

OPPOSITIONAL PAIRS AND CHRISTOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS: REREADING AUGUSTINE'S *DE TRINITATE*

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The author aligns the modern structuralist emphasis on the meaning-generating capacity of "oppositional pairs" with Augustine's penchant for the ancient rhetorical trope of "antithesis." The resultant rereading of De Trinitate uncovers Augustine's rhetorical construction of a christocentric theological epistemology that undergirds the work's structure, polemical agenda, and the classic theologoumenon of the trinitarian image in human interiority.

EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE IS DISTINCTIVE for its highly rhetorical construction. Whereas Scholastic theology privileges the logical movement from premises to conclusions, early Christian literature is more broadly concerned with the art of persuasion, including the confrontational "persuasion" of polemic. But, while a growing literature focuses on early Christian rhetoric, little attention has been paid to a specifically theological analysis of how this rhetoric structures the exposition of central Christian doctrines.¹ A significant case in point is Augustine's classic treatise, *De Trinitate*. Modern analysis has revisited the issues of the viability or otherwise of the "psychological analogy" and the relation between Augustine and Neoplatonism, and it has explored the polemical contexts in the framework of pro-Nicene and anti-Nicene theologies.² It has been concerned with whether Augustine's Trinitarianism is properly construed as privileg-

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¹ As a telling example, Averil Cameron's already classic study of early Christian rhetoric explicitly announces, "This is not a theological book" (*Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* [Berkeley: University of California, 1991] 6).

² On the psychological image of the Trinity in *De Trinitate*, the classic exposition of the view that this "analogy" provides genuine insight ("Einblick") into the trinitarian being of God is still Michael Schmaus's *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des hl. Augustinus*, *Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie* 11 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1927); see esp. 413. A contemporary exponent of this positive view is Johannes

ing the essence over the persons, or whether it neglects the scriptural account of the “economic Trinity.”³ Attempts to delineate the structure of *De Trinitate* as a whole have been conspicuously rare in recent scholarship, while the few exceptions tend to construe “structure” in terms of thematic sections (i.e., “faith” and “reason”) or movement of an argument.⁴ Missing from among the undoubted riches of these approaches is close attention to the specific interplay of words by which Augustine constructed and communicated his theological vision in this classic work.⁵

The present moment in theological scholarship manifests a certain pressure to remedy this lacuna. Elizabeth Clark has advocated that study of

Brachtendorff; see his “. . . prius esse cogitare quam credere’ A Natural Understanding of ‘Trinity’ in St. Augustine?” *Augustinian Studies* 29.2 (1998) 35–45 and *Die Struktur des menschlichen Geistes nach Augustinus: Selbstreflexion und Erkenntnis Gottes in “De Trinitate,”* *Paradeigmata* 19 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000). The opposite view is classically argued by Alfred Schindler, *Wort und Analogie in Augustins Trinitätslehre* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965) esp. 215–16. More recently, John C. Cavadini, “The Structure and Intention of Augustine’s *De trinitate*” *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992) 103–23, has also argued against the applicability of the psychological image to the divine Trinity. On the Neoplatonist background to *De Trinitate*, see Cavadini, *ibid.*, and Brachtendorff, *Struktur des menschlichen Geistes*. On the pro-Nicene polemical aspects, see especially Michel René Barnes, “The Arians of Book V and the Genre of *De Trinitate*,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 44 (1993) 185–95; “Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* I,” *Augustinian Studies* 30 (1999) 43–59; “Rereading Augustine’s Theology of the Trinity,” in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins (New York: Oxford University, 2000) 145–76; “The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine’s Theology of 400,” *Modern Theology* 19 (2003) 329–55; see also Lewis Ayers, “Remember That You Are Catholic’ (*serm.* 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000) 39–82.

³ For an account and refutation of such criticisms, see Michel René Barnes, “Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology,” *Theological Studies* 56 (1995) 237–50.

⁴ The most notable exception to the general neglect of the question of the structure of *De Trinitate* is found in Augustine, *The Trinity*, intro., trans., and notes Edmund Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine I/5* (Brooklyn: New City, 1991) 21–27; for a diachronic reading of the accumulative argument of the work, see Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970) 223–309.

⁵ By way of slight contrast, there has been some attention to the theological use of rhetorical strategy in Augustine’s *On Christian Teaching* (*De doctrina christiana*), in which Augustine deals explicitly with rhetorical theory. See, e.g., John Cavadini, “The Sweetness of the Word: Salvation and Rhetoric in Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*,” in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*, ed. Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995) 164–81, and J. Patout Burns, “Delighting the Spirit: Augustine’s Practice of Figurative Interpretation,” *ibid.* 182–94.

early Christianity embrace the literary turn through a closer attentiveness to “the textuality of early Christian writings.”⁶ Her recommendation of strategies generated by the linguistic turn is shaped by her own commitment to a critical theory that seeks to agitate presumptions of stability of meaning and the integrity of referentiality. As such, Clark’s program tends toward a poststructuralism inasmuch as it focuses on the indeterminacy, or absence of stable structures of coherence within a text. Indeed, Augustinian scholarship is already at the front ranks of attempts to read Augustine in postmodern perspective.⁷ But Clark’s recommendation of poststructuralist strategies can also be helpful in reminding us of the as yet relatively unexplored potential of structuralist strategies that seek to illuminate the production of meaning through the internal relations that form a given text. As a bishop and preacher, Augustine intended not so much to inculcate indeterminacy as to find ways to structure Christian meaning in communicable form. The retracing of his maneuvers to this end enables a valuable reappropriation of his theological vision, even if such reappropriation is to be succeeded by a postmodern interrogation of the stability and coherence of the text.

My proposal for a new reading of Augustine’s *De Trinitate* derives from an approach that has been dubbed “structuralist poetics.” As described by literary critic Jonathan Culler, such a strategy involves “an understanding of the devices, conventions and strategies of literature, the means by which literary works create their effects.”⁸ Toward such a structuralist poetics of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, I intend to explore here the applicability of an elementary tool of structuralist analysis to Augustine’s classic. That tool is the discernment of “binary opposites,” or “oppositional pairs,” and their meaning-making interplay within a text. The full implementation of this strategy would involve a detailed reading of the work as a whole, showing how the interplay of a cluster of oppositional pairs is integral to the construction of its theological vision. For now, I intend to give only a preview of what such a reading would look like. Thus, I will briefly describe the structuralist notion of “oppositional pairs,” which I see as corresponding to the ancient rhetorical trope of “antithesis.” I suggest that the primary antithesis of “faith” and “sight” is deployed in three distinct ways in Augustine’s other works, and that these three ways are integrated into a coherent epistemological method that determines the structure and argument of *De Trinitate*. The preview of a new reading of this classic work will

⁶ Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 2004) 160–61.

⁷ See John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, ed., *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2005).

⁸ Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1975) vii.

be presented by showing how it can clarify our perception of its logical structure, its polemical agenda, and the perennially controversial issue of the intended meaning of the so-called “psychological analogy.”

STRUCTURALIST “OPPOSITIONAL PAIRS” AND AUGUSTINIAN “ANTITHESIS”

Inasmuch as structuralist analysis is preoccupied with the internal relations that constitute a text, the most fundamental kind of relation it looks for is that of “binary oppositions” or “oppositional pairs.”⁹ Underlying this procedure is the epistemological premise that the construction of oppositional pairs—such as day/night, light/darkness, male/female, earth/sky—is a basic feature of human cognition that is reproduced in literary communication. A structuralist analysis explores how the interactive play between such oppositional pairs creates a world of meaning within the text. Culler points out that the very pervasiveness of this kind of cognitional and communicative maneuver makes for a certain ambivalence. One can easily espy binary oppositions around every textual corner, but not all are equally illuminating. The task of the interpreter is to locate those that are structurally constitutive and demonstrably integral to the text’s attempts to produce an effect of meaning.¹⁰

While “oppositional pairs” have become fundamental to modern structuralist hermeneutics, they were also a recognized and recommended tool of ancient rhetorical practice. Joining the ranks of Aristotle, Quintillian, and others,¹¹ Augustine had his own explicit statement of a theory of oppositional pairs, which we find in Book 11 of *De civitate Dei*. While insisting on the goodness of creation despite the presence of evil, Augustine remarks on the value of antithesis, as both a rhetorical and cosmological principle: “For what are called antitheses (*antitheta*) are among the most elegant of the ornaments of speech. They might be called in Latin ‘*opposita*’ or, to speak more accurately, ‘*contraposita*.’ . . . As then these oppositions of contraries lend beauty to the language, so the beauty of the course of this world is achieved by the opposition of contraries, arranged, as it were, by an eloquence not of words, but of things.”¹² Here, Augustine recommends the rhetorical use of antitheses for seemingly purely esthetic reasons, as a *mimesis* of the oppositional harmony of creation itself. His own texts give ample evidence of this particular mode of eloquence. In a

⁹ See Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* 16–18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 17–18.

¹¹ See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1410A; Quintillian, *Instituto oratoria*, 9.1.31412b; Demetrius, *De elocutione* 1.22–23.

¹² *De civitate Dei* 11.18 (*The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dodd, intro. Thomas Merton [New York: Random House, 1993] 361–62, slightly altered).

still valuable article on Augustine's preaching, Christine Mohrmann has written: "The most characteristic and, I would dare say, the most essential feature of his homiletic style is the antithetical parallelism that recurs at every moment and that results in a manner of thinking that is altogether his own. There is . . . an underlying rhythm [*une rythme fondamentale*] that dominates not only his words but his thinking itself. In the case of Augustine, it is a method that is explained more by his manner of thought and vision of life than by a tradition of classical rhetoric."¹³ Mohrmann did not explain just how such a rhetorical maneuver coincides with Augustine's vision and thought, but her remarks, together with Culler's caveat against a too indiscriminate recourse to "oppositional pairs," lead me to distinguish between two levels of such usage in Augustine. On the one hand, there are examples of antitheses that are ornamental and fairly isolated within a given text, such as in Book 4 of the *Confessiones* where Augustine muses on the death of his friend: "The lost life of those who die becomes the death of those still alive."¹⁴ On the other hand, there are oppositional pairs that are recurrent and are both representative and generative of complex patterns of thought—such as, for example, the contrast between faith and sight, or signs and things, or use and enjoyment. The correct construal of these antitheses is indispensable to a discernment of the structural patterns through which Augustine communicates his theological vision.

Among the oppositional pairs cited above, probably the most noted are signs/things and use/enjoyment. The first antithesis, crucial for modern semiotics and structuralism, expresses Augustine's adaptation of Stoic and Epicurean analyses of signs and their reference. Arguably, Augustine can be distinguished from his philosophical predecessors in concerning himself primarily with verbal, rather than nonverbal, signs.¹⁵ He applied this framework to scriptural exegesis in *De doctrina christiana* (ca. 395–ca. 427). The ultimate "thing" or "reality" (*res*) signified by scriptural signs is the Trinity; the object of *De doctrina christiana* is to enable the reader to approach the reality of the Trinity through scriptural signs.¹⁶ The second antithesis of use/enjoyment, also presented in *De doctrina christiana*, is perhaps the central principle of Augustine's ethical thought: all creaturely

¹³ Christine Mohrmann, "Saint Augustin prédicateur," *Maison Dieu* 39 (1954) 83–96, at 89, my translation. I am indebted to William Harmless, S.J., for this reference.

¹⁴ *Conf.* 4.9.14.

¹⁵ This position is argued by Giovanni Manetti, *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity*, trans. Christine Richardson, *Advances in Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1993) 157–68. On Augustine's theory of signs, see John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (New York: Cambridge University, 1994) 23–40.

¹⁶ *De doctrina christiana* 1.2–5.

realities are instrumental (i.e., to be used) to the enjoyment of God.¹⁷ The antithesis of faith/sight, though no less pervasive in Augustine's texts, has been less noted. At the most basic level, it expresses a foundational structural perspective that determines his vision, one that also underlies the two antitheses noted earlier, namely, Augustine's eschatological orientation. The biblical text that is routinely used to express this antithesis is 2 Corinthians 5:7, "For we walk by faith and not by sight"; most often this text is simply embedded in Augustine's language rather than explicitly cited. There is a plethora of Augustinian texts that express his eschatological perspective in these terms.¹⁸ But it will prove valuable to our analysis of *De Trinitate* to make subtle differentiations among three uses of this antithesis that express three distinct elements of an integrated theological epistemology presented in Book 1: (1) A simple differentiation between our knowledge of God in this world, through faith, and that which will become available to us in the world to come, in the very sight of God. In this usage, "faith" and "sight" correspond simply to our epistemological relation to God in this world and the next, respectively, and the relation is one of simple contrast. This usage is probably the most frequent in Augustine's application of the faith/sight framework. (2) The differentiation between faith knowledge and eschatological sight knowledge as comprising two different kinds of "sight." Here, "sight" language is not reserved simply for eschatological knowledge but applied also to the knowledge of faith. The fact that one term of the oppositional pair is used to designate the other term dramatizes the continuity within difference between faith knowledge and eschatological knowledge. (3) The differentiation between faith and eschatological sight as christologically enfolded through the dialectic of humanity and divinity in Christ. The sight of Christ's humanity in faith leads us to the eschatological sight of his divinity. A brief analysis of an example from each category will bring us to the threshold of my proposal for a reading of *De Trinitate*.

A significant instance of the first category, applied to the vision of God as Trinity, is found in his *De catechizandis rudibus* (ca. 400). Augustine describes the eschatological future in this way:

God shall be the whole delight and contentment of the holy city living in Him and by Him, in wisdom and blessedness. For we shall be made (as we hope and expect, since it was promised by Him) equal to the angels of God, and in equal measure

¹⁷ Ibid. 1.3.

¹⁸ Aside from the pervasive use of this motif in *De Trinitate*, I can cite a random assortment of its usages in Augustine's other works: *De doctrina Christiana* 1.37; 2.1.7, 12; *De consensus Evangelistarum* 4.10; *Enerratio in Psalmos* 17.37; *Sermones* 12.5; 337.5; 346.2; 351.3; *De diversis quaestionibus* 69; *De catechizandis rudibus* 1.25; *De spiritu et littera* 1.3; 1.36; *Contra duas epistolas pelagianorum* 3.7; *Epistulam Johannis ad Parthos Tractatus* 5.7.

with them we shall by vision at length have the fruition [*perfruemur*] of that Trinity in which we now walk by faith. For we believe that which we see not, that by the very merits of faith we may be counted worthy even to see what we believe, and therein abide; that we may no longer shout the equality of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and the unity of the Trinity itself, and the manner in which these three are one God, in a profession of faith expressed in a babble of words, but may absorb this by the most pure and fervent contemplation in that heavenly silence.¹⁹

We may note that, in this passage, each of the two components of the faith/sight oppositional pair draws a set of significant vocabulary, foreshadowing some of the complex interplay of oppositional pairs that we will find in *De Trinitate*. The stance of faith is here associated with “hope,” while eschatological “sight” of God is aligned with “wisdom” and “contemplation.” “Sight” is also associated with delight, contentment, and fruition—the last three terms evoking the “enjoyment” pole of the use/enjoyment framework. Moreover, the framework of signs/things is implied in the contrast between the “words” of trinitarian confession and the contemplation of the reality to which these words refer. In this passage, we find a simple contrast between faith and sight. Each is defined by its mutual opposition to the other: “we believe what we do not see.”

An example of the second category comes from Augustine’s homilies on 1 John (*In epistulam Johannis ad Parthos tractatus*; ca. 406). Here Augustine begins by reiterating a simple differentiation between faith and eschatological “sight” but quickly complicates matters by clarifying the distinction as between the knowledge of faith and eschatological knowledge. Faith is not merely a lack of knowledge and sight but a different kind of knowledge and sight:

We have not seen him, but we are one day to see him: we have not known him, but one day we shall: we believe in him whom we have not known. May we say that we have known him by faith, but not as yet by sight? Surely, in faith we have both seen and known; for if faith does not yet see, why are the faithful called the “enlightened”? There is one enlightenment of faith, another of sight. In our present pilgrimage we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7); so that our righteousness also is by faith and not by sight.²⁰

Here, “sight” is associated with knowledge. The underlying issue is the cognitive or intelligible content of faith. The notion of “faith” as simply

¹⁹ *De catechizandis rudibus* 47 (*The First Catechetical Instruction*, trans. Joseph P. Christopher, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation 2 [Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1946] 78–79).

²⁰ *Ep. Jo.* 4.8 (Augustine, *Later Works*, trans. John Burnaby, Library of Christian Classics 8 [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955] 291–92, emphasis added); see 5.7 where Augustine speaks of both faith and sight as different kinds of “vision”: “Now your vision is by faith; then it will be by sight” (“Modo cum fide vides, tunc cum specie videbis” [*Sources chrétiennes* 75:262]).

opposed to knowledge and “sight” is rejected in favor of a more careful distinction between the intelligibility (“enlightenment”) of faith and that of eschatological sight. But, in applying to faith the terminology of “sight,” Augustine is asserting some continuity within the distinction between the two.

The third category is illustrated by an important passage in *De diversis quaestionibus* 69 (ca. 388–396), where Augustine is arguing against an anti-Nicene *homoian* interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:28,²¹ “Then even the Son himself will be subject to him who has subordinated all things to him.”²² While the *homoians* took this text as proof that the Son is ultimately subordinate to the Father, Augustine interpreted it christologically as referring to the two stages of the reign of God. God reigns through Christ’s humanity in those who put their faith in his incarnation, but this reign will give way to God’s eschatological reign through Christ’s divinity, in which the faithful will enjoy the sight of the divinity he shares with the Father:

In what respect does the Lord presently reign during this special period characterized by the mystery which is his incarnation and passion? For, insofar as he is the Word of God, his kingdom is both without end and without beginning, as well as without interruption. But insofar as the Word was made flesh, he began to reign in those who believe by faith in his incarnation. . . . For he will hand over the kingdom to the Father when he will reign in those contemplating the truth through that whereby he is equal to the Father, and when through himself, the only begotten, he will cause the Father to be seen by sight. For now he reigns in believers by his self-emptying and the acceptance of the form of a servant. . . . However, in that [the Son] will hand the kingdom over to God and the Father by leading those who now believe in him from faith in his incarnation to the vision of divinity, he himself loses nothing, but both offer themselves, to those contemplating, as a single entity to be enjoyed [*Quod autem tradet regnum deo et patri, a fide incarnationis suae ad speciem deitatis perducens eos qui sibi nunc credunt, non ipse amittet, sed uterque se unum ad fruendum contemplantibus praebebit*].²³

²¹ In contemporary scholarship on 4th-century theology, “*Homoians*” is the accepted designation for those who preferred the language of “like” (*homoios*) to designate the ontological relation between Son and Father. This language was intended to counter the Nicene “*homoousios*” and implied the ontological inferiority of the Son to the Father.

²² The association between the contents of *De diversis quaestionibus* 69 and the anti-*homoian* polemic of *De Trinitate* have been emphasized by Barnes; see his “Rereading Augustine’s Theology of the Trinity,” in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O’Collins, S.J. (New York: Oxford University, 1999), and “Exegesis and Polemic,” “The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity,” as well as Lewis Ayres, “Remember That You Are Catholic (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000) 39–82.

²³ *Div. quaest.* 69.9; CCSL 44A:194 (Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David L. Mosher, Fathers of the Church 70 [Washington: Catholic University of America, 1977] 174–76).

In this passage, the dialectic of faith and sight is enfolded by the christological dialectic of the humanity and divinity of Christ. Through his incarnation, Christ is the way from faith to sight and the single unified object of both faith and sight. When he transfers believers from the realm of faith to that of sight, the reign of God will be fulfilled. Moreover, we can note again the lexical expansion of the faith/sight antithesis by association with other significant vocabulary. In this passage, this expansion is evident particularly with eschatological "sight," which is associated with "truth," "contemplation," and "enjoyment."

In each of these three subtly distinct variations on the theme of the antithesis or "oppositional pair" of faith and sight, we find a distinct epistemological principle. First, there is an emphasis on the sheer difference between faith and eschatological knowledge or "sight"; within this particular use of the binary pair, faith is defined precisely in terms of a lack of knowledge. Second, there is a qualification of that difference by noting that faith too contains its own kind of sight and knowledge. Third, there is a christological enfolding and mediation of the whole dialectic, with the path from faith knowledge to eschatological sight contained in the person of the God-Man Jesus Christ. We shall see that the integration of these three principles is foundational to Augustine's construction of a theological epistemology through the deployment of oppositional pairs in *De Trinitate*, to which I now turn.

THEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY IN *DE TRINITATE*, BOOK 1

Despite its importance for both a synchronic and diachronic approach to the text, Book 1 of *De Trinitate* has been underused in the interpretation of the structure and argument of the work as a whole. Besides being the entrance to the actual reading of the work, a diachronic analysis reveals that its final redaction likely belongs to the last stages of Augustine's composition.²⁴ It can be said, then, to represent both Augustine's first and last words in this work. Once alerted to the category of "oppositional pairs," a reading of Book 1 will quickly reveal a dense cluster of antitheses that cumulatively advance a theological epistemology foundational to the work as a whole. Failure to give due weight to the determinative role of this

²⁴ For arguments on behalf of this chronology, see Anne-Marie La Bonnardière, *Recherches de chronologie augustiniennne* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1965) 165–77, esp. 176–77; and Teselle, *Augustine the Theologian* 224–25. La Bonnardière concludes that the introduction to Book 1 was composed after 420, but "d'autre part, il se pourrait aussi que le corps même du livre I ait subi diverses retouches tardives" (176–77). This would indicate that Augustine's revisions of the work as a whole were accompanied by adjustments to Book 1, which is exactly what one would expect from an author of Augustine's caliber.

epistemology is, I believe, the primary reason why attempts to delineate the logical relation between the two halves of the work have been unsuccessful. Modern scholarship has rejected the traditional interpretation that discerns a movement from the data of biblical faith in the first half to the project of the rational appropriation of this faith through the “psychological analogy” in the second half. But no other schema for the logical connection between analysis of the biblical theophanies and that of the trinitarian image in the human person has been found to replace it.²⁵ Yet, such a connection is readily available through careful attentiveness to the epistemological program set out in Book 1.

The construction of this epistemology begins with raising the fundamental question, How can temporal and changeable creatures come to knowledge of the immutable and eternal God?²⁶ Implicit in the framing of this question is the fundamental oppositional pair that determines the whole discussion: a pro-Nicene emphasis on the radical and irreducible difference between God and creation.²⁷ Augustine rhetorically dramatizes this difference through his construction of a series of recurring oppositional pairs, all based on scriptural texts. Primary among these is the antithesis of faith and sight, with recurring reference to 2 Corinthians 5: 6, “For we walk by faith

²⁵ For criticisms of the faith/reason schema, see Hill, *Trinity* 21–22 and Cavadini “Structure and Intention” 103–6. Hill explains that the second half of the work retraces the contents of the first half *modo interiore* (24). This is true as far as it goes, but it does not really integrate the two parts within the terms that Augustine himself indicates in Book I. Cavadini sees Books 9–14 as a demonstration of the failure of the Neoplatonic contemplative ascent (106) but does not explain how such a demonstration is logically connected with Books 1–4, notwithstanding the christological Book 13. Barnes and Ayres have focused their analyses on the first half of the work, to the neglect of the second half. Brachtendorff, *Struktur des menschlichen Geistes*, analyzes the second half to the neglect of the first.

²⁶ This question is posed by Augustine as a dilemma: “So then it is difficult to contemplate and have full knowledge of God’s substance, which without any change in itself makes things that change, and without any passage of time in itself creates things that exist in time” (*Trin.* 1.1.3; Hill 66). The citation format adopted here corresponds to the standard PL and CCL format, and not to Hill’s modification of the chapter divisions. Where I use Hill’s English translation, I cite his page number as above.

²⁷ There is perhaps emerging agreement that a simultaneous emphasis on the irreducible difference and yet nearness between God and creation is integral to the grammar of pro-Nicene theology. This was the central characterization of Athanasius’s theology in Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1998, 2004) and is considered one of the key features of pro-Nicene theology in general by Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University, 2004) 320.

and not by sight.”²⁸ As we have already seen in other Augustinian texts, contiguous oppositional pairs quickly proliferate and become intertwined. The epistemological difference between faith and sight is also that between hope and sight, adverting to Romans 8:24: “Hope which is seen is not hope. . . . But if we hope for what we do not see, then we wait in patience.”²⁹ Faith and hope are consistently aligned with purification, which is also differentiated from sight, with reference to the evangelical beatitude: “Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8).³⁰ On the other hand, sight is aligned with contemplation, which is thus contrasted with faith, hope, and purification.³¹ These oppositional pairs are integrated with resonances of other standard Augustinian antitheses, such as seeking/rest³² and use/enjoyment.³³ In much of Book 1, Augustine is preoccupied with drawing together scriptural texts in a way that sets up these oppositional pairs, aligning the various items of one set of opposites and contrasting them with the other set. The aspect of contrast between these “oppositional pairs” corresponds to the first usage of the faith/sight polarity that I identified above, that of emphasizing the difference between this-worldly and eschatological relation to God.

Noting this difference sets the proper framework for raising the question of the knowledge of God, but it certainly does not resolve it. Augustine discusses various options for negotiating the epistemological divide between God and humanity: projecting bodily categories onto God, projecting creaturely spiritual categories onto God, and simply imagining things about God that are not direct projections of human experience but are simply fanciful efforts to rise above created reality and penetrate into the realm of God’s eternity. All three groups exemplify epistemological pride. The only successful way to overcome the epistemological abyss is that provided by scriptural revelation. The mode of this revelation both mirrors and reverses humanity’s efforts to impute creaturely categories to God by mediating God’s own self-expression through creaturely categories: “The divine scriptures then are in the habit of making something of children’s toys out of things that occur in creation, by which to entice our sickly gaze and get us step by step to seek as best we can the things that are above and forsake the things that are below.”³⁴ By thus locating the resolution of the question of knowledge of God in a divinely ordained program of

²⁸ The faith/sight motif is pervasive throughout Book 1, but especially so in the exegetical section of 1.7.14–1.13.31. According to the analysis of La Bonnardière, this section would constitute the original stratum of Book 1.

²⁹ E.g., *Trin.* 1.7.17.

³⁰ E.g., *Trin.* 1.1.2–3; 1.12.27; On the use of Mt 5:8 in Book I, see Barnes, “Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity.”

³¹ E.g., *Trin.* 1.8.17; 1.10.20–21.

³² E.g., *Trin.* 1.8.17.

³³ E.g., *Trin.* 1.8.18.

³⁴ *Trin.* 1.1.2; Hill 66.

mediation, Augustine invokes the epistemological principle underlying his second usage of the faith/sight framework, which I identified above. According to this principle, faith has its own “sight”; it is not simply a matter of not-sight, and absence of knowledge. Faith calls for attention to the divinely ordained mediations, the “sights” of faith, which guide the believer along a path of purification toward the fullness of sight. This principle anchors the fundamental thrust of the methodology of the whole work, to discern *similitudines*, or “images,” that anchor and guide faith.³⁵

Augustine does not waste any time in giving a christological structure to this series of oppositional pairs, enfolding one set within the humanity of Christ and the other within his divinity. Faith, hope, and purification are realized through clinging to the humanity of Christ, while sight and contemplation are attained in the eschatological encounter with the divinity he shares with the Father and the Spirit. The christological oppositional pair that enfolds all the others is that of *forma servi–forma dei*, as found in the christological hymn of 2 Phillipians. At the same time, Augustine articulates a locus of synthesis between these oppositional pairs by reference to a single subject—“one and the same”—who mediates between them. The one mediator, Jesus Christ, transports believers from faith and hope to sight, through purification to contemplation. This christological mediation corresponds to the third usage of the faith/sight framework identified above.

At this point, I can note that a structuralist analysis of the oppositional pairs that pervade much of Book 1 serves to illuminate the rhetorical process by which Augustine executes three significant achievements. First, he has cast the problem of the knowledge of God within a “pro-Nicene” emphasis on the irreducible difference between God and creation; second, he has “scripturalized” this epistemological divide through a whole series of biblical motifs; and third, he has enfolded this epistemological divide into a christological structure, such that the difference between God and creation is contained and mediated in the person of Christ. We can also see that the three distinct applications of his usage of the faith/sight framework, as we analyzed them from examples in his other works, are brought together in his announcement of his own methodology at the beginning of *De Trinitate*: (1) We cannot have direct unmediated knowledge of God in this world, which is to say that God is not available to human “sight.” Rhetori-

³⁵ This methodological thrust makes it possible to interpret the structural role of Augustine’s intertwined oppositional pairs from the point of reference of the binary pair of signs–things. I have done this in an earlier, but still forthcoming, essay, “Divine Semiotics and the Way to the Triune God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*,” in *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays on Historical Theology* ed. Andrew McGowan (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

cally, this principle is dramatized through the aspect of opposition between the binary pairs, which is ultimately based on the difference between God and world. Thus faith, hope, and purification are distinguished from sight, contemplation, enjoyment, etc. (2) But neither can we simply do without knowledge and concrete intelligible reference in the matter of faith; the way to God is provided by God's own self-mediation. Rhetorically, there is a relation of continuity between the oppositional pairs, which is provided by divinely ordained mediations of God's presence. Thus, faith, hope, and purification *lead* to sight, contemplation, and enjoyment because the objects of the first set are mediations of the divine that are designed to guide us across the ontological abyss between God and creation. Faith is founded upon and enabled by divinely ordained "sights" and "images" (*similitudines*) that entice us from material sights toward the eschatological sight of God. (3) Such mediation is fulfilled in the unity of the God-Man Jesus Christ who is God's supreme and perfect self-mediation. Rhetorically, Jesus Christ is the mediator between all the pertinent oppositional pairs: faith in the "sight" of his humanity leads to the eschatological "sight" of the triune God. He is the single object of both sets of the oppositional pairs and the way between one set and the other.

OPPOSITIONAL PAIRS AND THE STRUCTURE OF *DE TRINITATE*

How does my analysis of Book 1, with its constellation of oppositional pairs, illuminate the understanding of the work as a whole? This question can be dealt with by reference to the structure of *De Trinitate*, its polemical agenda, and the status of Augustine's presentation of the trinitarian image in humanity. While a full treatment of these issues requires a more spacious venue than the present one, I can at least advert to some vistas that can be opened up by reading *De Trinitate* in the light presented here. With regard to the overall structure of the work, I propose that an attentiveness to the structural relations between the oppositional pairs presented in Book 1 can present a way of identifying the dialectical movement of Augustine's theological argument in the work as a whole. Traditionally, the dialectical movement invoked to explain the work's structure has been a simple transition from "faith" to "reason": the first half of the work presents the church's faith, based on scriptural revelation; the second half is a presentation of the appropriation of this faith through human reason. Recently, this schema has come under much critical scrutiny. Edmund Hill has noted that the two halves cannot be so neatly divided (since there is a good deal of scriptural exegesis in the second half, for instance); nor does Augustine work with a clear divide between faith in revelation and autonomous rea-

son.³⁶ The attractiveness of the faith–reason interpretive schema, however, lies in the fact that it does not simply divide the book into two halves but links them through an epistemological framework: in the first half Augustine deals with the biblical “Trinity” manifested to faith through scriptural revelation and in the second half appropriates this faith through a rational analogy. More recent interpretations have not succeeded in identifying an alternative epistemological framework that brings the discussion of the divine missions in Books 2–4 and the anthropological trinitarianism in Books 9–13 into an organic continuity.³⁷ But it is exactly such a framework that Book 1 provides. In the perspective presented at the beginning of Book 1, the question of theological epistemology is not about dividing the realms of faith and reason, but about properly engaging the divine program of christological mediation between God and world. This engagement is the work of what can properly be called rational faith or biblical reason.³⁸ Since all knowledge of God is divinely mediated with ultimate reference to Christ, the essential work of this kind of theological reflection is to properly construe the relation between revelatory mediations (*similitudines*) and their divine referent. In particular, that task will always include an understanding of the christological fulfillment of these mediations.

Casting the matter in the terms of Augustine’s own rhetoric, the task of theology is to explore the sights of faith and how these lead to eschatological sight through Christ. We have already analyzed how Augustine’s epistemology is embedded in the three formal aspects of his use of oppositional pairs: opposition, continuity-within-opposition, and christological mediation and fulfillment. I propose that it is the interrelation of these aspects that determines the logical structure of *De Trinitate* as a whole. Throughout the work, Augustine is concerned with presenting creaturely

³⁶ Hill 21–23.

³⁷ Hill’s own schema identifies a chiasmic structure that sees the search for a “psychological” image as retracing, *interiore modo*, “the drama of the scriptural revelation of the mystery of the Trinity” (26). But Hill does not identify the basic epistemological principles by which, for Augustine, this transition is consistent with “biblical reasoning.” It is significant, and typical of modern scholarship, that Hill does not consider Augustine’s epistemological reflections in Book 1, apart from Augustine’s remark that he will “give reasons” (*reddere rationem*) in support of trinitarian faith. As Hill himself acknowledges, this remark cannot be interpreted through an anachronistic framework of faith and reason. On the one-sidedness of modern interpretations that tend to focus on one or the other of the two halves of the work, see n. 25.

³⁸ The integration of what we call “faith” and “reason” in Augustine’s theology generally, and specifically in *De Trinitate*, bears more reflection than can be given it here. Suffice it to say that Augustine’s way of seeing biblical revelation as an adaptation to empirical experience (and, thus, what is called “reason”) is a much more integrated approach than many readily presume.

mediations of knowledge of God within a dialectic that balances an apophatic stress on the difference between these mediations and their referent with cataphatic affirmations of the (qualified) efficacy of these mediations, which achieve both their efficacy in this world and their fulfillment in the next through Christ. Thus, after explicating his foundational epistemological principle of the necessity of divinely ordained mediations in Book 1, Augustine proceeds in Books 2 and 3 to expound the Old Testament theophanies as precisely a series of such mediations; they are the “external sights” that anchor faith.³⁹ In Books 2 and 3, the difference between these mediations and their divine referent is emphasized.⁴⁰ In Book 4, the incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ is presented as the recapitulation and fulfillment of all these mediations: “all the sacred and mystical things that were shown to our fathers . . . were likenesses of him [*sunt similitudines huius*] so that all creation might speak the one who was to come and be the savior of all who needed to be restored from death.”⁴¹ Rhetorically, Jesus Christ is presented as “the mediator” of the various oppositional pairs laid out in Book 1. A typical statement refers to him as the one “in whom we have been purified by faith [*per fidem mundati*] and will then be made completely whole by sight [*per speciem redintegrati*]; thus fully reconciled to God by him the mediator, we may be able to cling to the one, enjoy [*fruemur*] the one, and remain for ever one.”⁴²

Books 5–7 present Augustine’s reflections on conciliar trinitarian doctrine in terms of substance, persons, and relation. Augustine understands such reflection as directly consequent on the missions of the Son and the Spirit and therefore as a second-order reflection, one could say, on the history of divine self-mediation. These books are typically taken to represent the crossover from faith to reason, but their role in the movement of the work is more complex.⁴³ In effect, they elucidate the logic of the

³⁹ “Ut exterioribus visis hominum corda commota a temporali manifestatione venientis ad occultam aeternitatem semper praesentis converterentur” (*Trin.* 2.5.10; CCSL 50:93).

⁴⁰ “As for us, we say that God has never shown himself to bodily eyes, neither the Father nor the Son nor the Holy Spirit, except through some created bodily substance at the service of his power” (*Trin.* 2.9.16; Hill 108).

⁴¹ *Trin.* 4.7.11; Hill 160 (slightly altered); CCSL 50:175.

⁴² *Trin.* 4.7.11; Hill 161; CCSL 50:176.

⁴³ This is one place where Hill falls back into the faith/reason dichotomy that he theoretically rejects: “In Books V–VI Augustine tries to give rational arguments in support of this faith” (23). Hill goes on to clarify that this does not mean that Augustine is “attempting proofs . . . from reason” but arguing “that the Catholic faith is not at variance with acceptable logic and metaphysics” (*ibid.*). In fact, it might be more accurate to say that Augustine insists that “acceptable logic and metaphysics” must be reconstrued in light of biblical revelation—which he does, for example, in Book 5 where he adjusts the standard conception of “relation” as an accident.

transition from the historical mediation of the triune God in Books 1–4 to the inner psychological mediation of the trinitarian image in the human being. Inasmuch as they simply gather the logical consequences of the trinitarian economy from the appearances, or sights, of God that culminate in the Incarnation, these books are still within the ambit of appropriating divine self-mediation. But, inasmuch as these logical consequences lead to the confession of God’s very being as triune, they adumbrate the sheer difference between the trinitarian being of God and any empirical phenomenon or “appearance.” This difference is maximally manifest when one considers the perfect mutuality of relation—what the Greek tradition calls *perichoresis* and the Latin tradition would later dub *circumincessio*—among the three persons: “So they are each in each and all in each and each in all and all in all and all are one.”⁴⁴ Consistent with the theological epistemology outlined in Book 1, which Augustine takes as foundational to the mode of biblical revelation itself, this chasm of difference does not preclude the possibility of any intelligible content to trinitarian faith but simply recalls the necessity of mediation and, thus, the search for *similitudines*. It is a principle of “biblical reasoning” for Augustine that the lack of direct sight evokes the necessity for the mediated sights of faith: “Perhaps then what we love is not what any trinity is but the trinity that God is. . . . But we have never seen or known another God, because God is unique. He alone is God whom we love by believing, even though we have not yet seen him. What we are asking, though, is from what likeness or comparison of things known to us we are able to believe, so that we may love the as yet unknown God.”⁴⁵

In Books 8–12, Augustine explores the mind’s inner self-relatedness and the connections between this self-relatedness and its relations to both God and the world.⁴⁶ When properly related to God and world, the mind’s interrelatedness as memory, understanding, and will (*memoria, intelligentia, voluntas*) offers an approximation, however distant, of the perfect interrelation of the divine Persons. Augustine’s presentation of this trinitarian likeness, however, is also attentive to aspects of unlikeness and failure in the mind’s own self-relatedness. To emphasize either the affirmative or negative moments at the expense of the other is to abstract from the dynamic movement of Augustine’s argument, which leads from a simulta-

⁴⁴ *Trin.* 6.1.12; Hill 214.

⁴⁵ *Trin.* 8.5.8; Hill 248.

⁴⁶ Space does not permit a detailed account of the complex argument of these books. The summary statement above reveals my conviction that, for Augustine, the connection between the mind’s self-relatedness and its relations to God and world is crucial. Prescinding from these connections by focusing on the “introspection” or “solipsism” of Augustine’s approach simply indicates a superficial reading of the text.

neity of stress on both the likeness and unlikeness to a renewed statement of the theme of christological fulfillment. This statement comes in Book 13 where Augustine retrieves the oppositional pairs of Book 1 and supplements and completes them with knowledge/wisdom. Knowledge refers to the temporal presence and work of Christ, and wisdom to his eternal divinity. As in Book 4, the accent is on the christological mediation of the differences within the oppositional pairs:

That the only-begotten from the Father is the one who is full of grace and truth means that it is one and the same person by whom deeds were carried out in *time* for us and for whom we are *purified* by *faith* in order that we may *contemplate* him unchangingly in *eternity*. But the most eminent heathen philosophers . . . philosophized nonetheless without the mediator, that is, without the man Christ. . . . [But] our knowledge . . . is Christ and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants *faith* in us about *temporal* things, he who presents us with the truth about *eternal* things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3).⁴⁷

Books 14 and 15 present us with a climactic synthesis of the three formal aspects within the theological epistemology evoked by Augustine's oppositional pairs, now applied to the trinitarian image of God in humanity: (1) this image is disparate from its referent; (2) but it is an image nonetheless, which is actualized to the extent that it is in proper relation to God (remembering, understanding, and loving God) and world; and (3) its being an image is constituted through a process of becoming transformed in Christ.

OPPOSITIONAL PAIRS AND THE POLEMICAL AGENDA OF *DE TRINITATE*

The preceding outline of the structure of *De Trinitate*, schematic as it is, provides the skeleton for a reading of *De Trinitate* on its own terms, as found in the methodological prolegomenon of Book 1. It also encapsulates, though admittedly in very broad strokes, the work's argument as a whole. Thereby, it already provides the basic data for adjudicating the two remaining questions of the polemical agenda of *De Trinitate* and of Augustine's own assessment of the value of the trinitarian image in human consciousness. With regard to the work's polemical intent, recent scholarship has signaled a shift from the traditional view that *De Trinitate* is a "speculative" rather than a polemical work. Largely through the work of Michel Barnes, the anti-*homoian* elements of the work have been clarified, while John Cavadini has drawn attention to its anti-Platonic agenda.⁴⁸ Inasmuch

⁴⁷ *Trin.* 13.19.24; Hill 363–64; emphasis added.

⁴⁸ See, above, n. 2.

as the illumination of both these contexts has been extremely helpful, their integration remains a *desideratum* for further study. At the same time, the traditional emphasis on the work's relatively nonpolemical approach is not itself without merit. It represents a rather simplistic appropriation of the insight that Augustine is not concerned here with a narrow polemical agenda against one specific opponent. Rather, he is trying to expound the basic structure of pro-Nicene trinitarian faith, and in the course of doing so he is ready to confront all detractors, but especially *homoian* and Platonist sympathizers.

The anti-*homoian* polemic embedded in the argument of Book 1 has already been ably treated by Barnes,⁴⁹ who explains that a development of *homoian* theology asserted that the Son's visibility in the Incarnation and Old Testament theophanies revealed his inferior divinity with respect to the invisible Father. Augustine rejected the attribution of these Old Testament theophanies specifically to the Son and realigned the visibility of the incarnate Son strictly with his humanity. In this realignment, the dialectic of visibility/invisibility was no longer simply parallel to the relation between Son and Father but rather constitutive of two epistemological moments in reference to Christ, one corresponding to the form of servant, the other to the form of God. Transposing Barnes's insights into the framework of our structuralist analysis, I can pose the question, How does Augustine's rhetorical deployment of oppositional pairs serve his anti-*homoian* argument? The answer lies in the very relation of oppositionality and in a recurring emphasis on the difference within the oppositional pairs. The cumulative rhetorical effect is to problematize a straightforward inference of Christ's divine nature on the basis of his human economy. So there is an emphasis on the difference between Christ as an object of faith in his humanity and the same Christ as an object of eschatological sight in his divinity, and this difference is applied to all the other allied oppositional pairs: faith in Christ's humanity is also a stance of hope and purification that is differentiated from the sight, contemplation, and enjoyment of Christ's divinity.

At the same time, Barnes alerts us to the *homoian* contention that the pro-Nicene attribution of the visibility of Christ strictly to his human nature dilutes the notion that the mission of the Incarnation really belongs to the Word.⁵⁰ Augustine's emphasis on "one and the same subject" of Christ answers this objection. But the fact that this emphasis takes place within a dense network of oppositional pairs amounts to a rhetorical performance of the notion that visibility and passibility belong to "one and the same"

⁴⁹ See Barnes, "Exegesis and Polemic."

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 56–59.

Christ dialectically and through a movement of mediation, not as a direct consequence of his divine nature. Christ is the object of material sight only inasmuch as this material sight is a self-mediation of his divinity, which is the object of eschatological sight. The same dialectical mediation is rhetorically presented through Augustine's play with all the other oppositional pairs of Book 1. The "one and the same" subject is thus rhetorically constructed as a union and mediation of opposites.

When we look at the structure of the *De Trinitate*, as a whole, however, we find that the christological synthesis of the oppositional pairs introduced in Book 1 is given two further extended treatments: Books 4 and 13 both contain explicit polemic against "the philosophers." Book 4 counters Platonic pretensions to attain to a vision of the divine by insisting that the stable and enduring achievement of such a vision is possible only through the event whereby eternal truth entered into a unity with perceptible created reality in Jesus Christ. The christological synthesis of the oppositional pairs of time/eternity, faith/sight, and purification/contemplation is central and pervasive throughout Book 4. Book 13 counters the philosophers' programs for human happiness by insisting that it can be realized only through the gift of immortality granted by Jesus Christ. As already noted, Book 13 parallels the rhetorical emphasis on the christological mediation of oppositional pairs found in Book 4. Thus, through the deployment of oppositional pairs in Book 1 and then especially in the christological Books 4 and 13, I find that an emphasis on the difference within the oppositional pairs serves as an anti-*homoian* weapon, while a complementary stress on the christological mediation between these oppositional pairs combines a defensive response to *homoian* objections with an anti-Platonic agenda. Against both *homoian* and Platonic approaches, Augustine's use of oppositional pairs counters the lack of differentiation between human knowledge of God and its referent. The Platonists' lack of differentiation is implicit in the claim that the human mind can simply ascend to the divine without mediation, while the *homoians* accept christological mediation but still do not sufficiently differentiate between this adaptive mediation and its divine referent. Augustine's deployment of oppositional pairs dramatizes his theological epistemology laid out in Book 1, with its complex dialectic of difference and christological mediation in human knowledge of God.

OPPOSITIONAL PAIRS AND THE TRINITARIAN IMAGE IN HUMANITY

As already noted, Augustine combines affirmative and negative statements regarding the likeness of the triadic structure of human consciousness to the divine Triad. Evaluations of Augustine's own intentions in presenting the trinitarian image in humanity are routinely in danger of

privileging one emphasis over the other.⁵¹ Hermeneutic distortion is also likely if Augustine's presentation of this image in the latter part of *De Trinitate* is considered in abstraction from what precedes it. A striking lacuna in interpretations of Augustine's presentation of the trinitarian image in humanity is its connection with the theological epistemology in Book 1. According to the reading presented here, the proper framework for understanding the role of the presentation of the trinitarian image in humanity is precisely the outline of this epistemology in Book 1 and the logic of the oppositional pairs integral to Augustine's rhetorical construction of this epistemology.

I have shown that there are three fundamental aspects to this epistemology: (1) the necessity for divinely ordained mediations (*similitudines*) in attaining true knowledge of God; (2) the difference that still obtains between these mediations and their divine referent, as dramatized by the various oppositional pairs introduced in Book 1; and (3) the christological mediation of this difference, which is consummated in eschatological vision. All three aspects are integral to a proper interpretation of Augustine's presentation of the trinitarian image in humanity. As for the first, the salient point is that, given its place in the structure of the work as a whole, the discovery of the trinitarian image in humanity is *not* the work of "autonomous reason," nor the result of a merely Platonic ascent.⁵² Augustine does not begin with the transcendental structure of human consciousness and proceed, by a kind of theology of "correlation," to show that divine revelation corresponds to this structure.⁵³ What we have here is a "theology from above."⁵⁴ As Augustine himself takes many occasions to point out, the triadic structure of human consciousness is far from self-evident, and the grasp of this structure is fraught with aporias and failures. The fact is that, within the text itself, the discovery of this triadic structure is enabled by the presupposition of pro-Nicene trinitarian theology. If Augustine suc-

⁵¹ In my opinion, Schindler (*Wort und Analogie*) and Cavadini ("Structure and Intention"), for example, overemphasize the apophatic elements, while Brachtendorff's reference to "the mind's structural equivalents to the triune God" ("... *prius esse cogitare*" 44) insufficiently considers Augustine's apophatic caveats; see *Trin.* 15.7.11–15.9.15.

⁵² I am here parting ways with Cavadini's thesis in "Structure and Intention" that in these books Augustine is merely enacting the Platonic ascent with a view to demonstrating its inadequacy.

⁵³ The classic exposition of this thesis, which fails to take sufficient account of the foundational role of Books 1–4 in *De Trinitate*, is Olivier Du Roy's *L'Intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin: Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966).

⁵⁴ See the remark of Franz Courth, "Diese Analogien zeigen, daß Augustinus trinitätstheologisches Bemühen weniger einer aufsteigenden Linie folgt, als vielmehr einer absteigenden" (*Trinität in der Schrift und Patristik*, Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte, vol. 2, pt. 1a: [Freiburg: Herder, 1988] 202).

ceeds in some measure in finding what he is looking for, that is because in the first place he knows what he is looking for. And that knowledge is provided by the matter of Books 1–7: the divine appearances culminating in the missions of the Son and the Spirit, as these are expounded in the Scriptures and their conciliar interpretation. The affirmative moment in Augustine's presentation of the "likeness" between the triadic structure of human consciousness and the divine Trinity does claim a certain correlation between the two, and this is presented in some sense as a demonstration of the validity of pro-Nicene theology. But the direction of movement in the construction of this correlation is from divine revelation to its echo in human consciousness, not vice versa.

As to the second point enumerated above, it is undeniable that Augustine makes statements adverting to the "unlikeness" between the trinitarian image in humanity and its divine referent. Such statements correspond to the moment of difference in the oppositional pairs introduced in Book 1. But, as in the latter case, the difference or unlikeness is not to be interpreted as simply canceling out the affirmation of likeness. Rather, the dialectic of likeness and unlikeness is mediated by Christ in a transformative process that reduces unlikeness and brings the likeness to consummation. That is why Book 13, with its presentation of Christ as the mediator between the oppositional pairs that converge around faith and sight, succeeds the presentation of the trinitarian image in humanity in Books 9–12. That is also why Augustine looks for biblical support in his bid to locate a trinitarian *imago Dei* in humanity, not only in Genesis 1:26, which refers simply to the state of humanity being in the image of God, but also in texts such as Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:23, and Colossians 3:9 that refer to the renewal and reformation of the image through Christ.⁵⁵

The application of the logic of Augustine's oppositional pairs to the question of the trinitarian image in humanity can finally be made by speaking of the significance of this image in terms of the foundational oppositional pair of faith/sight. As with other oppositional pairs, faith and sight are both distinguished and related through Christ. Inasmuch as "sight" can denote both intelligible content and empirical appearance, faith is differentiated from sight in that the object it clings to is not comprehensively available to either human knowledge or sensible awareness; so "we walk by faith and not by sight." Nevertheless, faith requires some intelligible content, and what distinguishes Christian faith is precisely that it is based on the divinely ordained mediations that represent knowledge of God through empirical appearances. The "sights" of faith, therefore, lead us to the eschatological sight of God; they are the "mirror" in which "we behold with unveiled faces the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). And, once again, the

⁵⁵ *Trin.* 14.16.22.

mediator between the sights of faith and the eschatological sight of God is Jesus Christ. Applying this dialectic to humanity's relation to the divine Trinity, Augustine first meditates on the "appearances" or "sights" of God in Scripture, culminating in the missions of Son and Spirit (Books 1–4). As interpreted by ecclesial tradition, these "images" (*similitudines*) can lead us to the component affirmations that constitute trinitarian doctrine: that Father, Son, and Spirit are each distinctly God and together one God. These component affirmations converge in a vision of perfect triadic interrelation (Books 5–7). But there is no biblical "image" or "sight" that corresponds to such a synthetic vision of the object of trinitarian faith, since material beings by definition are divided by space and time and therefore cannot enact such perfect interrelatedness. For this reason, trinitarian faith requires a nonmaterial trinitarian "sight," and since humanity is made in God's image, it is biblically rational to look for such an image in the human person. The mind's triadic interrelation of memory, understanding, and will is such a "sight." It is not to be equated with the eschatological sight of the triune God; it is rather a "sight" of faith. As such, it simply belongs within the series of "*similitudines*" given in the scriptural mediation of knowledge of God. In this regard, it should not be overlooked that Augustine does not speak of a trinitarian "analogy" but of a "*similitudo*," which is the very term he uses for the biblical theophanies. The trinitarian image in humanity is discovered through the biblical revelation of the triune God and the biblical revelation that humanity is made "according to the image of God." Like all the sights of faith, this image leads to the full vision of God only through the redemptive work of Christ. Recognizing the trinitarian image of God in humanity is thus finally, for Augustine, a christological act inseparable from commitment to transformation in Christ. Toward the end of *De Trinitate*, Augustine makes this point by referring to 2 Cor 3:18: "But we with face unveiled, looking at the glory of the Lord in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord." Augustine understands "mirror" to refer to the trinitarian image in humanity, and he interprets the whole passage as signifying the movement, through Christ, from faith to sight:

So, "we are being transformed," he said; we are being changed from form to form, and are passing from a blurred form to a clear one. But even the blurred one is the image of God. . . . And when this nature, the most excellent of created things, is justified by its creator from its godlessness, it is transformed from an ugly form into a beautiful one. . . . And that is why he added "from glory to glory," (2 Cor 3:18), meaning from the glory of creation to the glory of justification. Though it is true that "from glory to glory" here could be understood in other ways: from the glory of faith to the glory of sight; from the glory by which we are sons of God to the glory by which we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *Trin.* 15.8.14; Hill 406.

CONCLUSION

If it is true that no analysis or interpretation can substitute for the act of reading a text, this is a fortiori the case when the analysis pertains to the rhetorical construction of a text. The effects produced by Augustine's complex and pervasive deployment of oppositional pairs throughout *De Trinitate* can be experienced only through direct encounter with the text. This article has simply attempted to facilitate a reading that is alert to these effects. It has also sought to elucidate the patterns and logical structures by which such effects may be properly discerned as not merely esthetic ornament but integral to the construction of the meaning of the text. The thesis underlying this reading of *De Trinitate* is that Augustine has taken a commonplace trope of ancient rhetoric, that of the "antithesis," and skillfully deployed it in the service of a pro-Nicene epistemology that centers on the christological mediation of the irreducible difference between God and world. Modern structuralist theory opens up a way to reengage this aspect of Augustine's rhetoric through the category of "oppositional pairs." Such reengagement can enable us to review central questions in the interpretation of this classic work, such as its structure, polemical agenda, and the status of the trinitarian image in humanity, through a framework immanent to the text itself.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ I presented an earlier version of this paper at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the North American Patristics Society. I am grateful to Richard Clifford, S.J., for his valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper, and to Brian E. Daley, S.J., and Stanley Marrow, S.J., for helpful conversation on its contents.