highest object of cognition, vision, and love, as both the highest Being and the highest self-fulfillment of man.

5. The analyses of the modes by which, according to Augustine, man achieves, and possibly retains, a happy life, all explicate the notion that the happy life, in its very ground, is a form of the highest spiritual and emotional intensity—of vision, of cognition, of love. Emotion, however, is always regarded as permeated by spirit. Not just any fortuitous—though perhaps fortunate—piece of knowledge which happens to expand our general knowledge occasions a life deserving to be called happy or felicitous. The life which deserves these names is brought about by the knowledge which is cognitive vision of the universal ground determining the realm of Being and the knowable. This conception differs fundamentally,

160. On the *perversio* of *uti* and *frui*, see *Div. Quaest.* LXXXIII 30.

as I have already mentioned, from certain modern and current notions and formulae concerning happiness which have absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the knowledge of Truth as it has been described here. Such formulae, for instance, as these: happiness as mere feeling; as a mood of self-indulgence; as sentimental well-being; as obtuse surfeit through consumption which refuses to be halted; or as the reduction of reality to a "brave new world" insulated against all objections, in which "they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get"¹⁶¹ and where happiness is decreed as a system. Although Augustine's concept of happiness is not egocentric—for love of God cannot exist without love of neighbour.¹⁶² and thus the individual's aspiration for happiness must also ground and increase his attachment to his fellow—it is nonetheless incompatible with utopian schemes for society which promise universal happiness in the future. But Augustine never shirks the social responsibility which man bears now, "in this time," to promote humanity, i.e. man's consciousness of being determined by a goal transcendent to history.¹⁶³

161. The consequence of which would be a radical and ruinous restriction of spirit and emotion (cf. A. Huxley, *Brave New World*, 1932).

162. Cf. e.g. *Trin.* VIII 8,12. *Ev. Joh.* 65,2.

163. It is one of the goals of Augustine's work on the philosophy and theology of history, *De Civitate Dei*, to make this clear.

If one can avoid carelessly repressing, or despising, the Augustinian concept of the happy life — and with it the Greek concept as well—as merely “contemplative,” then an analysis of this dimension of thought might well give one cause for reflection. But such reflection on happiness is impossible for a philosophy without norms or principles, which, after all, need not in themselves necessarily be prescriptions surpressive of freedom or function as a repressive ideology. Philosophy would do well to take its stand in opposition to the all too common repudiation of the “concept,” i.e. of rational, conceptual thought, which is presumed guilty of a functionally planned, but nonetheless opaque social system, and incline once more to the belief that the only salvation for the hapless confusion of the age must be found—if anywhere at all—in conceptual, argumentative, well-grounded, responsible thought. Not a thought which, though operating conceptually, becomes hopelessly entangled in formal or formalistic procedures; nor an ideological despotism which knows all too clearly, and without critical tolerance, just what is and what is not true; but a concept, rather, which is directed in intensive exertion and self-criticism toward the truth of things, and which, proceeding dialectically, takes this truth as the norm of thought *and* action. This truth of things—call it Being, Ground, Idea, or Reason—must possess, at least in analogy—though perhaps a distant one— something of the binding

force that the principle of *theoria* or of *regio beatitudinis* once had for Greek and Christian thought. Unless one harbors the fear that even a very pregnant and suggestive conception taken from the past can have only an unsettling effect on one's own designs, then the recollection of what is sound and productive, undertaken not merely to satisfy historical curiosity, but in the search for a corrective and for impulses needful to the present day, can hardly be dismissed as "reactionary" or uncritical. Perhaps then it would become evident that happiness is not dependent on some sort of subjectivism, or on arbitrary moods or feelings, nor on some "truth" which totally disintegrates in historical relativism; but is grounded rather in the knowledge of an idea which endures and proves itself binding and authoritative, despite its historical transformations.¹⁶⁴

164. It would require an investigation unto itself to make clear to what degree the Greek and Augustinian conception of happiness as a seeing cognition and "enjoyment" stands in contradiction to a eudemonistic and utilitarian ethic of pleasure or of ends, as this has, for instance, widely and persistently determined the modern enlightenment. "Common sense" seems most reluctant to be dissuaded from it. The contemporary mentality of consumption, encouraged from every side, only stimulates such an attitude, though this is studiously concealed by the growing debacle of man's preoccupation with himself which it has promoted.