THE USE AND NATURE OF THE CLASSICAL LIBERAL DISCIPLINES
IN AUGUSTINE'S TREATISE CONTRA ACADEMICOS

A Thesis

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by

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PREFACE

For my research on the various members of the Academy I used the English translations of the works of Cicero, Sextus Empiricus, Diogenes Laertius, and Plutarch which have been made available by "The Loeb Classical Library." In passages involving technical terms whose translation was critical for the meaning of the passage I have included the Latin or Greek term in parentheses instead of attempting to give additional translations.

I have also used English translations of the works of Augustine. Again, I have attempted to include the Latin for crucial terms. Unless otherwise noted, I have referred to passages of Augustine's works by using the numbering found in the Benedictine texts. However, several of the translations I used did not employ this numbering, and consequently I have cited passages from these works by giving the book and chapter numbers. In these cases I have noted that the number was a chapter number by prefacing the number with "Chap." In several cases I have given both references by including the chapter reference in parentheses following the Benedictine number. The reason for a lack of a uniform numbering system is that there has been no complete critical edition of Augustine's works.
I have used the footnotes to O'Meara's translation of *Contra Academicos* listed in the bibliography extensively as clues to where documentation of the Academics position could be found. The translation of the relevant portions of Augustine's *Retractiones* were also taken from the footnotes of O'Meara's work. The commentary by Eugene Portalie listed in the bibliography has also been most helpful since it gives many references to those passages in which Augustine discusses particular problems in his various works. I also took the translation of the passage from *De Genesl ad Litteram* from Portalie's work.

I want to thank Professor Anthony Nemetz for the help, advice, and criticism which have made this thesis possible.
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INTRODUCTION

"... every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's." With this statement Saint Augustine expresses his basic concern with multiple approaches to the truth exemplified in his use of reason and revelation; knowledge and belief; understanding and faith; and philosophy and theology.

As one of the classical attempts to resolve the apparent opposition between reason and revelation Augustine's thought provokes some significant questions: Was Augustine himself able to unify these multiple approaches, and if so, how? What contribution did the classical liberal studies make to Augustine's philosophy, and in turn, what contribution did his philosophy make to his theology? But before any of these questions can be answered, there are some basic issues which must be settled. One of these basic issues is the topic of my thesis.

Augustine does use logic, ethics, physics, mathematics, rhetoric, astronomy, grammar, and even music in his treatises and arguments. The questions which I shall discuss are: What are the

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1Augustine On Christian Doctrine 11. 28.
uses of mathematics, logic, ethics, and physics in Augustine's formulation of solutions to philosophical problems? What kind or degree of certitude can be found in these disciplines? What is the justification for the ultimate principles or premises of these disciplines? Did Augustine hold that the classical liberal studies could be used independent of any justification found in faith, belief, or revelation?

I shall organize my thesis around Augustine's work *Contra Academicos* in which he takes up the problem of the nature, purpose, and efficacy of inquiry. In this treatise Augustine discusses error and certitude and their relation to our confidence in the success of man's pursuit of truth. An additional reason for the selection of this treatise is that in this work Augustine refers to mathematics, logic, physics, and ethics and claims that through them he has learned certain things which convince him that truth can be known by man. If Augustine's justification for this assertion can be established, then much will have been accomplished towards ascertaining Augustine's conception of the extent of applicability of the classical liberal studies and the justification of the fundamental principles of these disciplines.

Organizing the thesis around one specific treatise will enable me to give a close analysis of Augustine's method of argument when attempting to prove a specific point. Such an analysis is essential to determine the role of the disciplines in Augustine's general theory of inquiry.
In order to understand Augustine's views on error, certitude, and the nature and purpose of inquiry as expounded in this treatise, it will first be necessary to establish the Academics' position on these issues.
CHAPTER I

THE POSITION OF THE NEW ACADEMY

To facilitate my discussion of the Academy, I shall use the classification of the various "Academies" and their respective leaders suggested by Sextus Empiricus: The Old Academy of Plato, the Middle Academy of Arcessilas, the New Academy of Carneades, the fourth Academy of Philo, and the School of Antiochus.¹

The first problem facing those who attempt to reconstruct the position of the 'Middle' or 'New' Academies is the lack of reliable documentary information. Both Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius tell us that neither Arcessilas nor Carneades left any writings.² Thus, even those scholars who were relatively contemporary with these men had to rely on the interpretations presented by the disciples of these leading skeptics.³ However, our knowledge is twice removed from the

¹Sextus Empiricus Outlines of Pyrrhonism i. 220.


³Clitomachus, a disciple of Carneades, is an important source for his views. Diogenes Laertius Lives of Eminent Philosophers iv. 67.
original source since we are forced to rely on men who wrote about these interpreters such as Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, Sextus Empiricus, and Cicero.

Although positions of the various Academics from Arcesilaus to Antiochus vary considerably, there is mutual agreement on a few basic teachings and methods of argument. They all accepted the Stoic division of philosophy into three branches. Cicero reports that "there already existed a threefold scheme of philosophy: one division dealt with conduct and morals, the second with the secrets of nature, the third with dialectic and with judgment of truth and falsehood, correctness and incorrectness, consistency and inconsistency, in rhetorical discourse."  

Most of the Academics also accepted the same criterion or test for truth. They used a definition offered and supported by Zeno, the founder of Stoicism. Zeno held that external objects make some sort of impact on the observer which he called a presentation (φαντασία). If the presentation is a true one, the object is impressed and molded "in a form such as it could not have if it came from an object that was not the one that it actually did come from."

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4 Cicero claims that this division was inherited from Plato. Cicero Academica 1. 19.

5 Cicero Academica, 1. 19.


7 Cicero Academica 1. 40.

8 Ibid. ii. 18.
Zeno calls a presentation which is comprehended in such a way "graspable" (καταλαμβάνει). He claims that these trustworthy presentations have "a 'manifestation' peculiar to themselves of the object presented." It is this "manifestation" (ἐμφάνισις) which is a form which could only have arisen from the object presented which distinguishes true presentations from all others. Cicero comments that Zeno held that such a presentation was grasped by the mind in such a way that it could not be removed by reasoning. This claim must mean that reason is unable to imagine any manner in which such a presentation could have occurred without it coming from the object from which it appears to come. Such presentations cannot by their very nature be refuted or shown to be false; they carry their own criterion or mark which distinguishes them unmistakably from any presentation that could be false.

The acceptance of Zeno's criterion also provided the Academics a common point of departure in their method of doing philosophy. If Zeno's criterion for distinguishing true presentations from false ones is correct, then the task facing those who deny that men can make this distinction is to show that in no case do we have a presentation which is such that due to its very nature it could not possibly be a false presentation. Thus, for each presentation suggested by an opponent of the skeptics as a "true" presentation, the Academic must offer as a

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9 Ibid., I. 40.
counter example either a presentation similar to the "true" one in every respect except that it is known to be false or a presentation which has equal evidence as the "true" one but which, if it were true, would contradict the first so-called "true" presentation. Sextus Empiricus reports that "the main basic principle of the Skeptic system is that of opposing to every proposition an equal proposition; for we believe that as a consequence of this we end by ceasing to dogmatize." Cicero states that a consequence of this method of discovering truth by arguing both for and against all schools is that the Academics have to master all of the philosophic doctrines maintained by their contemporaries.

In respect to the Academics' specific positions in the three divisions of philosophy Sextus Empiricus remarks:

For while, on the one hand, so far as regards making firm and positive assertions about any of the matters dogmatically treated in physical theory, we do not deal with physics; yet, on the other hand, in respect of our mode of opposing to every proposition an equal proposition and of our theory of quietude we do treat of physics. This too is the way in which we approach the logical and ethical branches of philosophy.

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10 Sextus Empiricus *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1. 6.

11 Cicero *De Natura Decrums* 1. 11.

12 Sextus Empiricus *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1. 9.

The notion of quietude deserves some explanation since Sextus Empiricus regarded the state of quietude as the end and goal of philosophy. In *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, i. 8, he remarks that "Skepticism is an ability or mental attitude, which opposes appearances to judgments in any way whatsoever, with the result that owing to the equipollence of the objects and reasons thus opposed, we are brought firstly to a state
Having noted some similarities in the views of the Academics, I now turn to the specific contributions of the leaders of the different "Academies." This information will be essential in determining whom Augustine is arguing against and whether or not his arguments are well directed.

Arcesilaus, as "the first to meddle with the system handed down by Plato," "the first to suspend his judgment owing to the contradictions of opposing arguments," and "the first to argue on both sides of a question," was the founder of the Middle Academy and led the attack against Platonism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, or any other view which people wished to maintain in opposition to his theories. He specifically denied that any presentations could be found which met Zeno's criterion for being a true presentation. Sextus Empiricus, who believed that his position as a Skeptic was different from the Skepticism of the Academy, claimed that while he and Arcesilaus agreed that the "end" is suspension of all judgment which is accompanied by a certain "quietude," they differed in that Arcesilaus

\[ \text{of 'unperturbedness' or quietude.} \]

\[ \text{(}\text{τὸ μὲν πρῶτον εἰς ἀποκόρ} \text{το ἰemspέτι τοῦτο εἰς ἀνταφήτης).} \]

\[ \text{Ἀνταφήσεις has a sense of imperturbability which is completely opposed to Augustine's conception of the restless heart seeking its Lord.} \]

\[ ^{13} \text{Diogenes Laertius} \text{ Lives of Eminent Philosophers} \text{ iv. 28.} \]

\[ ^{14} \text{Cicero} \text{ De Natura Deorum} \text{ i. 70.} \]

\[ ^{15} \text{Sextus Empiricus} \text{ Outlines of Pyrrhonism} \text{ i. 226f.} \]

\[ ^{16} \text{ibid.} \text{ i. 231.} \]
asserts that suspension of judgment in itself is really good and assent to anything is in itself bad, while Sextus Empiricus claims that he merely conforms to life undogmatically and follows what appears. 17 Sextus Empiricus also reports that some used to claim that Arcesilaus was merely testing his pupils to see if they were fit to receive the Platonic dogmas although he himself does not know whether this claim is true. 18

The Academy remained true to the doctrines of Arcesilaus with little change down to the time of Carneades 19 who reinforced the views of Arcesilaus 20 by arguing against the existence of any criterion of truth. 21 Cicero summarizes the main argument of Carneades as follows: "Some presentations are true, others false; and what is false cannot be perceived. But a true presentation is invariably of such a sort that a false presentation also could be exactly of the same sort; and among presentations of such a sort that there is no difference between them it cannot occur that some are capable of being perceived and others are not. Therefore, there is no presentation that is capable of being perceived." 22 Carneades argued that "neither sense, nor

17 Ibid. I. 226, 232.
18 Ibid. I. 234.
19 Cicero Academica I. 46.
20 Cicero De Natura Deorum I. 11.
21 Sextus Empiricus Against the Logicians I. 166.
22 Cicero Academica II. 40.
reason, nor presentation, nor any other thing that exists" could act as a criterion of truth for in all these cases we have examples of these faculties confronting us with false information which in no way differs from that which is claimed to be true. Carneades attempted to demonstrate this point not only by pointing out the discrepancies among philosophers and by arguing on both sides of all questions, but also by giving specific examples of cases where the senses or reason are in error. Although it is difficult to determine precisely which examples Carneades used, they were probably very much like the ones cited by Cicero in close connection with Carneades' name in *Academica* ii. 79-87. Cicero lists the case of the bent oar, the discrepancy between the apparent size and calculated size of the sun, the pigeon's neck which appears to change colors, the inability of the senses to distinguish between two eggs, twins, or grains of sand that look very much alike, and the types of "presentations" we have when drunk, dreaming, or mad. Cicero uses these cases as evidence that there are many sense experiences which, although they seem quite legitimate and like 'true' sense experiences in every respect at the time when we are having them, later turn out to be false.

As regards reason or dialectic, Cicero demands to know in what subjects these can act as the judge of truth and falsehood. He claims it is obvious that they cannot judge in geometry, literature,

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23 Sextus Empiricus *Against the Logicians* ii. 159.

24 Cicero *Academica* ii. 91f.
music, or any such discipline. He turns to philosophy and goes through
its three branches showing that, to use an example from physics, dia-
lectic is incapable of judging of the size of the sun, nor, to use an
example from ethics, can it judge concerning the highest good. Even
in dialectic itself Cicero maintains that if reason is to judge con-
cerning what form of hypothetical inference is valid or what propo-
sition is ambiguous, it merely judges concerning itself and not con-
cerning anything true or false in the world. As a further refutation
of dialectic Cicero cites the sorites paradox used by Carneades to
show that "no faculty of knowing absolute limits has been bestowed
upon us by the nature of things to enable us to fix exactly how far
to go in any matter."25 The paradox claims that when a small pile is
increased by very gradual stages we are unable to say when it becomes
a heap—"we do not know at what point in the addition or subtraction
to give a definite answer."26 Cicero used the "liar paradox", "If you
say that you are lying and say it truly, you lie,"27 to refute "a
fundamental principle of dialectic that every statement is either true
or false."28 He even attempted to cast doubt on the hypothetical in-
ference pattern with the following syllogism: "If you say that you
are lying and speak the truth, you are lying; but you do say that you

25 Ibid. 11. 92.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid. 11. 96.
28 Ibid.
are lying and speak the truth; therefore, you are lying." Even the
disjunctive proposition of the form "either x or not-x" did not escape
Cicero's skepticism as he felt Epicurus had a good argument when he
said that the claimed necessity for this proposition did not exist in
"the nature of things." \(^{30}\)

The significant contribution which Carneades made to the
teachings of the Academy was his discussion of probability. Sextus
Empiricus claims that although Carneades believed that no criterion
for truth could be found, he did believe that some criterion was
necessary "for the conduct of life and for the attainment of happi-
ness." \(^{31}\) Thus, Carneades used as his criterion "that which appears
true, and appears so vividly." \(^{32}\) However, according to Sextus Empi-
ricus, Carneades had three factors involved in his criterion: the
probable presentation which we use in trivial matters, the probable
and irreversible presentation which we use in greater matters, and
the "probable and irreversible and tested" presentation which we employ
in "matters which contribute to happiness." \(^{33}\) By irreversible he means
merely that there should be nothing in the presentation which should
"disturb us by a suspicion of falsity," \(^{34}\) and by tested he means that

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Ibid. II. 97.

\(^{31}\) Sextus Empiricus Against the Logicians I. 166.

\(^{32}\) Ibid. I. 173.

\(^{33}\) Ibid. I. 184.
we "scrutinize each of the presentations in the concurrence." (Here "concurrence" means a collection of presentations in instances where several presentations are involved in a judgment.)

As a transition figure in the history of the Academy, Philo, leader of the fourth Academy, presents a special problem in that he appears to have altered his views in his later years. Plutarch credits him with being "a vigorous representative of the doctrines of Carneades" and the teacher of Cicero. Cicero himself claims to be defending the views of Philo in his Academica. Philo was especially interested in Carneades' notion of probability. It was this interest in the "probable" and what the "wise man" could properly give assent to that gradually led Philo to diverge somewhat from the New Academy and its stricter adherents. Philo did not think that mere probability or the clearing away of dogmatism was sufficient for the wise man to obtain happiness. He sought greater fixity of conviction than the principles of his predecessors afforded. Philo agreed that objects were inapprehensible so far as concerns Zeno's criterion, but he went on to assert that they "are apprehensible so far as concerns the real nature of the objects themselves." Cicero declares that when "Philo weakens and

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34 ibid. 1. 182.
35 ibid.
36 Plutarch Lives "Lucullus" xiii. 3. (Cf. Cicero Academica ii. 17 where Philo is said to have been a student of Clitomachus and a defender of his doctrines.)
39 Sextus Empiricus Outlines of Pyrrhonism i. 235.
abolishes... the criterion... which leads to the inference that nothing can be grasped—so incautiously does he come around to the position that he most wants to avoid. It was on this point as to whether Zeno's criterion provides the distinction between the knowable and the unknowable that Cicero disagrees with Philo. Cicero also reports that Philo was bothered by the fact that the New Academy maintained that there were false presentations and still that they differed in no respect from the true ones.

It was arguments of this type which caused Antiochus to practically desert the position of the Middle and New Academies. Plutarch claims that he was a representative of the Old Academy, and Sextus Empiricus asserts that he was almost a Stoic and that he tried to transfer the dogmas of the Stoics to the Academy by showing that they were already present in Plato. Cicero too felt that with a few modifications Antiochus could have been a "perfectly genuine Stoic." Antiochus used the criticism against the New Academy that their dictum that nothing can be perceived, if true, would itself be an example of the kind of knowledge which the New Academy deemed

\(^{40}\) Cicero Academica 11. 18.

\(^{41}\) Ibid. 11. 113.

\(^{42}\) Ibid. 11. 111

\(^{43}\) Plutarch Lives "Lucullus" xiii. 3.

\(^{44}\) Sextus Empiricus Outlines of Pyrrhonism 1. 235.

\(^{45}\) Cicero Academica 11. 132.
impossible. Antiochus also felt that the distinction between true
and false presentations could not be made if some were not known to
be true. Antiochus seemed to be quite interested in demonstrating
the continuity of the development of the Academy and the agreement of
the Peripatetic, Stoic, and Epicurean schools. It is on this basis
that Zeller classifies him as an eclectic. Antiochus did hold to
Zeno's criterion, but he also felt that we do have some knowledge
which meets this test. He used to counter the arguments about dreams
with the fact that we can tell when we have been dreaming when we
wake up.

Perhaps my attempt to document the position of the leaders
of the various Academies has left the impression that the Academics
were a group of rather dull philosophers who spent their time quib-
bling over tedious epistemological questions. To the extent that my
summary does so, it is certainly misleading. For although the argu-
ments of the Academics were channeled largely along epistemological
lines, Arcesilaus, Carneades, and Philo were concerned with questions
of considerable practical and ethical importance. Can Truth be known?
Does Truth exist? What must a man know or do in order to lead a happy
life? How can a man act if not on the basis of what is known as true?
What can the "wise" man know? How can the "wise" man avoid error? Is
a man ever justified in holding an opinion, i.e., a belief based on

46 ibid. II. 102.
47 Zeller, p. 91.
48 Cicero Academica II. 49f.
anything other than a true sensation or perception? It was in order to present and defend a coherent set of answers to these questions that the Academics brought forth their arguments. It becomes obvious why they should concern themselves so much with epistemological arguments when one realizes that a basic principle of all of their systems was that man could not know Truth.

In spite of the fact that Cicero claimed that the Academics' teaching was limited to matters within the range of philosophical enquiry, the Academics were vitally concerned with the practical and ethical life. Rome's first acquaintance with Carneades and his views involved two separate orations on two successive days in which he defended two contradictory notions of justice. Carneades' reasons for expanding on the probable were intimately connected with his concern for the practical life and the "happy" life. It was due to similar motivations that Philo imposed severe limitations on the extent to which the doctrine concerning the impossibility of all knowledge should be pushed. The basic theme of the whole argument of the New and Middle Academies was that a man could be neither wise nor happy if he was in error. Since the Academics also held that nothing could be perceived as true, the only way to avoid error on their view, was to withhold assent from all things. Both Carneades and Philo were vividly aware of the implication here that in order to be happy a man must refrain from all action. It is significant to note that they both felt strongly compelled to demonstrate that their views contained no such implication. However, it is even more important to realize that it
was an attempt to discover the nature of the truly wise and happy man that gave rise to their entire system in the first place.
CHAPTER II

AUGUSTINE AND THE NEW ACADEMY

I have outlined the Academics' views on happiness and wisdom, truth and knowledge, and certitude and error. It is precisely these issues which occupied St. Augustine's attention when he attempted to refute the arguments of the Academics in his treatise *Contra Academicos*. Before we can turn to Augustine's actual refutation of the Academics, there are several preliminary questions concerning Augustine's relationship to the Academy which must be answered. (1) To what extent was Augustine acquainted with the arguments and views of Arcesilaus, Carneades, Philo, Antiochus, and Cicero? (2) How complete was Augustine's skepticism during the period when he claimed to subscribe to the views of the Academy? (3) What was the position of the New Academy as Augustine saw it? (4) What specific points in the position of the New Academy did Augustine deem it essential to refute? I shall discuss these questions in the order listed.

Concerning Augustine's acquaintance with the writings and discussions of the Academics, Alfaric concludes that since Augustine read very little Greek he probably never read anything about the New
Academy written by a Greek. He states that we have no evidence that Augustine ever came in direct contact with representatives of that school, and that since all the views he attributes to the New Academy can be found in Cicero's *Academicks*, Augustine probably got all of his information about the New Academy from this source. O'Meara also concludes that "one can be quite satisfied that Augustine's acquaintance with the tenets of the New Academy is adequately represented in Cicero's *Academica*, for his own *Against the Academics* deals almost solely with the arguments to be found there." O'Meara substantiates his claim by tracing nearly every view that Augustine attributes to the Academics to its source in Cicero. Thus, at least for the purpose of this paper, we can consider Augustine's conception of the Academy as drawn solely from the writings of Cicero.

The fact that Augustine did become acquainted with the Academy through Cicero explains in part why Augustine felt it so necessary to refute their Arguments. It was the reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* that turned Augustine to philosophy, and Augustine always speaks very highly of this work. In *Contra Academicos* itself Augustine states that the arguments of the Academics must be carefully refuted lest


2Ibid.


4Augustine *Confessions* iii. 7 (Chap. 4).
'We ourselves seem to some to dispute arrogantly the authority of highly learned men, among whom Tullius especially must always have weight with us.'\textsuperscript{5} But Augustine's relation to the Academy was not simply a matter of having read several philosophical tracts. For a short period of time the skepticism of the Academy seemed to Augustine to be the only genuine option left in the field of philosophical systems.

After Augustine became disillusioned with Faustus and Manicheanism, he gravitated toward the views of the Academy. Difficulties within the Manichean system itself, especially the poor understanding of the liberal disciplines, caused Augustine to reject Manicheanism. Yet, since at this time he had not yet come to see how it was possible that a spirit could exist or how he could prove the Manicheans guilty of falsehood, he turned to the Academics and 'their method of doubting everything.'\textsuperscript{6} That Augustine did not embrace their skeptical teaching to the extent that Arcesilaus and Carneades had is evident from Augustine's statement in the \textit{Confessions} that although he preferred these philosophers, he refused to 'commit the cure of his fainting soul' to them since they were 'without the saving name of Christ.'\textsuperscript{7}

When Augustine writes:

\begin{quote}
For all this time I restrained my heart from assenting to anything, fearing to fall headlong; but by hanging
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{5}Augustine \textit{Contra Academicos} iii. 14.

\textsuperscript{6}Augustine \textit{Confessions} v. 25 (Chap. 14).

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid.
in suspense I was the worse killed. For my desire was to be as well assured of those things that I saw not, as I was that seven and three are ten. For I was not so insane as to believe that this could not be comprehended; but I desired to have other things as clear as this, whether corporeal things, which were not present to my senses, or spiritual, whereof I knew not how to conceive except corporeally, both the cause and extent of his skepticism become apparent. The fact that he had at one time held Manicheanism to be true while it was later shown to be false, made him intensely aware of his need for some sort of "criterion." That Augustine never felt that truth could not be known or that no true presentations exist can be seen by noting his refusal to reject the propositions of mathematics. Having established the nature of Augustine's acquaintance with the Academy and the extent of his short-lived skepticism, I now turn to his conception of the position of the New Academy.

Augustine presents his conception of the doctrines of the New Academy in Chapter Eight of the second book of *Contra Academicos*. He claims that the doctrines of the New Academy are:

1. That man could have no knowledge of the things which concerned philosophy, and as for other things, Carneades and the rest of the Academicians ignored them;  
2. That man could be wise and that his office as a wise man is to seek for truth.

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8 *Ibid.* vi. 6 (Chap. 4).

9 Augustine *Contra Academicos* ii. 11, iii. 22f (cf. Cicero *Academica* ii. 97).

10 Augustine *Contra Academicos* ii. 11, iii. 10, 31 (cf. Cicero *Academica* ii. 66, 115).
That the wise man will assent to nothing whatever for if he assented to something, he must needs fall into error which is a crime for the wise man;  

Truth can be perceived by those signs which cannot be present in what is not true;  

Such a thing, i.e., a thing with such a sign, cannot possibly be found;  

Since it seems to follow that the wise man who would not assent to anything would not do anything, the Academics 'put forth the idea of the 'probable,' which they also termed 'what-is-like truth,' and maintained that the wise man did in no account default in his obligations, since he had something to serve him as a norm of conduct."  

The propositions listed above state the position of the New Academy that Augustine tries to refute. However, Augustine was not at all convinced that this was the true position of the New Academy. Following the lead of Philo and Cicero Augustine at times attempts to maintain the continuity of the Old and the New Academies. He suggests as probable, although he adds that he does not mind if it is

11Augustine Contra Academicos II. 11, III. 22-32 (cf. Cicero Academica I. 45, II. 59f, 66.  


16bid., I. 46.
false, the theory that the New Academy was keeping secret or hiding the doctrines of Plato so they would not be revealed to people who were not prepared to accept them, especially the Stoics whose materialism rendered them totally incapable of comprehending them. Whether or not this view is correct can probably never be settled categorically. Modern commentators are quite inclined to discredit it. Sextus Empiricus reports that there was a rumor that Arcesilaus was merely testing his companions to see if they were fit for the "reception of the Platonic dogmas." If Augustine did attribute these views falsely to the Academics, there was, nonetheless, good evidence that they held such a position, and to attribute the best possible view to a teacher was certainly in keeping with Augustine's conception of reading and teaching.

17Augustine Contra Academicos iii. 42.

18Augustine did attribute materialism to Zeno in particular, and sometimes he seems to attribute to the Stoics in general. Since the contexts in which Augustine makes these claims are always those in which he is discussing the nature of the psychic operations, for the purposes of this paper we can regard his claim as merely the claim that the Stoics held that all knowledge was sense knowledge. Thus, the truth of Augustine's claim is not affected by the fact that in regards to their ethical theory the Stoics were not materialists.

19Augustine Contra Academicos iii. 37-43.

20O'Keara in his translation of Contra Academicos, Against the Academics ("Ancient Christian Writers"; Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1950) makes this claim in note 48 to book iii. He cites other historians of the Academy to substantiate his claim.

21Sextus Empiricus Outlines of Pyrrhonism i. 234.

22Augustine On the Profit of Believing 11.
Now that I have explicited Augustine's conception of the position of the New Academy, one preliminary question remains, and that is focusing our attention on those specific aspects of the Academics' teaching which Augustine felt especially compelled to refute. Although Augustine himself does believe that the Academics were merely protecting the doctrines of Plato, he states that this is not the important point in his treatise *Contra Academicos.* "It is enough for me that I no longer think that truth cannot be found by man." Augustine believes he must refute two principles of the Academy. He feels that he must show that both assertions, "Nothing can be perceived," and "one must not assent to anything," are false. It is significant also to note that Augustine's treatise begins with a discussion of happiness and whether or not knowledge of truth is essential for happiness. That happiness cannot be found independent of truth is Augustine's self professed motivation for discussing the Academy and refuting their arguments. Thus, as Augustine sets about to refute the Academics, he is above all denying that their formula of withholding assent can lead to the happy life. Having pointed out which issues Augustine regarded as crucial, I now turn to his actual refutation of the New Academy.

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23 Augustine *Contra Academicos* iii. 43.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. iii. 22.

26 Augustine *Retractions* i. 1.
Augustine certainly didn't view his differences with the New Academy as a mere issue of bent sticks and moving towers. "We are concerned with life, with morality, and with the spirit—that spirit which hopes to overcome the antagonism of every kind of illusion..." The method Augustine uses to refute the Academy is probably very much like the method which was taught at the rhetoric schools in Madauros and Carthage. He did not propound a theory of his own but rather pointed out inconsistencies and inadequacies in the position and arguments of the Academics. The first two books of the treatise *Contra Academicos* are not a part of the actual refutation of the Academy. Instead they are attempts to get clear on the nature, significance, and interrelation of happiness, truth, the search for truth, error, and the "probable." Both Licentius, who in the dialogue attempts to defend the Academics, and Trygetius, who is trying to refute the New Academy, agree that happiness is the thing they desire most and that happiness is living in conformity with the divine part of the spirit, *i.e.*, reason. The question now is whether this happiness which it is reason's task to achieve will be realized by merely a diligent search for truth or by actually finding truth. Augustine realizes that the crux of the Academics' argument concerning this question lies in their definition of error. In accordance with


28 Augustine *Contra Academicos* 1. 25.

29 ibid. 1. 24.
the above definition of happiness it is obvious that the happy man is
the wise man, and the Academics define the wise man as one who is not
in error. Licentius, who defends the Academics, defines error as "the
approbation as true of what is not true." Trygetius, however,
maintains that error is precisely "to seek and never to find." Licentius
defines wisdom as the search after the knowledge of things human
and things divine which are necessary for the happy life. Trygetius
offers as his definition the knowledge of things human and
things divine which knowledge itself is necessary for the happy life.
Since the wise man is the happy man, and since wisdom is that which
the wise man knows or possesses, the dispute as to the correct defi-
nition of wisdom will be settled by determining whose definition is
a true description of what is essential for the happy life. These
are the central issues of the first two books.

In the third book of Contra Academicos Augustine presents his
refutation of the New Academy. His first and possibly main argument
involves a discussion of the wise man whose existence the Academics
constantly maintain. Here Augustine calls on all his rhetorical skill
to point out a seeming contradiction in the position of the New
Academy. If nothing can be known and if the wise man exists and does
know or possess wisdom, then wisdom turns out to be nothing. Augustine
argues that wisdom certainly cannot be nothing since no one can know

30 Ibid. 1. 11.
31 Ibid. 1. 10.
what is not true. Although Augustine doesn't go beyond pointing to the seeming contradiction, it is clear that the merits of this argument rest on the true nature of wisdom. To give Augustine's views on this subject will require some preliminary remarks concerning his ontology and theories concerning the psychic operations. Since these remarks will be made later in this paper, I shall postpone until that time a discussion of the nature of wisdom. Here it suffices to note that Augustine felt that the reduction of wisdom to nothing was sufficiently absurd to be regarded as a contradiction.

At this point in his argument, Augustine regards the position of the New Academy as refuted. However, since the purpose of the treatise is to prevent the arguments and disputes of the Academics from impeding men in their search for truth, Augustine says that "... lest the arguments of the Academics should seem somewhat to cloud the issue... I shall... put forward a few considerations against those who would believe that the arguments referred to stand in the way of truth."³⁴

Augustine's first additional argument is an attempt to point out a contradiction which results when the Academics state their

³² ibid. i i i. 10.
³³ ibid. ii. 33.
³⁴ ibid. iii. 14.
position. The Academics use Zeno's definition of what constitutes a true perception. It is also one of their basic tenets that nothing which meets this definition can be found. The Academy further claimed that they were concerned with and investigated only questions dealing with philosophy. Augustine claims that all three of these propositions deal with philosophy, and if the Academics are to support their position, these propositions must be claimed by them to be true in such a way as to satisfy Zeno's criterion. Augustine acknowledges that Arcesilaus merely regarded Zeno's definition as probable, but he goes on to argue that "even if we are uncertain of it, Zeno's definition we know the definition is true or not true." This last point which employs the law of excluded middle will be more fully discussed when I comment on Augustine's conception of dialectics. Augustine not only attacked seeming inconsistencies in the Academics' position, but also tried to refute the very argument by which the Academics claimed to demonstrate the necessity of adopting skepticism.

Augustine's refutation of the skepticism of the New Academy is inextricably bound up with his metaphysical and epistemological theories. Consequently, although he doesn't draw on these theories a great deal in his actual refutation, they must be considered if one is to grasp the significance of Augustine's arguments. In my discussion of Augustine's refutation, I shall first present his actual

\[35\] ibid. iii. 21.

\[36\] ibid.
arguments which were directed against the arguments for the New Academy in Cicero's *Academica*. Next I shall attempt to interpret what significance Augustine's own metaphysical and epistemological views lend to his arguments.

Since Carneades and Arcesilaus directed most of their arguments against Zeno and those Stoics who did have a purely materialistic theory of knowledge, most of the Academics' attention was given to knowledge mediated through the senses. Augustine does not want to defend the senses as faculties through which we secure any absolute knowledge. In fact, he claims that he would like to aid the Academics in their refutation of the Epicureans and Cyrenaics who, in his opinion, trusted entirely too much in the senses. Nevertheless, Augustine does not want to reject the senses altogether. He asserts that one may not repudiate the senses "to the extent that we can't say something appears to us." Concerning arguments dealing with the bent oar and the moving towers Augustine asserts that what the eyes see is, in fact, true since a 'cause has intervened to make what appears appear.' The water is the cause of the oar appearing bent, and on Augustine's view it would be the appearance of a straight oar which would justify doubting the senses. Thus, for Augustine, the senses provide subjective certainty, *i.e.*, a certainty that we do have sensations.

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37 *ibid.* iii. 26.
38 *ibid.* iii. 24, 26 (cf. Cicero's *Academica* ii. 19, 79).
39 Augustine *Contra Academicos* iii. 26.
However, Augustine does not include this discussion of the senses and sense knowledge in order to stress a subjective certainty. He is not interested in justifying the senses as trustworthy sources of knowledge. Instead, Augustine wants to point out that the bulk of the Academics' arguments, which are directed against sense knowledge, carry absolutely no weight in the presence of another type of knowledge. Augustine claims that "if there is one world and six worlds there are in all seven worlds" is a proposition that is untouched by considerations of sleep, madness, or the unreliability of the senses. Augustine terminates his discussion of the senses with a remark that indicates the significance of his rather newly discovered metaphysical position (his conversion to Platonism) when he notes that quite possibly the wise man may be found among the Platonists who use the senses, only for opinion and rely upon the intelligence for knowledge. Concerning Augustine's actual views on the validity of the senses, he states in his treatise On The Trinity that although the Academics have argued against the senses they (the senses) are to be trusted since they give us knowledge of "the heaven and the earth, and those things in them which are known to us so far as He who created both us and them has willed them to be within our knowledge."

Turning from the senses to that knowledge which is found only "in the intelligence ("intelligiendi") and, far removed from the

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40 ld. iii. 25.
41 ld. iii. 26.
42 Augustine De Trinitate xv. 21 (Chap. 12).
senses, abides in the mind ("in mente vivere"), Augustine confronts the Academics directly in each of their three disciplines, dialectics, physics, and ethics. He does not, however, set himself up as the "wise" man who would be in a position to actually answer specific questions in these fields and to formulate the "true" system of physics, ethics, and dialectics. Rather, he offers propositions concerning the subject matter of each discipline and then concludes that given this knowledge on his part, the wise man, who knows wisdom, must certainly hold even more propositions as absolutely certain. The nature of this approach will assume added significance when I discuss Augustine's epistemological theories.

In the field of ethics, Augustine asserts that he knows with certitude the following proposition:

E.1 "I... am able to know the ultimate good of man, wherein is happiness: either there is none, or it is in the spirit, or in the body, or in both."

Concerning physics Augustine says that he knows:

P.1 "There is one world or not one."
P.2 "If there is not one world then the number of worlds is finite or infinite."
P.3 "This world of ours is ordered as it is, either by the intrinsic nature of corporeal matter, or by some providence."
P.4 "It [the world] either always was and always will be, or began to be and will never cease, or never began in time but will end, or began to exist and will not cease to exist forever."

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43 Augustine Contra Academicos iii. 26.
44 ibid. iii. 23, 27.
45 ibid. iii. 27.
46 ibid. iii. 23.
Augustine also injects a proposition from mathematics. He claims that three times three makes nine whether the whole world is asleep or not.47 Finally, Augustine turns to dialectics about which he claims to know more than any other part of philosophy.48 He rightfully claims that it is through this discipline that he has learned all the other propositions which he has already declared to be true.49 Following is a list of the propositions he offers as examples of what he has learned through dialectics:

D.1 "If there are four elements in the world, there are not five."
D.2 "If there is one sun, there are not two."
D.3 'The same soul cannot both die and be immortal.'
D.4 "A man cannot at the same time be happy and not happy."
D.5 "Here and now there is not day and night at the same time."
D.6 'We are now either awake or asleep."
D.7 'What I seem to see is either body or not body.'50

Augustine then turns to what could be called principles or rules of dialectics. He states that, 'Dialectics also taught me that if, of any one of the conditional statements which I have just mentioned, the first part be assumed as true, it necessarily involves the truth of the dependent part.'51 Concerning propositions involving contrariety

47 ibid. iii. 24.
48 ibid. iii. 29.
49 ibid.
50 ibid.
51 ibid.
or disjunction he says that they "are of this nature that when a part is taken away, whether that be composed of one or more things, something is left which by the removal is made certain."\textsuperscript{52}

Cicero had known that statements of this type would be offered by dialecticians as examples which satisfied Zeno's criterion. Consequently, he lists his rebuttals to them in his \textit{ Academica}. Cicero challenges the dialecticians with the question as to whether or not dialectics could judge concerning truth or falsity in music, geometry, literature, philosophy, or any specific discipline. He pointed out that dialectics could not decide concerning the size of the sun; nor could it select the supreme good. He further claimed that when dialectics makes judgments about valid forms of inference, it merely judges about itself and not about the world.\textsuperscript{53} Cicero's final blow to dialectics is the citation of two paradoxes.\textsuperscript{54} He claims that the sorites paradox shows that the fundamental principle of dialectics, namely that every statement is either true or false, is unacceptable. Notice that this objection, if valid, would rule out Augustine's argument concerning Zeno's criterion that it must be either true or false as well as exclude propositions P.1, D.4, D.5, D.6, and D.7 as examples of propositions known with absolute certainty. Cicero even

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Cicero \textit{ Academica} ii. 91.
\item \textsuperscript{54} See page 8 above.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
attempts to destroy the rule of the hypothetical syllogism with the liar paradox. This objection would, if valid, disqualify Augustine's propositions P.2, D.2, D.1 as candidates for true propositions known with certainty.

Augustine, who had read Cicero's Academica, does acknowledge some of these objectives although he doesn't seem to treat them very seriously. His reply to the sorites paradox seems to be that if truth and falsity are found in conflict in one and the same statement, one should conclude on what one understands and not bother with that which he doesn't. Augustine dismisses the Liar paradox with the remark that the wise man will destroy "that most fallacious sophism of the Academics" if only by ignoring it. It is difficult to determine just how damaging the ancient dialecticians felt these paradoxes were. Benson Mates in his recent work on Stoic Logic indicates that even such a skeptic as Sextus Empiricus felt they were largely "trash." It is true that Chrysippus, perhaps the most famous Stoic Logician, is alleged to have written six books in an attempt to show that the Liar paradox could not be solved. Still even he did not allow this difficulty to prevent him from formulating a rather formidable system of logic. A far more serious objection to Augustine's

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55 Augustine Contra Academicos iii. 29.

56 Ibid.

57 Benson Mates, Stoic Logic, p. 84.

58 Ibid. (cf. Diogenes Laertius Lives of Eminent Philosophers vii. 196.)
examples is the thesis that his logical statements are not about the world or the concrete subject matter of any discipline, and consequently if they are true, they are only true in a very trivial sense.

Augustine realized that this challenge was directed against specific metaphysical and epistemological theories. The reason Augustine did not feel compelled to defend his metaphysical and epistemological views against these arguments is simply that he felt that such objections were completely insignificant when directed against his position. Moreover, Augustine suspected that such paradoxes and similar objections were actually devices for defending his own views from the materialism of the Stoics and Epicureans. Whether or not the Academics were defending such a "secret doctrine" need not concern us here. What is of importance now is how Augustine feels that his world view avoids the difficulties raised by the arguments of the Academics and further how this world view justifies him in maintaining that the propositions from the various disciplines are sufficiently important to assure the man on his search for truth that it can be found.

Although Augustine did realize that his argument ultimately rested upon a world view and its corresponding theory of knowledge, he did not want to spell out those theories in detail. He states that:

"It is enough for my purpose that Plato thought that there were two worlds, one intelligible, where truth itself resided, and this sensible world which, it is clear, we apprehend by sight and touch. The first was the true world, while the latter was made like the true
world and after its image. Truth, bright and serene, shines from the former in the soul which knows herself; but only opinion, and not knowledge, can be generated from the latter in the souls of those who are not wise. Whatever was done in this world according to the virtues that Plato termed 'civil'--virtues that are like the other real virtues which are known by a few wise men only--could not be called anything but 'like-the-truth.' 59

Augustine saw that Zeno and the rest of the Stoics who had a purely materialistic conception of the soul were unable to escape the arguments of the Academics.

'Accordingly when Zeno, fascinated by a certain opinion of his own concerning the world, and especially the soul (whose interests true philosophy is always vigilant to defend), began to say that the soul was mortal, and that there is nothing beyond the present world of the senses and nothing transpires in it except through corporeal agency... Arcesilaus, in my opinion, acted in a most prudent and useful way, since the evil was spreading widely, in concealing completely the doctrine of the Academy [i.e., the Platonic doctrine] and in burying it as gold to be found at some time by posterity.' 60

The problem remains to show how Augustine's theories of the 'world and the soul' lend a significance to the propositions which Augustine has claimed to discover through the various disciplines. It must be remembered that the purpose of the whole dialogue is to prove that man's search for truth need not by necessity end in failure. The evidence which Augustine offers to substantiate his conclusion that such a search can in principle be successful is the list of

59 Augustine Contra Academicos III. 37.
60 ibid. III. 38.
propositions from ethics, physics, mathematics, and dialectics. To understand how these propositions are expected to encourage a man to conduct a life-long search after truth it is necessary to examine what they mean in light of Augustine's theories of the world and the soul.
CHAPTER III

AUGUSTINE'S ARGUMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS THEORIES

OF THE WORLD AND THE SOUL

In Contra Academicos Augustine makes three distinctions when he discusses the general term 'knowledge.' He distinguishes opinion ('opinio') from knowledge ('scientia') and knowledge from wisdom ('sapientia'). He also makes an analogous distinction between the operations sensation, understanding, and contemplation. Opinion is often identified with the results of sensation¹ while knowledge is identified with understanding.² In his treatise On the Magnitude of the Soul Augustine states: 'For whatever is apparent to the soul, either through the condition of the body or through the purity of the intelligence, of that the soul is not unaware. Sensation claims for itself the first way; knowledge, the other.'³ At times Augustine seems

¹Augustine Contra Academicos iii. 26.
²Ibid.
³Augustine On the Magnitude of the Soul 58 (Chap. 30).
to blur both the distinction between knowledge and wisdom and the distinction between the corresponding operations understanding and contemplation. However, at other times the distinction between knowledge and wisdom is crucial. Given Augustine's stress on the point that he is not the wise man and instead merely knows some truths in *Contra Academicos*, this is a time when the distinction is crucial.

In his treatise *On the Trinity* Augustine very explicitly distinguishes between knowledge and wisdom: "The intellectual cognizance of eternal things belongs to wisdom, but the rational cognizance of temporal things to knowledge."\(^4\) ("Ad sapientiam pertineat aerternarum rerum cognitio intellectualis; ad scientiam vero, temporallium rerum cognitio rationalis."\(^1\)) Knowledge involves the judging by reason of corporeal things according to incorporeal and eternal reasons,\(^5\) while Wisdom involves the contemplation of eternal things. To put this point in terms of Augustine's metaphor of the glass, knowledge involves seeing through the glass darkly, while wisdom is seeing face to face. Knowledge is seeing only an image or an enigma of eternal things in temporal things, while Wisdom is contemplating eternal things directly.

I have established that Augustine distinguished three different levels in the cognitive process. These levels can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

\(^4\) Augustine *De Trinitate* xii. 25 (Chap. 15).

\(^5\) *Ibid.* xii 2 (Chap. 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Products</th>
<th>That Which is Known</th>
<th>Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Eternal things</td>
<td>Contemplation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>Temporal things</td>
<td>Sensation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*I have not yet shown what the object of the understanding is. As the investigation of this three-leveled hierarchy proceeds, it will become apparent that the nature of this object will provide the key in the relationships among the three levels.

As noted above, Augustine has defined knowledge as the judging by reason of "corporeal things according to incorporeal and eternal reasons." Given this three-leveled hierarchy and such a definition of knowledge, it becomes apparent that Augustine felt that the understanding and its product, knowledge, provide some sort of link between temporal things and eternal things. In order to understand how Augustine felt this was possible, several questions must be answered concerning the relationships which exist among the products: opinion, knowledge, and Wisdom and the corresponding operations: sensation, understanding, and contemplation. (1) If knowledge involves judging temporal things by eternal reasons, does knowledge depend on Wisdom? (2) If there is some sense in which knowledge depends on Wisdom, must contemplation temporally precede understanding? (3) If man must move from opinion to knowledge to Wisdom, what in the nature of the psychic operations makes this possible? But before these questions can be

6 Ibid.
answered, a basic question concerning Augustine's ontology must be settled. If the relation between eternal things and temporal things can be established, then the first two questions can be answered and a basis will be provided for answering the third question.

To answer the question concerning the relationship of temporal things to eternal things in exhaustive detail would of course involve the discussion of several theological and neo-platonic metaphysical questions that have no real bearing on the three questions concerning the relationship of knowledge and Wisdom. It will suffice for my purposes if I can establish: (1) The distinction between eternal things and temporal things; (2) an indication of how eternal things and temporal things are related and how the one depends on the other; (3) those ontological aspects of the creatures which are especially relevant to the investigation of the psychic operations.

In distinguishing between eternal things and temporal things, some confusion might arise over the word "eternal." For some persons 'eternal' means 'lasting throughout time' or 'without an end in time.' For Augustine this was not so. For him, to be eternal, meant to be outside of time. Time itself turns out to be a creature. It was not created 'before' other changeable things. Rather, a necessary condition for there to be time at all was for there to be changeable things. On Augustine's view time cannot actually be said to be or exist. It is

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7 Augustine *Confessions* xi. 17 (Chap. 14).
8 Ibid.
only motion or change which makes time. "If nothing passed away, there
would not be past time; and if nothing were coming, there would not be
future time, and if nothing were, there would not be present time." Corporeal things are subject to motion, generation, and decay, and
therefore they can properly be called temporal. These entities which
are incorporeal, unchanging, and immutable are timeless and hence can
properly be called eternal.

An indication of how temporal things are related to eternal
things can be obtained by examining a few aspects of Augustine's
theory of creation. Augustine comments on the creation in the eleventh
and twelfth books of his Confessions by giving an interpretation of
Genesis. Creation, for Augustine, is creation "ex nihilo" (from
nothing). Since the creation was a creation from nothing, all things
insofar as they exist are from God. There is no "other principle" in
the universe which God must struggle against to accomplish his pur-
poses. Thus, temporal creatures are, in respect to ontology, entirely
dependent upon their eternal creator.

This complete ontological dependency which the creatures pos-
sess in relation to their Creator has implications for the nature of
the creatures which will be relevant to the investigation of the
psychic operations. Given Augustine's conception of the nature of
God, it follows from the fact that all things, insofar as they exist,

\[9\] ibid.
are from God, that all things, insofar as they exist, are good.

Recognize God at once as author of everything in which you see measure, number, and order. If you take these entirely away, nothing whatever will be left. You may say there remains some incipient form, where you find neither measure nor number nor order. But, since, when these are present the form is perfect, you must not speak even of an incipient form: it seems to stand only as material to be perfected by the artist. For if the perfection of the form is a good, the beginning of the form must already be a good. When all good is taken away, there will remain not even a trace—absolutely nothing. All good is from God; therefore, no kind of thing exists which is not from God.10

Since the goodness of all creatures is a direct result of their ontological foundation, it follows that the ontological hierarchy ranging from the very least of the creatures up to the Creator will be paralleled by a hierarchy ranging from the lower degrees of goodness to the very highest degree of goodness (the Creator) which is the ground for all other goodness. Thus, if it is possible to approach the Creator and the higher creatures through an investigation of the lower creatures (the possibility of such an approach has not yet been demonstrated), any advance in knowledge of the creatures must and will be accompanied by an advance in knowledge of the goodness of the creatures. A consequence of this relation between knowledge of being and knowledge of goodness is that a properly conducted inquiry into temporal things will reveal to the inquirer both the degree of being and the degree of goodness of the things investigated. Whatever else can be said about this information concerning the goodness and being of the things

10 Augustine De Libero Arbitrio ii. 54.
investigated, it is clear that it will reveal a deficiency and lack which point toward perfect goodness and the perfect being. 'O Wisdom, most gracious light of a purified mind! You tell us without ceasing your name and your greatness. Every excellence in a creature reveals you.'

No creature by nature is deceptive or evil, and hence no properly conducted investigation can result in error or evil. 'Wherever you turn she [Wisdom] speaks to you by means of the traces she has left on her works... She does this so that you may see that whatever bodily thing delights you and attracts the bodily senses is subject to number...'. Of course, an inquirer can go astray in his investigation, but the cause of this error is always within the investigator and never within the things investigated. 'Alas for those who abandon you [Wisdom] as leader and who stray in what are but your footprints, who love the signs which you show but not yourself, who forget your meaning.'

The distinction between eternal things and temporal things has been established. It has also been shown that temporal things depend ontologically upon their eternal creator. The intrinsic goodness of the creatures has also been established. Having settled these three issues, we are now prepared to answer the original three questions concerning the relationship of knowledge and Wisdom.

11 ibid. ii. 43.
12 ibid. ii. 41.
13 ibid. ii. 43.
Knowledge, the judging of temporal things by eternal reasons, is dependent upon Wisdom in the sense that the ultimate justification for judging temporal things by eternal reasons is that these temporal things derive both their existence and form from an eternal Creator who fashioned them according to eternal reasons. But as the quotations I have taken from Augustine's writings show, this ontological dependence does not mean that Wisdom must temporally precede knowledge for the inquirer.

She does this so that you may see that whatever bodily thing delights you and attracts the bodily senses, is subject to number, and that you may ask whence it comes, and may return to yourself, and understand that you could not approve or disapprove what you perceive with the bodily senses, unless you possessed within yourself certain laws of beauty to which you refer all the beautiful things you perceive outside.\textsuperscript{14}

Here the "forms of these outward things" are "traces of Wisdom," and it is through the traces of Wisdom that man is led to Wisdom itself. This passage from \textit{De Libero Arbitrio} indicates that when a man properly reflects upon that which is perceived by the bodily senses he can attain knowledge. Augustine also holds that it is possible for this knowledge to lead to Wisdom.

What else, then, do we do when we endeavour to be wise, but concentrate, as it were, our whole soul with all the energy we can upon the object we reach with our mind, and set our soul there, and fix it firmly? We do this that the soul may not now rejoice in its own individual self which has entangled it in passing

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.} ii. 41.
Interests, but that, setting aside all inclination to things of time and space, it may grasp that which is always one and the same.\textsuperscript{15}

Hence, even though the justification for judging temporal things by eternal reasons is that temporal things are ontologically dependent upon eternal things, for the investigator, it is the acquaintance with temporal things that leads him to the knowledge and contemplation of eternal things.

I have pointed out those ontological aspects of the creatures which make the move from opinion to knowledge possible. I now turn to the third question concerning the nature of the psychic operations.

In the eighth chapter of the eleventh book of \textit{De Trinitate} Augustine propounds the following view concerning knowledge mediated by the senses. In sensation, three separate things can be clearly distinguished: the physical body that is seen, the vision itself, and the will which unites the vision and the body seen. Augustine accounted for the fact that we can recall objects sensed at some previous time by claiming that memorization took place when the will turned the memory to the senses. Since it was also obvious to Augustine that everything which is "in" the memory is not always being thought by the mind, he further claimed that the will could turn the "eye of the mind" or "the gaze of thought" toward the memory. A

\textsuperscript{15}ibid.
diagram of these three processes would look something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensing</th>
<th>Remembering</th>
<th>Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Species of the body</td>
<td>Species in the sense of the percipient</td>
<td>Species in the memory of the gaze of thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Will</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Hence, the will thrice unites." On Augustine's view the process of perceiving and the process of thinking were analogous. He states that the body in a particular place is to the sense of the body as the likeness of the body in the memory is to the eye of the mind. Likewise, the vision of one seeing is to the species of the body from which the sense is informed as the vision of one thinking is to the image fixed in the memory. Moreover, just as the will combines the body that is seen with the vision of the senses, it also combines the image in the memory with the vision of thought. In each case it is the will which provides the connecting link between the object seen, remembered, or thought and the object seeing, remembering, or thinking. This role of the will in these processes will become extremely important when we turn to Augustine's views on the possibility of error.

The limit of perceiving is in the corporeal bodies which can be perceived, and the limit of thinking is in the images in the memory.  

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16 Augustine De Trinitate xi. 16 (Chap. 9).
17 ibid. xi. 7 (Chap. 4).
18 ibid.
19 ibid. xi. 14 (Chap. 8).
Given these limits, Augustine's theory as explicated so far would limit our knowledge to knowledge of corporeal things. Of course, Augustine does not allow such a restriction. Augustine, to be consistent, must avoid the restriction of thought to objects of sensation through his conception of the memory. In book fifteen of De Trinitate Augustine refers to the memory of man in the following terms: "the memory of man, and particularly that which the beasts do not have, namely, that in which intelligible things are so contained that they do not come into it through the senses of the body. . ." 20

Here it is evident that it is the nature of the memory which enables man to move from sensation to understanding.

But not only in regard to sensible things established in space do there abide intelligible and incorporeal reasons, apart from local space, but also in regard to the motions that pass by in periods of time, there stand also like reasons, apart from any transit in time, reasons themselves that are certainly intelligible and not sensible. Only a few succeed in arriving at these things with the eye of the mind, and when it does arrive insofar as it can, the one who arrives does not abide in them, but is repulsed by the rebounding, as it were, of the eye itself, and thus a transitory thought is formed of a thing that is not transitory.

And yet this transitory thought is committed to the memory by means of the sciences in which the mind is instructed, so that there may be a place to which the thought that was forced to pass from thence may again return. . . 21

The key to the transition from sensible things to the "intelligible and incorporeal reasons" which are the objects of contemplation is

20Ibid. xv. 43 (Chap. 23).

21Ibid. xii. 23 (Chap. 14).
the "transitory thought committed to the memory by means of the sciences." Obviously the sense of memory referred to when Augustine is discussing understanding is not the same as that memory which merely records the images of things sensed. When Augustine speaks of the inquirer being unable to approve or disapprove of objects sensed without referring them to some law of beauty within him, we are immediately reminded of Plato's discussion of the memory and the example of the equal sticks in the Phaedo. When Augustine discusses the role of the memory in the operation of understanding, he is referring to a process analogous to that which Plato calls recollection (εἰμινόμην) whereby "the sight of one thing leads you to conceive another."\(^{22}\)

In his treatise De Musica Augustine deals with this sense of memory which is involved in understanding in great detail.

But the memory not only takes in the carnal motions of the mind, and we have already spoken of these numbers, but also the spiritual motions I shall now speak of briefly. . . that equality we could not find sure and fixed in sensible numbers, but yet we knew shadowed and fleeting, the mind could never indeed desire unless it were known somewhere.\(^{23}\)

Augustine also makes use of the fact that an unskilled person can produce answers to a certain type of question by being "reminded" through proper questioning. Augustine's observation following the discussion of this process is:

Well, then, isn't it evident he, who under another's questioning moves himself within to God to know the

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\(^{22}\) Plato Phaedo 74d.

\(^{23}\) Augustine De Musica vi. 34.
unchangeable truth, cannot be reminded by any outside warning to see that truth, unless his memory hold his own same movement? 24

When Augustine is speaking of understanding, the "objects" of the gaze of thought are in the memory. But, of course, these "objects" cannot be objects in the sense that the objects of sensation are. Nor can they be objects in the sense that eternal things are objects of contemplation. Obviously, if the three-leveled hierarchy set out on page 40 of this thesis is to be one which allows movement from the lowest level to the highest, the "objects" of understanding must be of such a nature as to mediate between those temporal things which are the objects of sensation and those eternal things which are the objects of contemplation. This "object" is the "internal word" or the "word of the heart." 21

For Augustine all thinking is done through words of the heart. "For even though no words are sounded, yet he who thinks certainly speaks them in his heart." 25 This word is not a part of any national language; nor is it composed of sounds. "For the thought formed from that thing which we know is the word which we speak in our heart, and it is neither Greek, nor Latin, nor any other language." 26 Concerning how these words are formed, Augustine remarks:

But what is that which can be a word, and therefore is already worthy of the name of a word? What, I say, is

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24 Ibd. vi. 36.
25 Augustine De Trinitate xv. 17 (Chapt. 10).
26 Ibd. xv. 19 (Chapt. 10).
this word formable and not yet formed, except something of our own mind which we cast this way and that by a kind of revolving motion, according as we think now of this and now of that thing, just as they are found, or as they occur to our mind? And it then becomes a true word when that which we cast, as I have said, by a revolving motion arrives at that which we know, and is formed by it by taking its perfect likeness, so that as anything is known, so it is also thought, so it is spoken in the heart, that is, without sound, without thought of sound, such as certainly belongs to some language.27

Can something false be known? Augustine categorically denies that there can be a word of the heart for anything false.28 To think (Augustine notes that these remarks apply to both contemplation and understanding) is to form a perfect likeness of the thing that is known. "For when we speak the truth, that is, speak of what we know, then the word which is born from the knowledge itself which we retain in the memory must be altogether of the same kind as that knowledge from which it is born."29

The real significance of the inner word as the object of understanding is not concerned so much with the transition from opinion to knowledge, which is the primary concern of this paper, but rather with the transition from knowledge to Wisdom. 'Whoever, then, desires to arrive at some kind of a likeness to the Word of God, although unlike it in many things, let him not behold our word which sounds in the ears... but we must pass by these things in order to arrive at

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27 |bid. xv. 25 (Chap. 15).
28 |bid. xv. 17 (Chap. 10).
29 |bid. xv. 19 (Chap. 10).
that word of man, for by its likeness, of whatever sort it may be, the
Word of God may in some manner be seen as in an enigma." Augustine
concludes concerning "that word of ours" that, "in this enigma there
is a likeness, be it what it may, to that Word of God who is also God,
since it is also born from our knowledge as that Word was also born
from the knowledge of the Father." Augustine's justification for
considering this inner word a likeness of the Word of God lies both
in the nature of the creatures from whose likenesses the inner word
was formed and in the nature of the human mind which formed the inner
word. It was the human mind which was "created in his own image."
It is the trinity found in the human mind which consists of the memory,
understanding, and will which is the true image of the Divine Trinity.

The question which provoked this entire investigation of
Augustine's ontological theories and views concerning the psychic
operations was the question about the significance which Augustine at-
tached to the disciplines in his refutation of skepticism. Prima facie
it seemed difficult to see how Augustine felt the propositions which
he gave from physics, mathematics, dialectics, and ethics were of such
importance that they could convince a man that his search for truth
need not end in failure. Having established a few of the fundamental
aspects of Augustine's ontology and theories of the soul, it becomes
evident that it is precisely the type of knowledge exemplified in the

\[30\]
\textit{ibid.} xv. 20 (Chap. 11).

\[31\]
\textit{ibid.} sv. 24 (Chap. 14).
propositions from the disciplines that provides the connecting and mediating link between opinion and Wisdom. Once an inquirer actually possesses knowledge of this sort and knows it for what it is, then in principle there is no difficulty in seeing that Wisdom and the contemplation of eternal things is certainly possible. Since knowledge is knowledge of the internal word, and since the internal word when properly understood is seen to be an image of eternal things, true Wisdom becomes theoretically possible. How the actual move from knowledge to contemplation is accomplished is a whole new subject that involves many complex philosophical and theological issues. Just as Augustine felt a discussion of this was not necessary in order to refute the Academics, it is certainly beyond the scope of this paper to show how such a move is accomplished. What was important for Augustine was that he felt he had shown that mere opinion could be transcended. Moreover, the very nature of the operation (understanding), the thing known (the internal word), and the product (knowledge), which show the transcendence of opinion to be possible also points to the existence of Wisdom and suggests that its attainment is possible. It is for this reason that Augustine constantly reiterates the theme in Contra Academicos that it is enough for him if he can be certain of some knowledge since, if he who is not wise can have some knowledge, how much more will the wise man be capable of possessing Wisdom.

That this mediating role is the role which Augustine assigns to the disciplines can be seen by a brief glance at Augustine's treatise De Musica. The first five books of this treatise are an exhaustive
analysis of the different metric feet and their proper combinations conducted by examining "those number-traces belonging to time-intervals."\textsuperscript{32} Augustine points out that in these books he is "dwelling with grammatical and poetical minds."\textsuperscript{33} However, he severely chastizes those who "consider those first five books sufficient."\textsuperscript{34} It is in the sixth book that "the very fruit of those \[the first five books]\ is found."\textsuperscript{35} The entire treatise was undertaken so that adolescents or men of any age God has endowed with a good natural capacity, night with reason guiding be torn away, not quickly but gradually, from the fleshy senses and letters it is difficult for them not to stick to, and adhere with the love of unchangeable truth to one God and Master of all things who with no mean term whatsoever directs human minds.\textsuperscript{36}

Thus, although it is certainly a difficult task, the disciplines can lead the inquirer from corporeal to incorporeal things and from temporal to eternal things. Again, the transition is made through the memory. In the course of the dialogue, the disciple is made to see by the questioning of the teacher, that approval or disapproval could not be granted to these "numbers" or rhythms in the memory, without reference to some law of perfect equality or harmony.

Having discovered the significance which Augustine attached to the disciplines, we can now see how he would have answered Cicero's

\textsuperscript{32} Augustine \textit{De Musica} vi. 1.
\textsuperscript{33} ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} ibid.
objections to the type of propositions presented in Contra Academicos if he had felt compelled to do so. Cicero's objection was that if dialectics ever claims certitude about which forms of inference are valid, it merely judges about itself and not about the world. To put this claim in more modern terms, it is the claim that whenever certitude is found in any of the disciplines, this certitude is merely a result of the form of the proposition or of the formal structure of the discipline itself. On this view statements which purport to have content and to be "about the world" could never claim certitude. We shall take up the question of how Augustine can claim certitude for his propositions when we discuss his views concerning error. At this point I want to consider whether the propositions have any content or are "about the world."

If it can be shown that the propositions from the disciplines do not have content, then even if they are known with certainty due to their purely formal structure, they will not serve Augustine's purpose. This kind of proposition would provide no mediation between opinion and Wisdom, temporal things and eternal things, or sensation and contemplation. The propositions from dialectics which were applications of some variation of the principle of non-contradiction certainly did have content on Augustine's views. This principle was an eternal reason capable of judging certain temporal things, and as

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37Cicero Academica 11. 91.
such, the results qualified as examples of true and certain knowledge. If the principle of noncontradiction is merely some linguistic convention or an arbitrarily chosen axiom of some formal system, then clearly the results of applying it to the subject matter of a particular discipline are not knowledge in the sense in which Augustine uses this term. Again, we see that a particular objection of Cicero and the Academics is legitimate when directed against certain world views, e.g., that of the Stoics and Epicureans. However, as explained above, Augustine does have a theory about the world and our knowledge of that world which does make the general principles of dialectics extremely significant.

It has been shown how Augustine could in principle meet Cicero’s objection to the principles of dialectics. In the discussion of Cicero’s objections in this paper, it was noted that Augustine handled the sorites and liar paradoxes in *Contra Academicos* by choosing to ignore them. A framework has now been drawn up in which it can be explained why Augustine felt justified in treating the paradoxes in such a seemingly off-hand manner. The paradoxes are simply a part of the much larger question of certitude in general. Cicero presented the paradoxes in an attempt to show that not even remarks concerning the validity of certain inference patterns could be certain in the way demanded by Zeno’s criterion, i.e., that they be known in such a way that they could not be false. Cicero maintained that the liar paradox, although obviously fallacious, had exactly the same claim to truth as any other inference of this pattern.
In effect, Cicero is asking for a criterion to distinguish the true inferences and perceptions from the false ones. The implication of the paradox is that there is no mark, criterion, or method to distinguish true perceptions from false ones, and hence we can never have certitude about any of our knowledge.

What about the things which Augustine claims to be examples of true knowledge? Does he hold the propositions discovered through the disciplines with certainty? Is there a possibility that he could be in error? The previous discussions of Augustine's ontological and epistemological views provides a framework in which Augustine's position on these questions can be seen.

It was pointed out that the cause of error could not lie in the nature of things since the Creator and all the creatures are good insofar as they exist. Therefore, Augustine must account for error through his epistemological theories. He observes that "it makes a very great difference whether the senses of the body are inactive as when people are asleep, or are disturbed from their inward structure as when they are in a frenzy."

38 But organic disorders alone will not account for all sensory error. Sometimes due to fears or strong desires the will concentrates so fixedly on an image in the memory that the eye of the mind mistakes this image for some sense object existing outside the body. It "sometimes happens to those who are healthy and

\[\text{Augustine De Trinitate XI. 7 (Chap. 4).}\]
awake, that while engaged in the process of thinking, they turn their will away from the senses, and so inform the eye of the mind by various images of sensible things, just as though the sensible things themselves were actually experienced.\textsuperscript{39} This process of course would result in error if the sensible things, from which the images of sensible things were made, had perished. When "the form or the species of the body" has perished, the will can no longer recall it to the sense of perceiving. Likewise, forgetfulness can "blot out" the form or species in the memory so that "the will can no longer turn the eye of the mind by recollection in order that it may be informed thereby."\textsuperscript{40} But notice that even in regards to sense knowledge the mind is not limited by the forms or species perceivable by the senses and those forms or species present "In" the memory. "But because the mind possesses the great power of forming images, not only of things it has forgotten, but also of those that it has not felt or experienced, while enlarging, diminishing, changing, or arranging at its pleasure those things which have not slipped away, it often fancies that something is so and so, when it knows either that it is not so, or does not know that it is so."\textsuperscript{41} At this point, following Zeno's criterion, we would expect Augustine to attempt to distinguish between the cases when we know we are deceived and those in which we do not. However, precisely

\textsuperscript{39}ibid.

\textsuperscript{40}ibid. xi. 8 (Chap. 5).

\textsuperscript{41}ibid.
at this point, Augustine makes a radical shift from the question of which of the sensible images are true to the question concerning the use of sensible images. Moreover, he speaks not only of the use of sensible images in inquiry but also of their use in leading the better and truer life.

For no one could use these things corporeal and sensible things not even in a good way, unless the images of sensible things were retained in the memory, and unless the will for the most part dwells in the higher and more inward things, and unless the same will, which is adapted both to bodies without and to their images within, refers whatever it takes from them to a better and truer life, and rests in that end upon which it gazes, and for the sake of which it judges that these things ought to be done...

Before I can explain the nature and significance of this shift, two preliminary comments must be made. First, it should be noted that by analogy, all the remarks about sensory error apply to the operation of understanding. The questions simply have to be rephrased in terms of certainty regarding the formation of the internal word. Again, it is the will which turns the eye of the mind to the memory and causes it to seek out those forms and species which it desires to know. And again, when Augustine approaches the question of certitude, he makes the shift to the proper use of knowledge and the internal word. The second preliminary issue which must be discussed involves the nature of the will. Is the will a faculty just as the memory and the sense of sight are faculties? Is it some mysterious power which literally moves, directs, and controls the other faculties?

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\[\text{Ibid.}\]
Augustine's answer to both questions is, "No." He states that in that trinity which consists of the memory, the "eye of the mind," and the will, the will is of a more spiritual nature than the memory or the "eye of the mind." Now since Augustine is aware that he is using the phrase, "the eye of the mind" in a metaphorical sense, it follows that his remarks about the will cannot be taken in their usual univocal sense.

Most of Augustine's remarks concerning the role of the will in the intellectual process indicate that the will is the granting or withholding of assent done in reference to some end or goal which the will seeks. Augustine distinguishes between the end or repose of the will in regards to individual "passing acts" of perception or conception and the end or repose of the will as regards "the will itself of the man that has no other end except happiness." As regards the individual passing acts of the will, Augustine notes that the will "separates the senses of the body from the bodies that are to be perceived by a movement of the body, in order that we may not experience a sensation or that we may cease to experience

\[\text{\footnotesize {\textsuperscript{43}}}\text{ I qualified this statement by saying 'Most of Augustine's remarks since there is an ambiguity present in Augustine's discussion of the will. When Augustine is discussing the will in connection with the psychic operations, the interpretation which follows does convey the essence of his remarks. However, I have been unable to determine whether such a conception of the will is consistent with Augustine's remarks about the will in connection with free will, grace, and the will as the counter part to the Holy Spirit of the Divine Trinity in the trinity which exists in man's mind.}}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize {\textsuperscript{44}}}\text{ Augustine \textit{De Trinitate} xi. 10 (Chap. 6).}\]
it. . . . For by example. . . by closing our mouth, or by spitting out something that we do not wish, we turn away from tastes. . . . And so the will acts by a movement of the body. By analogy similar remarks apply to conception. Hence, to wish to turn the gaze of the mind away from that which is in the memory means nothing else than not to think of it. I hesitate to press the following point too far, but there seems to be at least a hint here of Ryle's remarks to the effect that to choose orange juice means nothing other than to life your arm and remove orange juice from the shelf. I use this hint as evidence for the claim that Augustine does not reify the will at least when he deals with it in intellectual contexts.

An examination of Augustine's remarks concerning the will as a weight will clarify what he means by the end or repose of the will both in regards to individual acts of the will and the will of man himself. He speaks of the will as a weight which unites the measure in the memory with the number in the vision. Clearly Augustine is using "measure," "number," and "weight" in a highly technical sense.

"But because things which have been impressed on the memory singly can be conceived according to number, measure seems to belong to the memory, but number to the vision. For even though the multiplicity of such visions is innumerable, yet a limit has been fixed for each one in the memory beyond which it cannot go. Hence, the measure appears in the memory and the number in the visions, just as there is also a kind of measure in the visible bodies themselves to which the gaze of many spectators is formed from one visible

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45bid. xi. 15.

46bid.
object in such a way that even one person may generally see a double image of one thing because of the number of the eyes, as we have taught above. Accordingly, there is some measure in those things from which the visions are expressed, but in the visions themselves, there is number. But the will which unites and arranges them, and binds them into a kind of unity, and does not choose to rest its desire of perceiving and thinking except in those things from which the visions are formed, resembles a weight.\[47]\ (italics mine)

In *De Genesi ad Litteram* Augustine says "measure fixes the limit of everything, number gives it its species, and weight gives it rest and stability."\[48] Thus, in the individual acts of perception or conception the will has a particular end or goal which it seeks, namely, the perceiving or conceiving of some particular thing. In order to "rest in" this end, the will must unite the number in the vision with the measure in the object or in the memory. Although the distinction between number and measure is not clear, I take it that both terms refer to a form or principle of organization. At times, instead of differentiating between measure and number, Augustine speaks merely of the species in the object and the species in the vision. Yet, when he wants to differentiate between these species, he refers to the

\[47\] *bid.* xi. 18. (Chap. 11). When Augustine is discussing the nature of the creatures he frequently refers to Wisd. 11.21 where the writer of this book states: "But thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight." It is perhaps significant to note that this particular book is not part of the Canonical books of either the Jewish or Protestant Scriptures. It is, however, included in the Roman Catholic Bible. Most scholars agree that the book comes from a text of Greek rather than Hebrew origin.

\[48\] Augustine *De Genesi ad Litteram* iv. 7 (Chap. 3).
former as 'measure' and the latter as 'number.' Since measure "fixes the limit of everything," it is this species in the object which limits the species (number) which is formed in the eye of the perceiver or conceiving. Given the limitation which the measure in the object imposes on the perceiver, the actual form of what is perceived is still not determined. Various numbers can be formed from the measure present in one object. Augustine is not propounding any "bundle of perspectives" theory here, but merely pointing out that the mind itself must and does make a contribution to perception and conception. As the italicized portion of the long quote from De Trinitate suggests, it is when the will unites the measure in the object seen with a number that actually arose from that object, that perception and conception take place. When Augustine speaks of the will as a weight, he means that it is something which naturally seeks its own level, end, or resting place. Given this conception of the individual acts of the will, it becomes apparent that error can arise when the will is improperly motivated by strong desires or fears. I imagine that Augustine would analyze the hallucinations of the dying man in the desert as caused, at least in part, but the excessive desire to see the oasis.

Yet this is not the kind of error which concerns Augustine most deeply. As noted above, Augustine usually handles the problem of error and certitude by shifting to the problem of how to lead the better, truer, and happier life. We are now in a position to see why he makes this shift. The reason for the shift is connected with the distinction between the ends of the particular acts of the
will and the end of "the will itself of the man that has no other end except happiness." If the will merely wills to see, and does not refer what it sees to something else, there is no need to show how seeing is the end of the will, for this is evident. But if it refers it to another thing, then it certainly wills something else, and there will not now be merely a will to see. Obviously, any serious inquiry would involve many acts of the will. Augustine holds that all these acts are referred of course to their own particular end, but then these ends in turn are referred to other higher ends, and these, in turn, are referred to the highest end, happiness.

"But all the wills that are bound to each other are good if the end to which all are referred is good; but if it is bad, then all are bad. And, therefore, the series of good wills that are joined together is a kind of road on which there are, as it were, certain steps for those ascending to happiness; but the entanglement of the bad and perverse wills is a chain by which he will be bound, who acts thus, in order that he may be cast into the exterior darkness."

The will is never stimulated to action except by the perception of some good in some object. Since, for Augustine, all objects are good insofar as they exist, it is obvious that there will be degrees of goodness which can all attract the will. The power and freedom of the will lie in the fact that it can choose or reject both the greater and the lesser goods.

The will is not drawn to perform an action except when an object is perceived. We have it in our power to accept
or reject something, but we have no power to decide what the eye shall light on. We must agree that the soul comes into contact with both higher and lower objects in such a way that a rational person takes what it chooses from both, and deserves happiness in accordance with its choice.52

Thus, happiness, which as Augustine points out in the first book of Contra Academicos, is desired by all men, can only be attained if all our inquiry (and indeed all our life) is referred to the highest end, the greatest good, God. Thus perfect Wisdom, the goal of all contemplation, will be attained when the restless heart of the inquirer finds its repose in God. It is for these reasons that Augustine uses as the guiding principle of all his investigations the fact that "our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." There is an additional aspect of Augustine's theory that makes the problem of certainty different for him than for Cicero and many other philosophers. If knowledge involves a mere collection of truths or else is a rigorous deductive system in which the truth of a proposition is deduced from the truths of those preceding it, then the question of certainty arises in connection with each particular truth and each step of the process. In a deductive system, an error in one step would be disastrous for the entire system.

However, Augustine's system is neither a deductive system nor a system of many completely independent truths. Knowledge of any of the disciplines, when properly understood, points to knowledge of the

52 Augustine De Libero Arbitrio iii. 25.
Creator of those things which the discipline considers its subject matter. All knowledge has this one ultimate goal—the contemplation of the Creator. The fact that there are many disciplines and many creatures shows that there is a plurality of ways to reach this goal. Thus, individual aspects of an individual discipline no longer can determine the falsity of the entire system as indeed would be true in a deductive system. Moreover, the interrelations of the various paths all leading to the same goal would provide a means of self correction as the inquiry proceeds.

Hence, we see that Augustine differs from Cicero not only in his theories concerning the source of error but also in his views concerning the consequences of error for the inquiry.

Having established at least in outline form certain aspects of Augustine's metaphysics and epistemology as well as his views on error and certitude and their relation to intellectual inquiry, I can now assemble the substance of his reply to the arguments of Cicero and Carneades.

A reading of *Contra Academicos* would not have convinced Cicero that he was wrong. He would probably still have maintained that Augustine had not found propositions which met Zeno's criterion. Cicero would object that Augustine had not shown any mark or characteristic which clearly distinguishes all true propositions from all false ones. At this point Augustine can only reply that Cicero has not grasped the way in which false propositions are mistaken for true ones. Augustine does not reject Zeno's criterion. He constantly maintains
that if we are to have confidence in our inquiry, then clearly true propositions must be known in a way that false propositions cannot be known. However, if my analysis of Augustine's position on error is correct, then he, unlike Cicero, does not look for some mark inherent in true propositions and absent from false ones, but rather he concentrates on the way in which truths are known. Error arises when the will cleaves to and makes its judgments in reference to some mutable and changing good. This explains why Augustine uses the confessional approach to theology and why he begins his most famous work, the Confessions, with the words:

Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is thy power, and of Thy wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee--man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that Thou resistest the proud--yet man, this part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee. Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.53

Augustine concludes his treatise confident that he has demonstrated that the inquirer need not despair in his search for truth. As pointed out before, this has tremendous significance for Augustine since, for him, the very possibility of attaining happiness hinges upon the possibility of attaining truth. The expressly stated purpose of Contra Academicos is to show that the attainment of truth and hence the attainment of happiness is possible. As noted above, an integral part of Augustine's demonstration of this point was his refutation of

53Augustine Confessions i. 1 (Chap. 1).
the arguments of the Academics through appeal to the classical liberal studies recognized by the Academics, i.e., dialectics, ethics, physics, and mathematics. We are now in a position to make a final evaluation of the implications of this use of the classical liberal disciplines.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

The classical liberal studies themselves played an extremely important role in Augustine's own intellectual development. Through his education at Madauros, Tagaste, Carthage, and Rome he had become an extremely competent rhetorician. It was his studies in rhetoric which brought him into contact with Cicero and consequently philosophy. Augustine's first dissatisfaction with the Manicheans arose when he discovered the inadequacy of their astronomy. Augustine's confidence in the truths of mathematics was never destroyed and was one of the reasons why he never gave himself completely over to the Academics. I have shown how Augustine appeals to the disciplines in *Contra Academicos* to establish certain points. Augustine appeals to the disciplines in a similar way throughout his more philosophical works. Mathematical truths are used as examples of certain truths, and facts from astronomy are employed to refute those who trust in astrology.

However, as was seen in the brief discussion of *De Musica* in this thesis, Augustine holds that the primary utility of the disciplines lies in the fact that through a study of them the mind can be
led from temporal and changing things to the contemplation of eternal and unchanging things. The disciplines are an invaluable aid to the inquirer provided they are used in accordance with a proper end and are not regarded or enjoyed simply as an end in themselves. During his lifetime Augustine had approached the disciplines in both ways. He had taught rhetoric and grammar in Carthage and Rome, where, by his own admission, his chief motivation had been self-pride and the desire to excel in the eyes of his peers. He had also examined the laws of meter and those "number traces belonging to time intervals" in his treatise De Musica, where, again by his own admission, he was motivated by the love of unchangeable truth and a desire to find the perfect laws of equality and harmony by which physical sounds and time intervals are judged. From his own experience Augustine knew that only the latter approach to the disciplines could possibly allow an inquirer to advance in his search for truth and happiness. Notice that Augustine does not claim that he did not know anything about rhetoric when he was in Rome. He merely points out that he was unable to use that knowledge in any further inquiry after truth and happiness. Thus, it is in this mediating between imperfect temporal things and the perfect unchanging eternal things that the primary utility of the disciplines lies.

It follows from such a conception of the disciplines that the pursuit of any or all of the disciplines can be of value to the inquirer who is able to use them properly. Any investigation of the order, harmony, and number which constitute the very existence of all
of God's creatures can, if properly conducted, lead to a knowledge and contemplation of the cause of all order, harmony, and number, the Creator. No subject is closed to investigation. The "good and true Christian" can go about his investigations convinced that "wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's." I have established how Augustine used the disciplines in Contra Academicos as well as stated in general terms his use of them in De Musica. More work needs to be done before Augustine's complete conception of the use and nature of the classical liberal disciplines can be established. All of his more philosophical works including De Ordine, Soliquitia, and De Libero Arbitrio, need to be carefully analyzed in an attempt to determine precisely what Augustine felt the nature of the disciplines to be in each of these works. The chapters of De Ordine which deal with the origins of the disciplines should prove especially helpful. In each case the results would have to be compared with my remarks about Augustine's general theories of inquiry and theories concerning the operation of the psychic processes in order to see if these theories need revision.

After this initial work has been done, a sound approach to the question of how Augustine integrated reason and revelation will be possible. So far as I know, this concrete work on the specific treatise and disciplines has not been done.

In Contra Academicos the disciplines are used to provide propositions which are known with certainty. These propositions are examples of knowledge whereby temporal things are judged by fixed and eternal principles. It is knowledge of this sort which allows Augustine
to assert that the Academics can be disregarded and that wisdom, i.e., the contemplation of eternal things, is possible. Augustine does claim to hold this knowledge with certainty. However, if my analysis of his theories concerning the psychic operations is correct, the problem of certitude in regards to the entire inquiry is transposed by Augustine into a problem of the ends of the will and the use of the knowledge obtained.

The justification of the principles of the disciplines involves the claim that they are part of the Wisdom of God whereby the world was created. Notice again, however, that although these principles are ontologically prior, they need not be and often are not temporally prior in the inquiry itself. Thus, the disciplines can be used independent of any justification found in faith, belief, or revelation. In fact, their primary utility lies in leading alert minds beyond sense objects and images and thus enabling them to see that reason alone is not adequate for the attainment of happiness. Hence, although faith, belief, or revelation is not needed for the discovery of the principles of these disciplines and hence for the gaining of some knowledge, Augustine does hold that something besides reason is necessary for the proper use of the disciplines in the quest for Truth and happiness.

The net result of my inquiry and others similar to it will be the establishment of Augustine's conception of the disciplines and his theories concerning the nature of rational inquiry. It is only on such a base that a sound approach to the question of how Augustine
integrated reason and revelation can be made. Attempts have been made to answer this question, but most of them have been in the form of an attempt to separate Augustine the Neo-Platonist from Augustine the Christian. O'Meara insists that the sole importance of Augustine's *Contra Academicos* is that it provides information on the extent of the importance that Augustine attached to Neo-Platonism as compared with Christianity and contains clues concerning the sources of his Neo-Platonism.¹ Alfaric, in commenting about the period that Augustine wrote *Contra Academicos* notes that:

Sans doute il acceptait la tradition chrétienne, mais il ne le considérait que comme une adaptation populaire de la sagesse platonicienne. Ce n'est que longtemps plus tard qu'il est arrivé à donner à la foi le pas sur la raison.²

In his introduction, O'Meara lists an impressive bibliography of those who have argued the question concerning the extent of Augustine's claimed conversion to Christianity in 386. Alfaric leads the field of those who maintain that Augustine was little more than a Neo-Platonist in his early works. A work by Charles Boyer, *Christianisme et Neo-Platonisme dans la formation de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1920), attempts to defend the "more traditional view" that Augustine was writing these early dialogues primarily as a Christian.


I admit that this controversy is extremely important in Augustinian study. However, Augustine himself did not view his works as divided in such a manner. If Augustine had seen his works as divided into "Platonic works" and "Christian works," certainly he would have mentioned it in his Retractiones. However, he does not repudiate his treatise Contra Academicos when he reviews it in the Retractiones. He does express some regret about the tone of his remarks when he referred to the Platonists in this treatise:

Rightly, too, am I displeased with the praise with which I so exalted Plato and the Platonists, or Academic philosophers, as should never have been done in the case of impious men--especially since Christian doctrine has to be defended against their great errors. Further, as regards my statement that my own arguments were trifling in comparison with those used by Cicero in his books about the Academics: I, in fact, refuted his arguments with most cogent reasoning; and, though what I said was said by way of a joke and is, of course, ironical, nevertheless I should not have said it.

Augustine remained convinced of the worth of his arguments as they were presented in Contra Academicos. It was not the views of the Platonists as Augustine employed them in his refutation of skepticism which are rejected in the Retractiones. Instead it is the praise given to the Platonists which displeases Augustine in his later years. Notice also that it is when dealing with Christian doctrine that the errors of the Platonists must be attacked. Since Augustine is not dealing with

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3Augustine Retractiones i. 4.
4Ibid.
Christian doctrine in this treatise, it seems improbable that the above quote from the Retractiones could be construed as a rejection of the Platonic elements of *Contra Academicos*.

I don't feel that the "Christian versus Platonist" approach is the soundest approach to the problem of reason and revelation in the writings of Saint Augustine. Instead, I propose the establishing of Augustine's theories of rational inquiry, the psychic operations, and the nature of the world, and then attempting to analyze the relation of reason and revelation from these bases.

As an example of the type of work I have in mind, I shall make a few comments about the role of revelation for Augustine on the basis of my remarks about his theory of Creation and his theory of the nature of the psychic operations. 5

The will is never attracted to action except by the perception of some good in some object. 6 Notice that this goodness is, as the goodness (and existence) of all creatures, from God. Now Augustine also maintains that "no one can wholly predetermine what should come into his mind." 7 It is really God who determines these first perceptions of man as He pleases, either through the providential action

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5 A comment very similar to the one that follows was made by Eugene Portalie in his *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine* trans. Ralph J. Bastian ("Library of Living Catholic Thought"; Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960), on page 199.

6 Augustine *De Libero Arbitrio* III. 25.

7 Augustine *De Ordine* I. 14 (Chap. 5).
of external causes or interiorly by the ministry of angels or even by a divine illumination sent to the soul. Hence, we see that the grace of God is involved in what is often regarded as the purely intellectual process of perceiving objects and acting on the basis of our perceptions. It is also apparent that at least in some contexts revelation need not be anything more mysterious or "unnatural" than the occurrence of a thought.

It seems to me that this type of inquiry will not only be more fruitful in yielding information about Augustine's methods of rational inquiry and his views concerning the necessity of belief and faith, but will also yield the best analysis of how Augustine felt the two seemingly divergent approaches could be integrated.

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8 Portalie, A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine, p. 197. He cites the Retractions i. 23 as his authority.
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