

Augustine probably is one of the most significant keystones of theological development in the West. Tillich clearly acknowledges his dependence on Augustine rather than the Thomistic tradition; and the kind of work we have been doing, in many ways, is heavily dependent upon Augustine.

Augustine's early history is more intriguing than many of the saints of the church. According to Williston Walker, the church historian, the two major streams of influence on Augustine's life were his father, from whom he inherited his passionate and sensuous nature, and his mother, a person of deep Christian conviction, who supplied his highmindedness and truth-seeking. Those are great qualities.

Reflecting his passionate and sensuous nature, at the age of seventeen Augustine had a concubine whom he kept for fourteen years. When he finally married he had to make other arrangements. With his firm conversion to Christianity, that kind of passionate eros was transformed into his understanding of the move toward unity with God, or toward the beatific vision. The dimension of his life he gained from his father was fully incorporated into who he was.

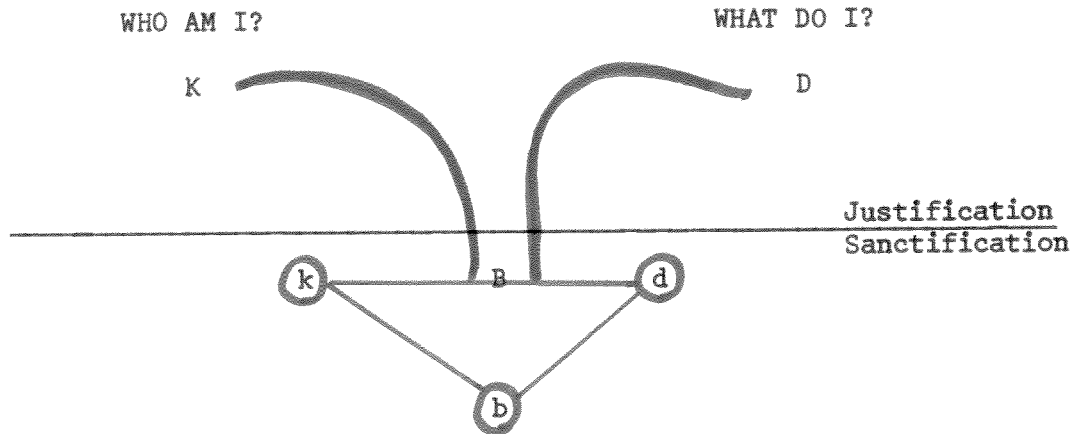
On the other side, reflecting the influence of his mother, Augustine set out on a great journey for truth. He sought it through the Manichean's dualism, skepticism, and neo-platonism before he finally arrived at Christianity. Out of his immense struggle he became a great intellectual of his time, standing as a philosophical giant. With his conversion to Christianity, he took the grasp that he had of the times and used it to become one of the great apologetic defenders of Christianity.

When he was 29 or 30, Augustine became a pastor, moving extremely quickly through the ranks to become a bishop, against his better judgement and desires. He wanted to do a number of other things---either teach or be a contemplative---but finally participated in the demands that were upon him. He was called upon to speak for the church in a number of controversies of that time.

Augustine said he was interested in only two things: God and the soul. His interest in God included interest in man's relationship to God. He was deeply fascinated by man, struggling to articulate that "Will" (the decisional dimension of a human being). What man is all about, is to be moving toward the beatific vision, or moving toward the City of God.

Later, I will lay out a way of describing Augustine's understanding of Grace, Justification and Sanctification, and how it relates to our triangles. But first, if we look at our own journey we see that we began on the pole of Knowing, in the push to get intellectual clarity as a way to cut against the psychologism, in which psychology was pushed to ridiculous extremes. The other major thrust we were involved in was the Doing dimension. Our whole push in Fifth City and penetration was very clearly in that dimension. The extreme perversion of that in

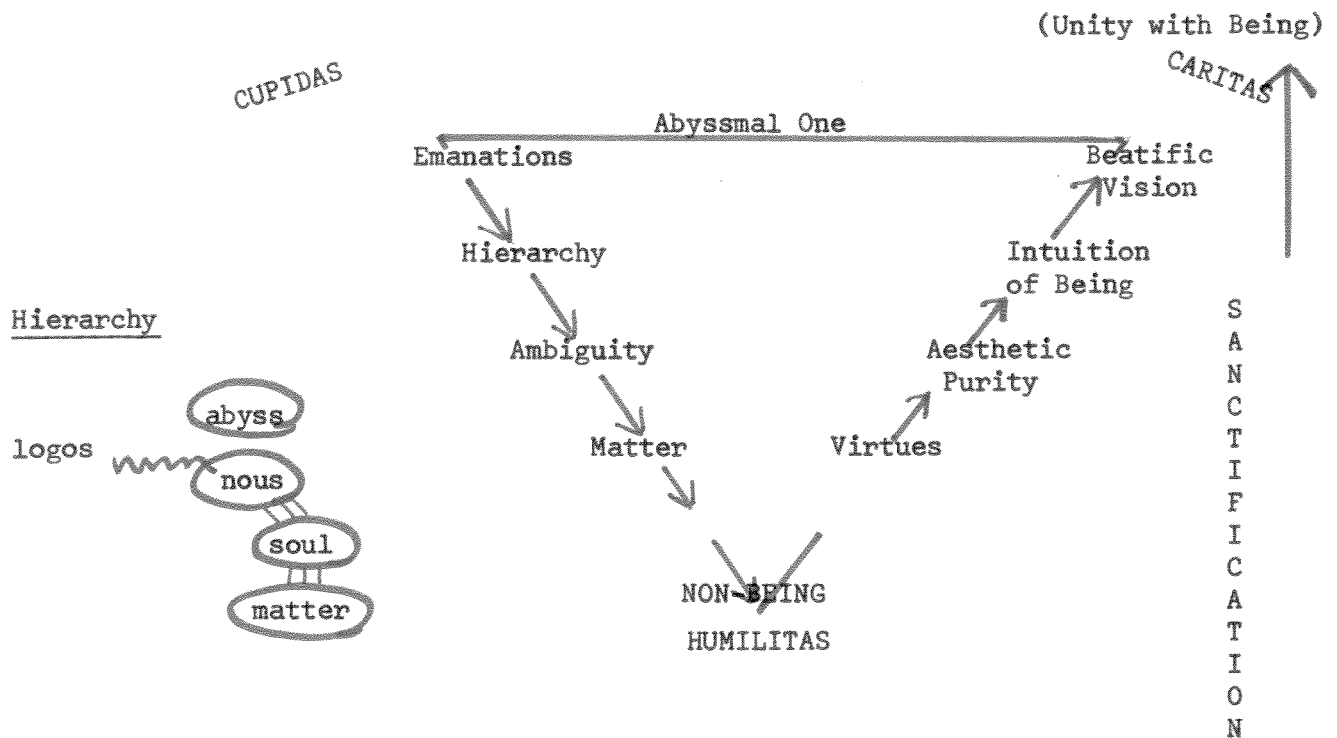
society is liberalism in which we find people who ostensibly want to do but are totally impotent. We are now given the possibility of breaking loose into what it means to talk about Being. In one sense, holding the poles of Knowing and



Doing, is Justification, the event of coming into awareness, affirming the fact that you are affirmed and deciding to live out of that affirmation; holding the Being dimension is Sanctification. That is one way to constantly hold over against any discussion of justification and sanctification an image of pre-Christ event and post-Christ event. The knowing, doing, and being dimensions are also held in the Being dimension of our existence, or Sanctification. Our push now is out of the being dimensions into the doing. For instance, in the LENS Course one is constantly doing, constantly involved. The whole push in sanctification is that kind---you don't just sit there as the sanctified one, you are involved in the world.

I would like now to discuss Augustine, through his traditional philosophical categories. the categories are less important here than the flow as you move through them.

Augustine begins with the Abysmal One, the abyss, the utter void, from which pour "emanations". Since there is no way to touch God, who is utter distance, the nous, created by God, holds the content of God, which is primarily interpreted through universal and individual essences--that is, the nous is the particular givenness--the way you bump into the Mystery. In his understanding of man's descent into hell, and using a Greek neo-platonistic structure of "hierarchical relationships," Augustine sends man down through the nous to the logos. The logos is the rational structuring of that reality which finally holds everything in unity. The logos is that which holds you present to the abysmal one, or holds together the relationship between the abyss and the nous.



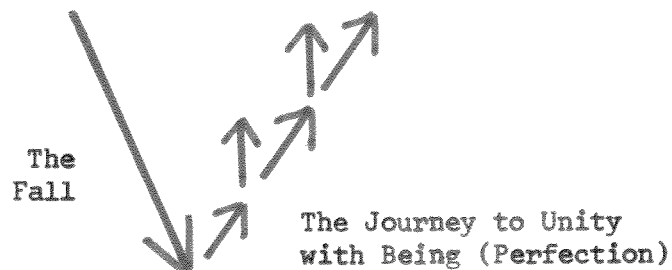
Next, is the soul, which includes the movement of everything, including the stars. The soul has the ability to turn and relate itself to the logos or the nous ("that which is"), or it can turn and relate itself to non-being. Non-being is not a zero, but a rejection of Being. "Matter" is not in itself evil, but is non-being, or the end of emanations. Man's ultimate involvement in disrelationship falls in the category of "the flesh." That is, "the flesh" refers to disrelation, hanging onto matter, or striving to get out of matter. Augustine calls this drive plunging man down through the hierarchy "Cupidas,"--amor plus pride, or subversion.

Man is from God. He is created in the image of God but descends to find himself in this kind of disrelationship. Augustine believed that all sins of the time were striving or security-seeking. Striving is wishing you could get on top of Sanctification in every dimension and thinking. You cannot. The striving of security is one in which you try to get into a situation so you will never have to worry again, like being deployed to Central Africa! Both of these, he saw, are as much sins of the flesh as gluttony.

Augustine saw that man's relationship to God also involves a movement upward in the hierarchy--that is, man is able to enter a journey of re-establishing his relationship to Being. Man finds himself wallowing in his disrelationship, his sin; and it is "sometimes, at that moment, as though a wave of light breaks into his darkness" and he sees the kind of creature he is, which is deeply humiliating. This experience, in which man becomes genuinely humble in the midst of that kind of event, Augustine calls "humilitas."

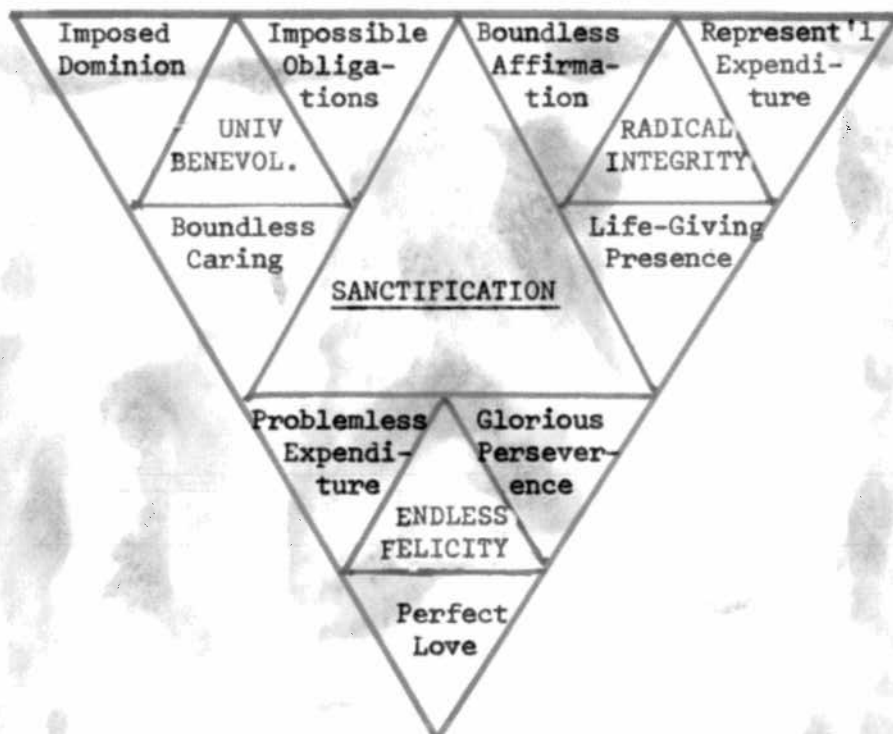
Man can start, by virtue and ascetic purification, to climb back up the ladder. However in that journey, it is necessary to have that experience of Grace again--that is, you have to have the assistance of God to continue the ascent. A divine act is needed, by which, through contemplation or expansion of consciousness, you are seized by the transcendent power. Grace comes into your life again, and you continue with your contemplation, meditation, in which you have the ability to intuit unity. That is, intuiting the possibility of mystery--intuiting the possibility of the relationship to God. This is, finally, the beatific vision. This ascent of man to perfection, or mystical union, is called, by Augustine, the Caritas. This is man's journey to perfection, down into sin,--up to perfection. The key is that Augustine was clear that in the Christ event it is possible to be reunited with the Mystery. Yet, he was also clear that men will see through the process of perfection in which one has the fruits of grace and participates in those.

For Augustine, looking through our categories, the experience of humilitas is justification in which, like a flash of lightning, a man sees his disrelationship and his unity. And at the same time, Sanctification, or the kind of genuine response to the love of God, or responding to what has been given to you, comes out of that event. Augustine has really helped us in terms of showing that one begins with Justification and, in the midst of that, experiences Sanctification. Something happens and you don't do anything, but then after a while, you do. You begin to see that certain things are demanded of you. In the midst of that you forget that you're human: that is, you begin to think that you're something else. Then you are in need again of that event which breaks you loose. For Augustine, you're not just "spinning your wheels in the mud" but you are going



somewhere. You know that you are a different kind of human being; You haven't gotten away from this kind of situation, but your life has taken on a different kind of quality. The way Augustine speaks of Cupiditas is that man is driven with eros which doesn't have anything to do with what you think it does. But it is your experience of being deeply excited, being deeply passionately driven. Now, when that's hooked to pride then you are continually going off into sin. Sin is striving after new knowledge, or seeking some kind of security. Now on the other side of humilitas, that gets converted into caritas. Augustine does not throw out his passionate nature, but rather he channels it into the quest for unity or the push towards perfection in his existence. It's that kind of deep passionate care that then gets transformed. You can't get romantic about thinking

you are going up the ladder. You think you have gotten rid of hate, but instead, you become a more skilled hater, with more depth to you in your hate. Once that's transformed, there is the passion breaking forth in the midst of a person's life.



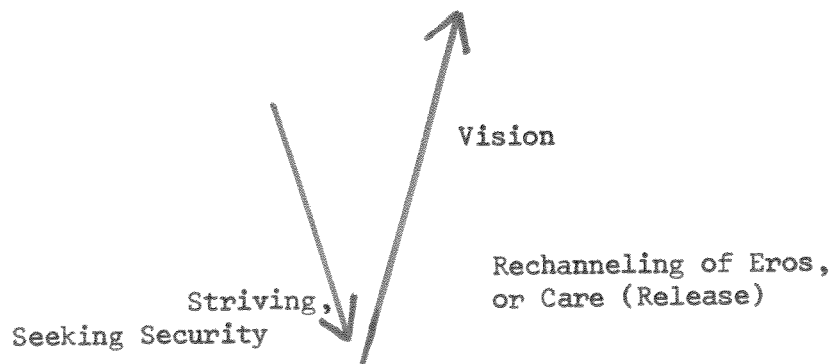
From where we stand, is Augustine really dealing with Sanctification --- Universal Benevolence, Radical Integrity and Endless Felicity? My initial response is that Augustine falls primarily on the pole of Endless Felicity. That's a strong category, but again on second thought, I would put him on the Radical Integrity pole. For Augustine, the radicalness of the Christ event, in which a man is able to lift the world is just key in his whole understanding. We read things about "beatific vision" and the "City of God" which obviously come under Endless Felicity. But in terms of thinking of Augustine as a whole, Radical Integrity is that transforming event that then allows you to be the human being you are. From Augustine's writings comes the reminder that "All there is, is good" or he writes about that which is--and its Boundless Affirmation; and one can look at Augustine's whole life style as Representational Expenditure. Here you have a man who wanted to do almost anything except what he was assigned to do--the Bishop of Hippo. His willingness to be that kind of human being, on behalf of others, was Representational Expenditure; or Live-Giving-Presence--the tremendous influence Augustine had then and has now. There's Life-Giving Presence going on today. Time and again, a person will go back to the past to acknowledge his debt to Augustine.

I would place the second emphasis on Endless Felicity. Augustine knew that unity was Fulfillment--in other words, to experience the re-unification or the beatific vision. Fulfillment is knowing God, especially through Glorious Perseverance. Augustine was a man who had seen it all. He'd been through the whole gammit. He did not grow up in some sheltered closet. And he knew that nothing was going to make him happy. Therefore, he was released to decide what happiness is. You decide your happiness, but you only decide in the context standing over against God, not anything else. Universal Benevolence is the third beat there. Augustine was truly a defender of the faith. Boundless caring is that of discovering the possibility of harnessing the care.

There are several implications of all this for us. Theologically, God and the soul are the two realities everything is all about. First, you have the reality of the Mystery, which is confronted by consciousness. In the midst of that confrontation is the rechanneling of eros, or the rechanneling of care which pushes for the vision, or fulfillment.

The other implication, theologically, is the notion of Justification--Sanctification--Justification--Sanctification. It is not that we are out of Justification and now all going to be Sanctified. Augustine helps to recall that both are one fantastic explosion of life.

Of the sociological implications, one is the whole business of care, or eros. It cannot be blocked off. Every man cares. But when that gets blocked or perverted, it comes out in the striving or the seeking after security. When that transformation happens, care is released in a brand new way. Studying Augustine has re-emphasized the necessity of giving people the change to be the genuine caring human beings they are.



Lastly the City of God seems to be fairly obviously dealing with the Other World. We must be careful, in relating the City of God and the New Social Vehicle, that we do not think that with the New Social Vehicle we are going to achieve some kind of Utopia, or that we will create some kind of City of God where there is no more hate and no more sin. Clearly, that is not going to happen. Go back to the new image in the Church Lecture. Just as soon as you think you have hold of the edge, you're a fool, because the edge is somewhere else. That's what it means to be mission--to continually move somewhere else. So you are not, in the

first instance, getting somewhere, as you work to create the structures of the Guild and the Ecumenical Parishes. Rather, you are enabling human life to move continually through history. At the same time what's never existed before is, indeed, going to come into being. But it is not utopia, it is the City of God, which is the transformation in the midst of the sin.

--Robert Vance