

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...*

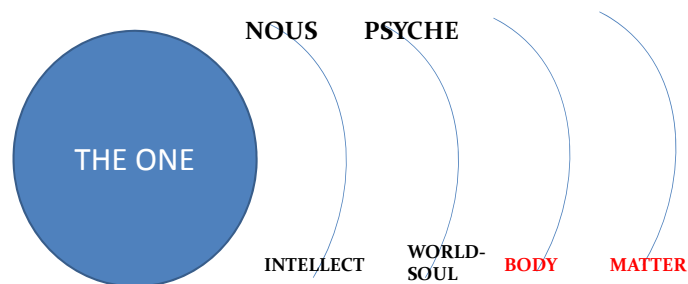
REFERENCES

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**.

FROM PLATO TO AUGUSTINE VIA PLOTINUS AND ABRAHAM

- Thinkers in monotheistic societies : interaction of three main visions :
“*Abrahamic*” monotheism , “*Homeric*” Graeco-Roman , and *Mysticism* .

AUGUSTINE : *Abrahamic and Homeric*

A. *The Divine and the Cosmos:*

1. dualism *vs* monism : created *vs* eternal : transcendent *vs* immanent.
2. *God* (faithful love, mercy, compassion) *vs* *ultimate structural principle* (moira, *Idea of the Good, the ONE*, thought , world-reason, atoms and the void...).
3. cosmological, *impersonal* principle : *necessity* (automatic operation): *detachment vs free*, spontaneous action, *personal* concern : commitment, *involvement* (*covenant*, revelation, prophets, history...).
4. *primacy* of the *personal* over the merely *structural* :
Divine Law vs Nomos : two types of *prophets*--- remind man of *covenant-responsibility vs* reveal the *hidden truth* (Teiresias) .

B. *Man (the Human Race):*

1. *in the image and likeness of God: family*-relationship: unique representative to rule over creation on behalf of God *vs* shared rationality (structural, *impersonal* relationship).
2. human dignity *intrinsic* (relation to God) *vs* special (*elite*) qualities (power, beauty, intelligence...).
3. no *fixed* nature: possibility of *radical change in character* through *grace* and *repentance : conversion* (or the opposite).

C. *Society: (polis,cosmopolis,church,umma,social contract,classless society...)*

1. *brothers: beyond* mutual need and complementarity of natures.
2. *communion*: full human fellowship, solidarity, mutual care;
organic vs merely *functional* relationship.

D. *Knowledge: beyond* abstract , *theoretical* definition (natures) to *existential* concrete, personal-historical *encounter*.

E. *Virtue*: LOVE God, neighbour, self *beyond* Know Thyself, Balance is Best ;
FAITH, HOPE, LOVE *beyond* Justice, Wisdom, Courage, Self-Mastery .

F. *Vice* : SIN : *betrayal* of covenant-partner *beyond*
HUBRIS: *breaching* the Order of the Cosmos .

G. *Evil* : conscious , personal , radical ---*avoidable*
vs blindness, ignorance, immaturity---*inevitable* .

H. *Love* : *agape (caritas) different from eros (amor)* and other meanings...