

# CVSP-exposure to a variety of modes of communicating insight into what gives meaning to human life...

- **ALL FORMS** of art and literature, socio-economic-political life, science, technology, human relations, philosophical, religious, and spiritual experience...
- **CVSP201** exposes us to **polytheistic experience** expressed via poetry, myth, **tragic**, and **scientific-rationalistic** visions of our human life...
- **CVSP202** introduces us into **the worlds of monotheism** ...
- **CVSP203-204** into the **modern** and **contemporary**...

# *Objectives*

- Transition from world of Homer - **tragic** and **rationalistic** - to the Abrahamic **monotheistic**
- Basic vocabulary / concepts – **a comparative analysis** in **CVSP** terms : **world-views** and the **image of man**
- Prepare for the reading of ***The Confessions***
- More complete lecture next week on the text

# *Interaction of many cultures*

- Ancient Mesopotamian, Accadian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Persian, Hittite, Phoenician...
- “*Greek*”/ Hellenic = a **synthesis** of elements from the above + North African + the specifically Greek
- Hellenistic (*Alexander*) and **Roman** (*Republic* + *Empire*) extended this rich process
- Far Eastern elements (very rich cultures) developed separately ,but inevitably ,were not totally absent
- **Hebrew “Abrahamic”** monotheism interacted with many of the above
- What (if any) **contribution** did this peoples make ???

# *contributions???*

- All **major categories** of human cultural and intellectual creative activity (art, literature , history, science, philosophy, mysticism...) were **established in other cultures**.
- Perhaps one may conclude that their **unique** contribution is their *presentation of the Divine*, with its corresponding *implications* in the search for fundamental human *self-understanding*.
  - *Nature, the Human , Society , History , Knowledge , Excellence , Freedom / Slavery , Values...*
- It is helpful in our study to see their **scriptures** as an **ongoing dialogue** with the **cultures of the day** .
- Many **common** aspects/significant **unique** perspectives

# *The Divine and Nature(the Cosmos)*

Neither *Tragic* nor *Rationalistic*

- **God : Unique , Creator , Transcendent**
  - the Cosmos has a beginning and an end
- **Faithful Love , Compassionate, Merciful**
- **Free, Personal, Involved**
  - covenant, revelation, prophets, history
- **Primacy of the personal and the human**
  - **no rigid inflexible structure** of the **Cosmos** that determines human life , but a **Loving God**

***The Human: male and female***  
***“ in the image and likeness of God ”***

- **Family-relationship** ; representative ruler over the creation
- **Human dignity intrinsic**
- Given **freedom** to live as God intended (**Eden**) OR to rebel and live **the current condition** (the natural consequence of their choice)
- The intended **intimate relationship with God** has been spoiled : exile/ **alienation**
- **No fixed nature** ; possibility of **radical change** in character; grace, repentance, conversion (or the opposite)

# *Human Society*

- *Family* (**brothers and sisters**) : “*children*” of God
- *Solidarity*, mutual responsibility, *communion* ;  
*organic* relationship beyond the merely *functional*
- Alienation **from God** leads to alienation **from fellow humans** : violence, corruption, **radical selfishness...**

# *Human History*

- Finite , linear , purposive/developmental irreversible...
- **Stages** corresponding to the **interaction** of God and His wayward children
- Eden (**original power and innocence**); **alienation** and **preparation** (Covenant, The Law, Prophets)
- The Christ : **Salvation/ Redemption /Restoration**
- The Last Days : **working out** restoration
- The Last Judgment : **end of History** and the **New Creation**

# *Human Knowledge*

- *existential (experiential)* : concrete, personal-social - historical
- complements *theoretical, abstract, speculative* knowledge ; not to be confused with it
- deals with *specifically human experience* that is not of the order of *scientific* and *mathematical* expertise

# *virtue (excellence)*

**LOVE** (God , Neighbor , Self, each other , enemy);

➤ **relationship** and **service** (not subjective **feelings**)

- **Faith , Hope , Love** complete the philosophical virtues (Justice , Wisdom , Courage , Self-Mastery)
- **Humanization** (personalization) of Goodness and Justice : focus on **relationships** and not only on **impersonal** order/structure/harmony

# *Vice and Evil*

- *SIN* : *betrayal* of covenant –partner (*personal*)  
*not* simply *breaking a law* (of the Cosmos *or* of God)
- *EVIL* : radical , *conscious* , personal is *the true human problem*
- Evil that is the result of *ignorance, blindness, recklessness* is *negative* but is *not the sufficient cause* of the *radical human predicament*

# LOVE

- A term with a long history , **many meanings**, and subject to both **idolization** and **vulgarization**
- Initially always **outward** and **action oriented**
- **Only recently** primarily connected with **subjective feelings**
- ❖ **EROS** (amor) : the **response** to , the **search** for , and the **dedication** to **BEAUTY** that **begins** in the **appetitive** realm but leads to and finds its **fulfillment** only in **artistic** and **intellectual** realities
- ❖ **AGAPE** : the **active concern** for the well-being of 'the other' at the **cost** of personal loss (**sacrificial**)
  - primary contrast is with **selfishness** and **fear**  
(not **hate**)

# *Title/Form/Style*

- *Autobiographical* ; **CONFESSION** = primarily **acknowledgment /testimony/ witness**  
**NOT focus on sins**
- **PRAYER** as a dynamic expression of his concrete human reality (**not merely a pious religious formula/ practice**)
- **NOT “proving the existence of God”** but expressing his philosophical reflections as a human being who claims to have encountered God (**how does human existence look to such a creature?**)

# MAN is an Abyss

## *The Human Life-World*

- Some **enduring** features/contributions to **philosophical** investigation
  - **first** in-depth study of the human being in concrete experience (*Inward Empiricism*)
  - **first** candid/transparent **autobiography**
  - **first** *depth-psychological* exploration of the human mind (long before **Freud**)
  - **first** exploration of *Time* in **human terms**

# *Ideology and socio-political life*

- Augustine's world was **turbulent**, with different groups **vying for power**. The setting was not one of **simple academic debate**. Each group sought to **impose** its views on society as a whole.
- No option of a **tolerant 'secular'** solution was available.
- Rightly or wrongly, Augustine sincerely saw his option as **the most human** one.
- It would be **unfair** to miss the *authenticity* of his *Confessions* by **reducing it to propaganda**

# ***Existential Theology***

***monotheist experience philosophizing***

- ‘WITNESS’ - **not** abstract **or** dogmatic assertions
  - attempt to **convey experience** through **description**
  - what beliefs **mean** in a person’s **life**
  
- NOT a **polemical** or **theoretical** argument
  - the **human face** of doctrine
  - facilitates **dialogue** and **empathy**  
(**NOT agreement**)
  
- Examples ...

# *examples*

- *knowledge of God* and *God's love* : ongoing personal relationship experience , directly and in society
- '*original sin*' : the ontological-theological expression of **concrete** experience (**human struggle** against the pressures of deep-rooted *selfishness* and *resistance to the truth* that *one's own reason* presents) - **beyond** ignorance and blindness
- '*evil*' : even in **babies** ( not *responsible for* but exhibiting its "*original*" presence )
- the philosophical '*problem of evil*' (later in the lecture), *foreknowledge and free-will* , *trinity* , *incarnation...*

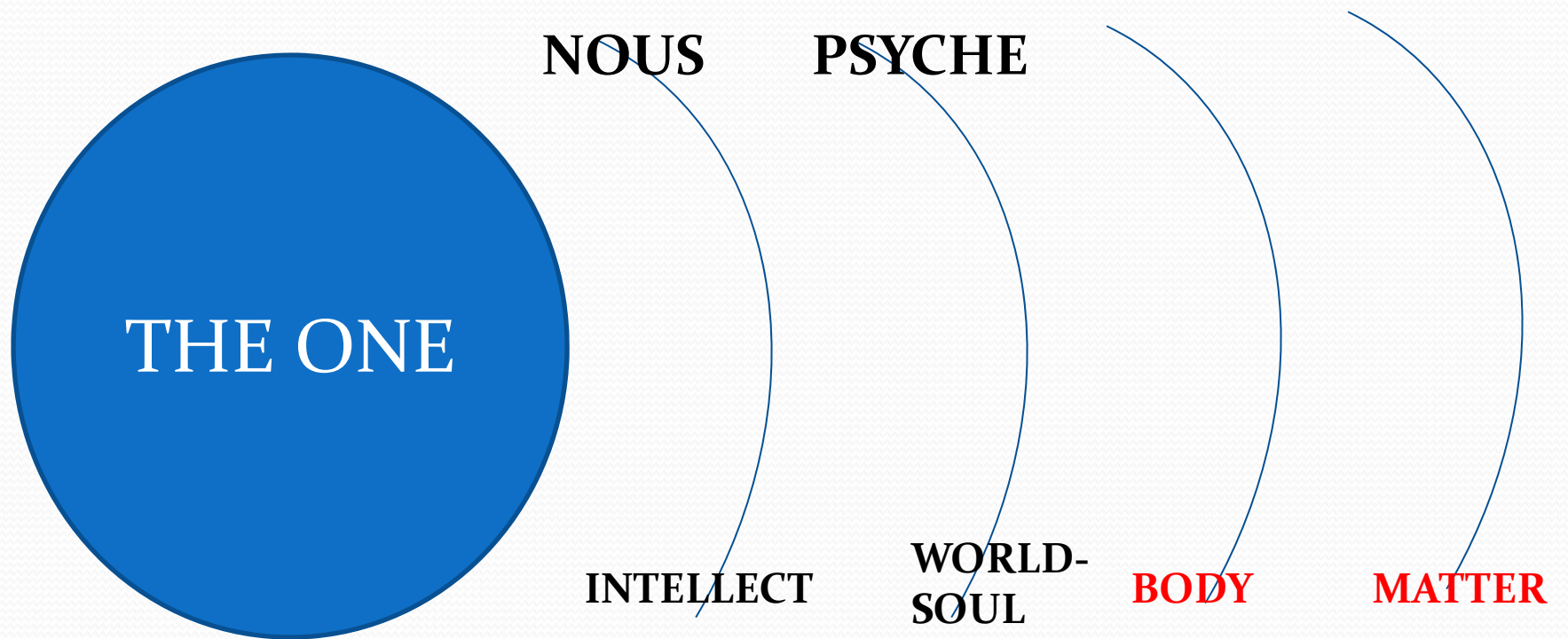
## REFERENCES

**F-**

"... these are **tentative** theories... not downright assertions." (p. 266)

"Can any man say enough when he **speaks of you?** ...even those who are most gifted with speech **cannot find words to describe you.**" (p. 23)

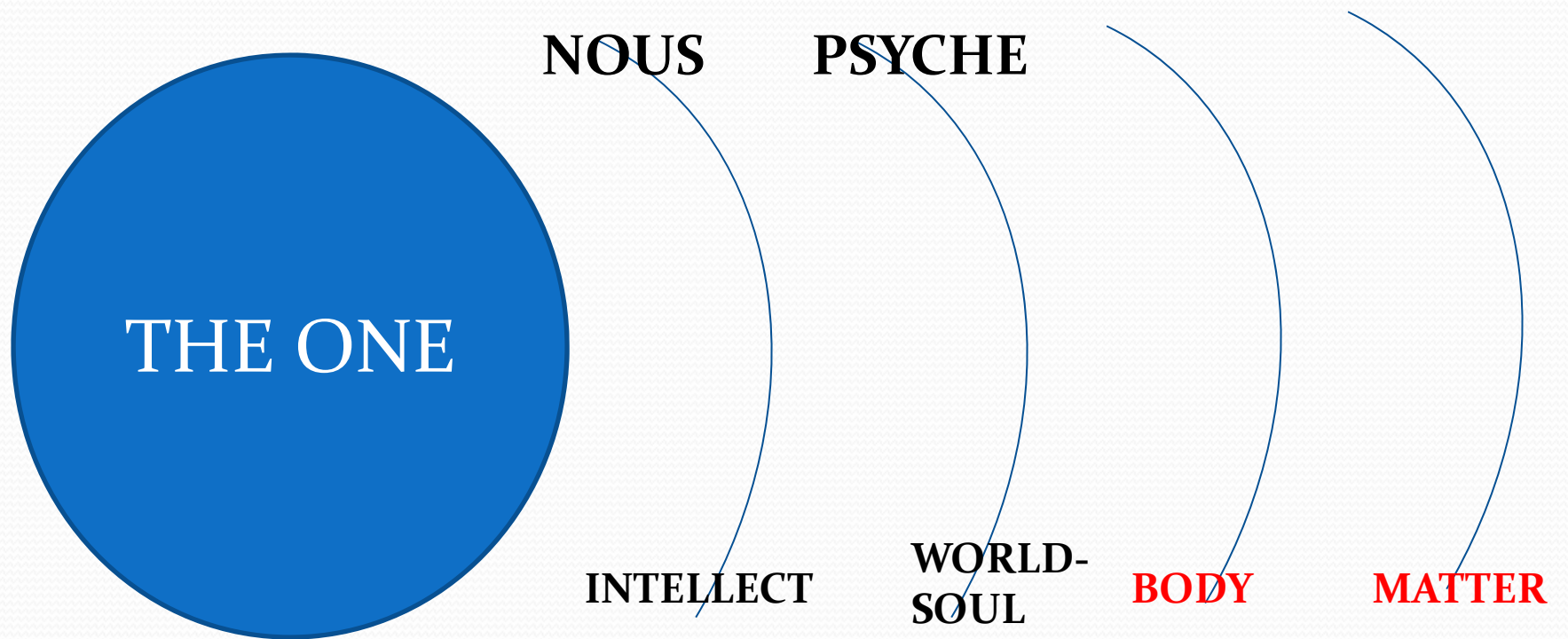
# PLOTINUS (*NEO-PLATONISM*)



# Plotinus 'monotheized'

- **Augustine** credits the **Platonists** with providing him with his **philosophical vision** beyond the **materialism** of the other major philosophies of the day (Stoicism, Epicureanism, Manichaeism...).
- He finds **many points in common** between the Christian view of **God** and that of Plotinus.
- He sees **the major difference** in the **HUMILITY** of **GOD** (and correspondingly in the **human being**).
- For him , this virtue makes **ALL the difference**. Without it **PRIDE** spoils all claims to **Divinity** and **Wisdom** . ( **Book 7** : chapters 9,20,21)
- He “**personalizes**” Plotinus’ ‘**structural**’ system.

# PLOTINUS (*NEO-PLATONISM*)



## *exploring the life-world of the human self*

- Inward empiricism : a **new methodology**
- **Unity** of the Self : **three** modes/ **one** substance
- Myself as *Understanding*
- Myself as *Will*
- Myself as *Memory*

# *Inward Empiricism*

- A.
- "...men go out and gaze in astonishment at high mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the broad reaches of rivers, the ocean that encircles the world, or the stars in their courses. But **they pay no attention to themselves.**" (p.216)
  - "...the field of my labors is my own self. I have become a **problem** to myself... **I am investigating myself, my memory, my mind.** There is nothing strange in the fact that whatever is not myself is far from me. But **what could be nearer to me** than myself?"  
(p.223)

# *Myself as Will*

## **B.**

- "I **knew** that I had a **will** as surely as I knew that there was life in me. When I chose to do something or not to do it, I was **quite certain** that it was **my own self**, and **not some other person**, who made this **act of will**..."
- "...so that I was on the point of **understanding** that **herein lay the cause** of my sin." (p.136)

## *paralysis of the will*

**C.**

"My inner self was **a house divided against myself** ... I was... overcome with violent **anger with myself** for not accepting your will and entering into your covenant. Yet in my bones **I knew** that this was what I ought to do. **In my heart of hearts**, I praised it to the skies. I need not even walk as far as I had come from the house... to reach this goal I needed no chariot or ship... **no more was required** than... **a resolute and wholehearted act of the will.**" (pp. 170-1)

"The mind **orders itself** to make an act of the will, and it would not give this order **unless it willed to do so**; yet it **does not carry out its own command.**" (p. 172)

## ***the “two” wills*** (pp.172-4)

- NOT **literally** TWO---he **rejects** this *Manichaeian* dualism ; the struggle of the **one** Self as Will
- Two **orientations** of the ONE **free-will** ;
  - this is the concrete experience of an “original” enslavement** , which he now understands to be **the consequence of the “original” rebellion of the human race (Adam/Eve) against God, and the loss of “original” power and freedom**
  - This means a **weakened** will but one that is **still free** to make **serious choices** with serious consequences that affect **the human race**
  - This highlights **the need for God** to restore **original freedom**

## ***MYSELF AS MEMORY : history***

### ***D.***

"... as I rise by stages towards the God who made me. The next stage is **memory**, which is like a great field or a spacious palace, a storehouse... (an) inner hiding place..." (p. 124)

"**All this goes on inside me, in the vast cloisters of my memory.** In it are the sky, the earth, and the sea, ready at my summons, together with everything that I have ever perceived in them by my senses, except the things which I have forgotten. In it **I meet myself** as well. I remember myself and what I have done, when and where I did it, and the state of mind at the time. In my memory, too, are all the events that I remember, whether they are things that have happened to me or things that I have heard from others. From the same source I can picture to myself all kinds of different images based either upon my own experience, or upon what others have told me. **I can fit them into the general picture of the past; from them I can make a surmise of actions and events and hopes for the future; and I can contemplate them all over again as if they were actually present...** The power of the memory is prodigious, my God. It is **a vast, immeasurable sanctuary. Who can plumb its depths?"** (pp. 215-16)

***Myself as Memory :***  
**the experiential *knowledge of God***  
**above *Self ( transcendent )***

**E.**

"See how I have explored **the vast field of my memory** in search of you, O Lord. And I have not found you outside it... **It is there that I find you** when I am reminded of you and **find delight in you.**" (p. 230)

" ...you are **not the mind itself** for you are the Lord God of the mind...Where else,then, did I find you...**in yourself, above** me." (p.231)

## ***Some results***

- ***God*** and ***Evil*** are presented as ***concrete realities*** experienced in **human life** ; not ***abstract concepts***
- Encounter with ***God*** : **always positive**
- ***Evil*** : concretely experienced in connection with **an abuse of the Will**
  - not **abstractions** (an Evil God/the stars/no evil)
  - not **false accusations** (matter, the body, appetites, feelings, emotions, desires...)

**PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

# *Mysterium caritatis (love) and Mysterium iniquitatis (evil)*

MYSTERIUM = *a rich reality not reducible to abstract rationalistic formulae*

- LOVE and EVIL : *twin realities* in human life
- LOVE : AGAPE *and* EROS
- CARITAS = AGAPIZED EROS
- Only *existential description* can *adequately* explore such *rich realities*