

University of Denver

Digital Commons @ DU

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

1-1-2011

Intuitive Virtue in Plato, Augustine, and Gandhi

Brian Timothy Keady
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd>



Part of the [Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons](#), and the [Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Keady, Brian Timothy, "Intuitive Virtue in Plato, Augustine, and Gandhi" (2011). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 842.

<https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/842>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, dig-commons@du.edu.

INTUITIVE VIRTUE IN PLATO, AUGUSTINE, AND GANDHI

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the University of Denver and the Iliff School of Theology

Joint PhD Program

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Brian Keady

June 2011

Advisor: Naomi Reshotko

© Copyright by Brian Keady 2011

All Rights Reserved

Author: Brian Keady

Title: INTUITIVE VIRTUE IN PLATO, AUGUSTINE, AND GANDHI

Advisor: Naomi Reshotko

Degree Date: June 2011

ABSTRACT

In this study, I argue that Plato, Augustine, and Gandhi hold in common the view that (1) in order to develop understanding of ultimate reality one must—in addition to engaging in contemplation of that reality—engage ethically in the practical world, and (2) in order to engage ethically in the practical world, one must also seek to understand ultimate reality through contemplation.

Much of what is original in the dissertation emerges at the level of the sub-theses I present in support of these ideas. I examine (1) and (2) in Plato by offering a reinterpretation of his conception of dialectic—the practice by which he says we pursue knowledge of the Forms. Focusing on the *Republic* and *Philebus*, I argue that dialectic for Plato consists in more than just the various types of the question-and-answer method. He also considers practical experience an essential element of the practice, and closely links dialectic to ethical participation in Forms and the development of a kind of practical expertise guided by *noêsis* (intuitive insight, understanding).

I examine (1) and (2) in Augustine by analyzing his account of the relationship between the human mind and the divine ideas. Particular attention is given to (1). I show how, on Augustine's view, one can cultivate not just knowledge (*scientia*), but divine wisdom (*sapientia*) while engaged in endeavors associated with the active life. We shall see that Augustine finds it possible for the mind to process mutable and immutable reality

simultaneously, and that, as the mind purifies and reforms itself, ethical engagement in temporal affairs does not necessarily hinder—and often enhances—the mind’s ability to apprehend intelligible objects.

I examine (1) and (2) in Gandhi through an analysis of his conception of the inner voice, prayer, and the life of selfless service. Particular attention is given to (1). Even more than Plato and Augustine, Gandhi believes that we come to know and live in harmony with the eternal by pursuing it while engaging ethically in the world. Still, echoing these authors, he maintains that our ability to epistemically access the divine is not just “a kind of ‘open sesame’ which has just to be shown to the millions”—cultivation of the inner voice requires discipline and constant effort, as well as a radical transformation in worldview.

Acknowledgments

This study is dedicated to my friends, family, teachers, and especially a few great souls who have been the true source of inspiration of anything good found within it.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Action, Contemplation, and Intuitive Insight.....	6
A Few Preliminary Clarifications.....	31
Methodology.....	47
Chapter Two: Plato’s Practical Dialectic.....	49
Plato’s Dialectic.....	51
Practical Dialectic in the <i>Republic</i>	55
Practical Dialectic in the <i>Philebus</i>	81
Chapter Three: Action and Divine Wisdom in Augustine.....	96
Forms and the Human Mind.....	99
Contemplation and the Ethical Life.....	104
Intellection and the Multi-Tasking Soul.....	119
Chapter Four: Gandhi on Contemplative Action and the Inner Voice.....	130
Ethical Conduct and Divine Knowledge.....	133
Following the Inner Voice.....	143
Action, Discipline, and Inner Purification.....	151
Objections and Concerns.....	161
Chapter Five: Conclusion.....	173
The Platonic Model.....	173
The Augustinian Model.....	181
The Gandhian Model.....	186
Bibliography.....	194

1

INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries, philosophers have puzzled over the question of whether our time on earth is best spent devoted to a life of contemplation, a life of action, or some mixture of the two. The debate has been particularly lively among those who believe that truth, knowledge, and happiness are grounded in an ultimate reality that transcends phenomenal existence. Though from different cultures, eras, and backgrounds, Plato, Augustine, and Gandhi share this basic perspective, and each has a great deal to say about the action/contemplation debate and about how we should live so as to best pursue knowledge of the eternal.

In this study, I argue that Plato, Augustine, and Gandhi hold in common the view that (1) in order to develop understanding of ultimate reality one must—in addition to engaging in contemplation of that reality—engage ethically in the practical world, and (2) in order to engage ethically in the practical world, one must also seek to understand ultimate reality through contemplation.

Much of what is original in the dissertation emerges at the level of the sub-theses I present in support of these ideas. I examine (1) and (2) in Plato by offering a

reinterpretation of his conception of dialectic—the practice by which he says we pursue knowledge of the Forms. Focusing on the *Republic* and *Philebus*, I argue that dialectic for Plato consists in more than just the various types of the question-and-answer method. He also considers practical experience an essential element of the practice, and closely links dialectic to ethical participation in Forms and the development of a kind of practical expertise guided by *noêsis* (intuitive insight, understanding).

I examine (1) and (2) in Augustine by analyzing his account of the relationship between the human mind and the divine ideas. Particular attention is given to (1). I show how, on Augustine’s view, one can cultivate not just knowledge (*scientia*), but divine wisdom (*sapientia*) while engaged in endeavors associated with the active life. We shall see that Augustine finds it possible for the mind to process mutable and immutable reality simultaneously, and that, as the mind purifies and reforms itself, ethical engagement in temporal affairs does not necessarily hinder—and often enhances—the mind’s ability to apprehend intelligible objects.

I examine (1) and (2) in Gandhi through an analysis of his conception of the inner voice, prayer, and the life of selfless service. Particular attention is given to (1). Even more than Plato and Augustine, Gandhi believes that we come to know and live in harmony with the eternal by pursuing it while engaging ethically in the world. Still, echoing these authors, he maintains that our ability to epistemically access the divine is not just “a kind of ‘open sesame’ which has just to be shown to the millions”—cultivation of the inner voice requires discipline and constant effort, as well as a radical transformation in worldview.

A few key words should be clarified from the outset. “Intuition” and “intuitive insight” are employed in the first and last chapters as umbrella terms to designate the basic cognitive process by which our three authors believe one can apprehend eternal reality. These terms were the best among a group of unsatisfactory alternatives; more often we will be dealing with these authors individually, and so will fortunately be able to use terminology more appropriate to their respective philosophies. This is important as Platonic *noēsis*, Augustinian intellection, and what Gandhi refers to both as “intuition” and the “inner voice” contain both important similarities and differences.

In chapter one I provide an introductory overview of each of the authors’ perspectives on the relationship between action, contemplation, and intuitive insight in order to highlight the key concepts and issues that we will focus on. I also offer a brief description of the study’s general methodology, as well as a section containing some preliminary clarifications about the authors’ views on the scope of embodied knowledge and related issues.

The second chapter examines dialectic and *noēsis* in Plato. I offer a reinterpretation of dialectic that emphasizes the role the active life plays in the enterprise, showing how dialectic for Plato can be pursued in ways other than the question-and-answer method. The chapter is divided into two main sections, one dedicated to the *Republic*, and the other to the *Philebus*. We shall see that the *Republic* links dialectic to ethical participation in Forms and the development of a particular kind of practical expertise guided by *noēsis*. *Noēsis*, in turn, is portrayed as something that can be cultivated through active endeavors (e.g. engaging in social and political affairs), as

opposed to only theoretical ones. The *Philebus* identifies practical experience as an essential element of the dialectical method of collection and division, and portrays dialectic more generally as the process by which we seek to coordinate all of our actions in pursuit of truth. Dialectic, it emerges, is a process that involves the harmonious integration of both the active and contemplative lives.

Chapter three turns to intellection, contemplation, and divine participation in the works of Augustine. After discussing his basic perspective on the beneficial effects of contemplation in everyday moral conduct, I explore the mental restructuring he believes accompanies imitation of and participation in the divine ideas. Augustine maintains that we can grow in our awareness of Forms by ethically engaging empirical reality with the overarching intention of participating and unifying with the eternal structure at its basis. By seeking to become more just, for example, he believes we can increasingly grasp and participate in the Form of Justice. I also show how Augustine develops a theory of cognition that allows for the simultaneous operation of multiple functions of the soul. According to him, the wise person can remain in close epistemic proximity to the Forms while occupied with practical endeavors, and this because the intellect can be at work even when the divine ideas are not at the forefront of conscious awareness. We shall see moreover that, on Augustine's view, devoting mental energy to the active life does not necessarily detract from intellectual apprehension.

In the fourth chapter we will explore Gandhi's philosophy, which is geared even more towards pursuing the divine through the active life. Like Plato and Augustine, Gandhi places a type of intuitive insight at the heart of his epistemology and believes that

it can be cultivated by attentively interacting with the everyday world. In the first section I analyze his views on the link between *ahimsa* (non-injury; non-violence) and eternal Truth. The second part examines the dynamic of developing divine knowledge through ethically engaging the world, and developing practical ethical insight through contemplation. We will look, among other things, at Gandhi's views on politics and prayer in this regard. The rest of the chapter provides an in-depth analysis of his conception of the inner voice and its relationship to the active life of virtue. Providing concrete historical examples, I show how the quest for Truth for Gandhi is an endeavor of progressive approximation: with practice and the increasing purification of one's life one can, he says, listen to the inner voice with higher degrees of depth and clarity, realizing through love and selfless service a sense of union with the divine that ultimately allows one to live more virtuously.

The final chapter provides a close recapitulation and summary of the main threads of analysis set forth in previous chapters. I also present some brief comparisons between Plato, Augustine, and Gandhi on topics that have been addressed over the course of the study.

ACTION, CONTEMPLATION, AND INTUITIVE INSIGHT

As we have said, this study will focus largely on our three authors' views on the relationship between practical endeavors and our ability to know and live in accordance with eternal reality. In the remainder of the introduction we will consider an initial sketch of each of their perspectives. We start with a few vignettes from Plato's dialogues in order to gather some useful concepts and distinctions for the pages to come.

Plato: The Practical and Theoretical Life

Plato discusses in several places the contrast between the theoretical and practical life, a topic that seems to have been popular among Greek intellectuals of his time. For example, in a striking parody of a rigid split between theory and praxis, Aristophanes' *Clouds* portrays Socrates and his disciples as absent-minded buffoons whose preoccupations with lofty matters render them ignorant of the day-to-day world. We likewise find Socrates in the *Apology* charged with busying himself with "studying things in the heavens and below the earth" (19b),¹ which can be taken both as a judgment against his popularly alleged preference for natural science over religion and his partiality for theoretical concerns over human matters. Socrates of course denies these claims: disavowing any interest in the speculative practices of sophists and natural philosophers, he insists that his focus has always been on the basic questions associated with human wisdom.

¹ Cf. *Ap.* 18b.

The conflict between theoretical and practical knowledge is most famously and vividly captured in the digression of the *Theaetetus*, which depicts the philosopher as a stargazer with little concern for, or even awareness of, temporal affairs. Contrasting him to the rhetorician of the law courts, the digression imagines the philosopher as never pressed for time, as one who converses with others in calm and peaceful settings, and who speaks with the sole aim of striking upon the reality and truth of things. The philosopher identifies with the whole of *what is*, his global perspective helping him to see the pettiness and folly of struggles over social position, arrogance about one's ancestral pedigree, and the inordinate value placed on the opinions of others and the things of the world (174d-175b). Rhetoricians, by contrast, are represented as having vested interests in the court's decisions, and as unlucky individuals who become warped in soul as they pander to the expectations of their superiors (172d-173b).

Inasmuch as the philosopher rises above worldly concerns and focuses his attention on intelligible reality, the *Theaetetus* casts him in a positive light. But we also receive a comedic portrait of Thales, who, we are told, was so entranced by his study of the heavens that he stumbled into a well, a blunder that invites the ridicule of a Thracian girl who joked that his preoccupation with the stars prevented him from seeing what was in front of his feet (174a). The digression's philosopher is presented as being aloof to the point of not knowing his way to the agora, the law courts, or any other public place. He has neither seen nor heard about the city's laws, and is never present at social or political functions. Completely oblivious of his neighbors and their actions, he barely knows whether they are human or some other type of animal (173d-174b). The philosopher

concerns himself exclusively with the forms or essences of things, and he pays little heed to the goings on of the world, or even his own behavior. Clumsy, graceless, and lacking any sort of wit in common conversation, he remains ignorant of his own practical ignorance. “Only his body lives and sleeps in the city,” his mind being completely engulfed in ethereal pursuits (173e).

Not every element of the *Theaetetus*' philosophic man thus appears intended for emulation, and the model is perhaps better understood to represent the opposite extreme of the earth-bound rhetorician. The depiction is of course also at odds with Plato's basic account of Socrates, who regularly frequents the agora, certainly knows how to get there, and participates in the political duties required of him.² Well aware of the identity of his interlocutors, Socrates shows keen interest in their lives, behaviors, and psychological condition, and has a certain wit about him even when discussing mundane affairs. We find several of these qualities in the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* itself,³ and these qualities provide close contrast with the philosophic man there described.

On the heels of the account of the philosopher comes the *Theaetetus*' famous injunction to escape from earth to heaven as quickly as we can, where “escape means becoming as like God as possible” (176a-b).⁴ Few details are given about what this dramatic directive specifically entails, and we are left with a number of questions. How

² Julia Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 55.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Cf. e.g. *Rep.* 613a-b, *Symp.* 207d, *Tim.* 89e, *Laws* 716b-d.

can we assimilate ourselves to the divine if we are inexorably bound by time and space? How realistic is the ideal and to what extent does it require an otherworldly existence? Does flight from the world involve detaching oneself from friends and family, and disengaging from all social interaction? Does it mean becoming an absent-minded theoretician who falls into ditches and lacks practical awareness or concern for others?

Plato's conception of divine assimilation has recently attracted wide attention from scholars interested in his epistemology and moral philosophy. It seems to have been the guiding principle of Platonic ethics in antiquity, and the sense that it involves a surrender to the otherworldly has led many ancient and modern commentators to interpret it as espousing uncompromising flight from the world.⁵ On this interpretation of Plato, we come closest to the divine by separating ourselves from the fleeting and deceptive nature of sense experience and by focusing on the abstract. To become like God is, among other things, to reason about the Forms—what they are in themselves, how they relate to one another, etc.—and to embody their stable, unchanging nature by avoiding temporal occupations and seeking to live in our minds as much as possible. On this reading divine assimilation is best achieved through theoretical reasoning, and the

⁵ For different views on Godlikeness, see Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 52-71; John M. Armstrong, "After the Ascent: Plato on Becoming Like God," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2004): 171-83; Naomi Reshotko, "Socrates and Plato on Sophia, Eudaimonia, and Their Facsimiles," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 26 (2009): 1-20; Daniel C. Russell, "Virtue as 'Likeness to God' in Plato and Seneca," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42 (2004): 241-60; David Sedley, "Becoming like God' in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle," in *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias: Proceedings of the IV Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Tomás Calvo and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1997), 327-39, and "The Ideal of Godlikeness" in *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Plato*, vol. 2, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), 309-28.

more we devote our lives to rational speculation, the better we are able to grasp the eternal and embody it.

Recent work, however, has convincingly shown Godlikeness to be an ideal that—at least in certain dialogues⁶—also reaches deeply into the sphere of the everyday. The *Theaetetus* itself, for example, describes assimilation to God as a process by which we transform our lives and cultivate the virtues. A person “becomes like God,” we are told, “when he becomes just and pure, with understanding” (176a-b). While we are given little elaboration about what this program actually entails, other dialogues indicate that the philosopher can—and perhaps must necessarily—pursue justice, purity, and other virtues not just through theoretical rumination, but also by integrating them into daily life and into his everyday interactions with other people. The take-home message is that without real-world experience and concrete embodiment of the Forms, philosophical inquiry yields only half-baked insights and skills not unlike the imitative expertise of sophists.

The *Phaedrus*, for example, compares someone with mere theoretical knowledge of rhetoric to a pseudo-physician who knows not when, to whom, and to what extent he should administer his treatments (268b-c). The *Phaedrus* teaches that aspiring rhetorician-dialecticians must have comprehensive knowledge of the different kinds of soul and speech, and that abstract knowledge of these kinds is only a preliminary step. The true dialectician must then “put his theory into practice and develop the ability to discern

⁶ There is disagreement, for example, about whether the *Republic* is among the dialogues that portray the compatibility between Godlikeness and moral engagement in the world. Cf. e.g. Armstrong (“After the Ascent,” 171-83), who argues that it is only with the identification of God with *noûs* in the *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, and *Laws* that Plato develops a conception of Godlikeness that involves improving the world.

each kind clearly as it occurs in the actions of real life. Otherwise he won't be any better off than he was when he was still listening to those discussions in school" (271d-e).⁷ To practice rhetoric dialectically he must, upon meeting people, be able to discern what they are like so that he can select the speech that will elicit the best response from them. In addition to this and other practical elements, he also needs to grasp "the right occasions for speaking and holding back" before he has "mastered the art well and completely" (271e-272a).⁸ The same logic holds, presumably, not only for the dialectician's interaction with the Forms associated with soul and speech, but for every Form: he must be able to discern how they emerge in daily life if he does not want to be "walking with the blind" (270e).⁹

Plato presents dialectic as our most God-like activity. Through it, the dialogues teach, we are brought as close to the divine as possible. Because of its rarefied nature, dialectic is often thought to have little practical relevance, its exercise being closely

⁷ Translations of the *Phaedrus* are from Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, *Plato: Phaedrus* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995).

⁸ Socrates also indicates that the rhetorician must "know the truth about the things that are just or good" (*Phdr.* 272d).

⁹ To take another example, dialectic is also intimately associated with the "kingly art" and the second type of measurement outlined in the *Statesman*. This kind of measurement is a form of applied dialectic, for it involves measuring the phenomenal world against eternal realities. In contrast to the first type, which evaluates the "number, lengths, depths, breadths and speeds of things in relation to what is opposed to them," the second measures "in relation to what is in due measure (*metrion*), what is fitting (*prepon*), the right moment (*kairon*), what is as it ought to be (*deon*)—everything that removes itself from the extremes to the middle (*meson*) (284e). Practitioners of the second art use it, for instance, to judge the optimal length of a discourse. But in so doing, their concern is not with the theoretical enterprise of determining the proper length of this or that *type* of discourse. Instead, they discern how token instances, each with their own unique features, share more or less in the Forms constituting what is in due measure. While engaged in discourse, they are able to gauge whether discussion is approaching or surpassing the appropriate standards of clarity, concision, thoroughness, etc., and can adjust their actions accordingly.

associated with philosophers who have their heads in the clouds. As we shall see, however, the practice is multifaceted, and our conception of both it and divine assimilation will turn largely on what we place under its heading. If Plato's dialectic extends no further than theoretical discussion and deliberative thought, our view of assimilation will take on similar characteristics. If, on the other hand, dialectic is given a wider berth—that is to say, if we recognize other aspects alongside classic philosophical exchange and reflection—our interpretation of assimilation will likewise be more expansive.

The second chapter begins with an exploration of several different forms of dialectic that appear in the dialogues. As we shall see, one unifying feature of all Plato's renditions is an overarching concern with Forms. As opposed to baking, shoemaking, carpentry, and other occupations, dialectic focuses on the intelligible structure of reality. Of course when Plato writes of the practice, he most frequently has in mind theoretical speculation and the give-and-take of philosophical exchange. Through these activities we eliminate false or contradictory notions and sharpen our accounts of Justice, Beauty, Happiness, Friendship, and so forth. Indeed, Plato makes clear throughout the dialogues that question-and-answer and theoretical speculation are indispensable for anyone hoping to develop an adequate grasp of different Forms.¹⁰

¹⁰ In a certain sense, question-and-answer can itself be viewed as an active endeavor, for it takes place with other people, and in the world. Question-and-answer is also, no doubt, an essential component of Plato's dialectic (the main argument in ch. 2 is not that question-and-answer is not part of dialectic, but that dialectic is not limited to the question-answer method). What ancient and contemporary commentators would deny, however, is that question-and-answer falls on the "active" side of the active life/theoretical life dichotomy. Rather, philosophical exchange is one of the quintessential activities of the theoretical side.

But while some passages give the impression that dialectic is strictly a technical and speculative enterprise far removed from worldly cares and concerns, other remarks reveal a practical side, one that is very much concerned with how we conduct ourselves in the world. The primary aim of the second chapter will be to show that for Plato attentive engagement in practical affairs also plays an essential role in bringing one epistemically and existentially closer to eternal reality. The *Republic* reminds us that the dialectician's *logoi* are distinct from the realities they represent, and that aspiring dialecticians must also strive after truth in non-theoretical ways if they hope to cultivate any thoroughgoing level of philosophical insight. Understanding Justice, Courage, and other Forms involves more than thinking and talking about them: dialecticians must also strive to *be* just and courageous if these Forms are to progressively manifest in their minds and in their lives. Not reducible to a single method or approach, dialectic also consists in the practical ways in which this progressive participation in—and apprehension of—Forms is achieved.¹¹

On the *Republic's* view, seeking truth involves imitating the Forms and pursuing psychic harmony. Theory plays a central role, but the progressive integration of Forms into daily life also constitutes an essential part of the philosophic path. Plato indicates that philosophic study alone cannot deliver a comprehensive understanding of reality—a deep awareness of how Forms manifest in the phenomenal world, and the ability to

¹¹ One might, of course, wonder if this implies a paradox. How does one become just or courageous without knowing what these virtues are? If *being* just and courageous is part of what is needed to grasp Justice and Courage, and pursuing these virtues requires knowing them, which element comes first? And how does the “active” dialectician initiate the process? These questions will be taken up in the next section.

translate this awareness into moral practice, is also needed. We shall see that the *Republic's* philosopher-rulers serve as models of genuine philosophical maturity. In contrast to the *Theaetetus's* philosopher, these dialecticians navigate the world with practical wisdom, manifesting expertise and shrewdness of mind in political affairs and in their overall management of the city. What is often overlooked is that the *Republic* expressly indicates that their education is not complete until they have devoted a significant portion of their lives to active involvement in worldly affairs. The *Republic* portrays dialectic as an enterprise that is at once intellectual and ethical, and it is only *after* developing the ability to apprehend and instantiate Justice, Beauty, and other Forms in the rough and tumble world that student philosophers can be said to have become true dialecticians. In addition to its theoretical elements, dialectic in the *Republic* is closely linked to participation in Forms and the development of a particular kind of practical expertise guided by *noêsis*.

In our treatment of the *Philebus* we shall see that, as in the *Republic*, the ability to translate theory into practice is a key characteristic of the advanced dialectician, and that those who are deficient in this regard cannot lay claim to any substantive understanding of eternal reality. The adept practitioner of Philebean collection and division seeks exposure to a wide variety of Forms, and such exposure ultimately requires a diverse range of empirical experience. We learn that the diaretical procedure starts with particulars and ultimately returns to them after the ascent is made to their different respective overarching unities and subunities. Dialectical knowledge of music, for example, requires deep familiarity with all of the different kinds of musical pitch, which

in turn involves exposing oneself to empirical instances of each, both at the first stage of the ascent and at the end of the process once one has begun to develop an understanding of both pitch and music as a whole.

The *Philebus* also portrays dialectic more generally as the process by which we seek to coordinate all of our actions in pursuit of truth. One of the dialogue's underlying messages is that to understand the virtues one must strive to embody them, and that this cannot be achieved through armchair speculation alone. With the right type of awareness, beauty or measure displayed in the agora or on the battlefield can point one toward the Forms of Beauty and Measure. As we shall see, in contrast to a program of total detachment or neglect of practical affairs, the *Philebus* invites the reader to contemplate a middle road, one that combines the attributes associated with devotion to eternal reality with the advantages of practical wisdom so as to allow the dialectician to move through the world with grace and intelligence. As opposed to invariably hindering our understanding of Forms, the *Philebus* presents practical affairs as something that can—when approached from the right perspective—provide us with opportunities for developing and broadening our familiarity with the eternal so that it may increasingly manifest in our lives.

Augustine: The Active and Contemplative Life

The competing merits of the active and contemplative life were vigorously discussed during Augustine's time. In the fourth century an increasing number of people

around the Mediterranean basin were considering permanent retirement from the world, and several Roman and Alexandrian thinkers from preceding centuries—Cicero, Philo, and Origen, to name a few—could already be called upon for arguments on both sides of the issue. Augustine was of course himself deeply interested in the comparative ideals represented by the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*. In the *Confessions* he offers an account of the profound tensions between his own temporal aspirations and the pull toward spiritual leisure and devotion. In other works he gives more systematic treatment to the topic, often in response to colleagues who approached the subject with equal gravity.

Augustine articulates the action/contemplation distinction in a number of different ways.¹² Following several of his theological predecessors, he contrasts the active and contemplative lives in the biblical pairings of Lia and Rachel of the Old Testament, and Martha and Mary, and the apostles Peter and John of the New Testament. Lia, Rachel, and Peter represent temporal responsibilities and service to humanity, while Rachel, Mary, and John represent contemplative devotion and hope for the eternal *visio Dei*.¹³ Augustine gives primacy to the life of contemplation. The contemplative life is the “better part” (*melior pars*) and represents our final destiny (*Serm.* 104.2-3). Only fully

¹² For lucid accounts, see e.g. Mary Elizabeth Mason, *Active Life and Contemplative Life* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961), 27-45; R. J. O’Connell, “Action and Contemplation,” in *A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 38-58; N. Joseph Torchia, “Contemplation and Action,” in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 233-235.

¹³ See e.g. *C. Faust.* 22.52; *Jo. ev. tr.* 124.5-7. For detailed analysis, see A. M. la Bonnardière, “Les deux vies. Marthe et Marie (Luc 10, 38-42),” in *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, ed. A. M. la Bonnardière (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986), 411-425, esp. 412-14. For a broader assessment of the Biblical pairings among medieval thinkers, see Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-43.

realizable in the hereafter, its domain contrasts with that of the active life, which spans the duration of embodied existence.¹⁴ In the active life, Augustine says, we are sojourners in another land, while in the contemplative life we find our eternal home; in one we toil, in the other we rest. The active life “is passed here to the end of the world, and there finds its termination,” whereas the contemplative life “is deferred for its completion till after the end of this world, but has no end in the world to come” (*Jo. ev. tr.* 124.5).¹⁵

Thus, from one perspective, Augustine understands action as a means to our more permanent contemplative end: we perform practical tasks out of necessity and out of different social and moral obligations, undertaking them with the hope of finding free moments for contemplation, and acting virtuously so as to place ourselves on the proper trajectory for eternal salvation and the everlasting vision of God. Augustine connects the contemplative life to wisdom (*sapientia*) and the theological virtues (faith, hope, and love), which have God as their object and represent humankind’s highest aspirations. The active life, by contrast, is associated with knowledge (*scientia*) and the classical virtues (practical wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice). The classical virtues are cultivated and maintained by practical effort—by acting in the world. The theological virtues, on

¹⁴ Contemplation corresponds with the unity of the divine and action with the multiplicity of temporality. See *Serm.* 104.2-3. Cf. *Gn. Litt.* 4.14.

¹⁵ Translation follows, with slight modifications, Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7 (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1888). Cf. John Rettig, trans., *Augustine: Tractates on the Gospel of John 112-24 and Tractates on the First Epistle of John* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

the other hand, are more directly a product of eternal grace, and are developed and strengthened through humble contemplation of God and the divine attributes.¹⁶

Still, while insisting on the general superiority of the contemplative life, in several places Augustine maintains that one should postpone private contemplation and study when ecclesiastical duties call.¹⁷ And indeed instead of taking up the path of a solitary, in his own life Augustine practiced a hybrid of the active and contemplative models, attending to his many daily clerical obligations while engaging in scholarly and contemplative pursuits in moments of leisure. As other commentators have pointed out, to reconcile these apparent contradictions we should distinguish between action and contemplation insofar as they represent for Augustine two different aspects of inner life and two different external modes or ways of living.¹⁸ What Augustine means when he subordinates action to contemplation is that the *internal* life of contemplation is to be preferred to that of action. From this perspective, his focus is on the aforementioned superiority of contemplation as a more advanced stage on the philosophical/spiritual path, a path where the active life—a life of moral virtue—is pursued so as to purify the mind for progressively deeper levels of divine insight in both its contemplative *and* practical endeavors. By contrast, when Augustine speaks of the importance of putting off

¹⁶ In another account, Augustine describes the evolution from the classical virtues to the single virtue of contemplation in the afterlife. Without poverty, deception, distress, inordinate passions, and other temporal burdens, he says, “we shall pass . . . from these many virtues of action to that one virtue of contemplation, by which we are empowered to contemplate God” (*En. in Ps.* 83.11).

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. *C. Faust.* 22.57; *De civ. Dei* 19.2 and 19.19.

¹⁸ See Edward Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life* (London: E. P. Dutton, 1926), 157-67; and Mason, *Active Life and Contemplative Life*, 27-45.

contemplation in order to fulfill temporal obligations, he is referring to different *external* modes of life.

In fact, as we shall discuss in chapter three, although in some places Augustine writes of the general superiority of contemplation, in others he indicates that the comparative merit of the external active and contemplative lives must be judged on a case by case basis. While there is “no controversy about the Supreme Good,” Augustine believes the best means for reaching that good will vary according to the individual (*De civ. Dei* 19.2). The active, contemplative, and mixed lives, he says, all have their advantages, and no single model works best for everyone. The question is “which of these three makes it hard or easy for someone to reach the supreme Good, and to hold it fast. For this supreme Good is that which, once we have attained it, makes us continuously happy. But not everyone is invariably happy in studious leisure, or in public activity, or in some mingling of these” (19.2).¹⁹ Thus, insofar as action and contemplation refer to two *external* modes of life, Augustine is reluctant to award priority to one or the other.

On his view, happiness and contemplation rest primarily in the apprehension of the divine ideas (*ideae, formae, rationes*). He uses both “intellect” (*intellectus*) and “reason” (*ratio*) to designate the faculty by which the soul apprehends the ideas: “intellect” refers more frequently to the soul’s capability to directly apprehend such entities, while “reason” tends to mark more broadly our capacity for acquiring knowledge and

¹⁹ Translation follows, with slight modifications, Mason, *Active and Contemplative Life*, 39.

understanding both inferentially and non-inferentially.²⁰ Having eyes, Augustine writes, is different from looking at something, and looking is different from seeing (*Sol.* 6.12).

Reason is the mind's eye, so to speak: through it we "look" or inquire into various things, and by it we "see" intellectual objects.

Thus in its broadest construal reason stands as the proximate source of both looking and seeing (God is the ultimate source), but Augustine further distinguishes between reason and reasoning (*ratiocinatio*), specifically equating reasoning with the "looking" aspect of mental inquiry, and reason with "seeing." The sound mind is always in possession of reason, though it is not always reasoning (*quant.* 27.53). Reason is best understood as a permanent mental faculty²¹—it is the mind's sight (*mentis aspectus*), while "reasoning is reason's search," or "the actual moving of the sight of the mind over the things that are to be seen." (27.53). Reasoning is inferential, discursive thinking. Through it "we learn something from premises that are granted or are clear in themselves, either by questioning someone else or by linking up things for ourselves" (27.52).²² Reason, by

²⁰ See e.g. *De ord.* 2.11.30; *De civ. Dei* 10.2. Cf. Joseph M. Colleran, trans. and ed. *Augustine: The Greatness of the Soul and The Teacher* (New York: Newman Press, 1978), 207 n. 65. Colleran distinguishes *ratio* from *intelligentia*, which, he says, is "rather intuitive." While I think it is right to align the intellect and intellection with intuition, as we shall see presently, Augustine distinguishes *ratiocinatio* from *ratio*, equating the latter with a direct kind of seeing, which appears equivalent to intellection. Cf. *Sol.* 1.6.13.

²¹ According to Augustine, reason and intelligence "dwell in the mind by nature" (*De civ. Dei* 11.2). Cf. *Sol.* 1.6.12. See e.g. Colleran, *Greatness of the Soul*, 207 n. 65; Ludwig Schopp, "The Immortality of the Soul," in *Writings of Saint Augustine*, vol. 2, ed. Ludwig Schopp (New York: CIMA Publishing, 1947), 15 n. 3; A. N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 148-51.

²² Unless otherwise noted, translations of *De quantitate animae* are from "The Magnitude of the Soul," trans. John J. McMahon, in *Writings of Saint Augustine*, vol. 2, ed. Ludwig Schopp (New York: CIMA Publishing, 1947).

contrast, corresponds to intellection—it is the direct vision the mind enjoys of different intelligible forms.

The height of knowing for Augustine comes in moments of what are perhaps best described as intellectual intuitions or insights. Phillip Cary points out that “insight” is an apt word for describing Augustine’s conception of intellectual vision because it captures both the rational and experiential sides of its nature: the knowledge one seeks is discovered by the divine function of reason, but in an important sense this discovery is also an *experience* of the divine.²³ Additionally, Cary observes that focusing on insight helps us avoid applying rigid philosophical distinctions foreign to Augustine’s understanding:

A focus on insight can help prevent us from making inappropriate separations between Reason and Experience or drawing disciplinary boundaries between such forms of philosophical inquiry as epistemology, psychology, and ethics. For Augustine what human life is all about is achieving the blessedness of wisdom, and therefore what morality is all about is purifying the mind’s eye, healing it of its defects and equipping it with the virtues it needs to see the Truth clearly. Hence the goal of human life is defined epistemologically (wisdom and understanding), the road is defined in ethical terms (virtue and purification), and the whole process must be understood psychologically (as a turning and journey of the soul).²⁴

Perceiving the intelligible is both a philosophical and spiritual affair for Augustine; ultimately he finds little difference between the truth one searches for intellectually, and the divine nature one discovers spiritually. Interpretations vary about the exact extent to which he thinks we can apprehend the eternal during mortal life, but as we shall discuss more fully in a moment, what is clear is that he believes that access to the intelligible is

²³ Phillip Cary, *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 71.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

possible, and that it is available to all who ardently seek it.²⁵ This in fact is what Augustine has in mind when he refers to the intellect's activity, which provides partial insight into the eternal in this life, but which remains distinct from the full and complete beatific vision that will be granted to purified souls in the world to come.

While on an external level Augustine sees no inherent superiority between the active and contemplative lives, some of his characterizations of embodied intellectual vision might lead us to think that he nevertheless reserves such vision strictly for moments of leisurely rest, where, relatively unhindered by the distractions of the world, one can enjoy brief glimpses of the divine. Only by disengaging from the empirical, it would seem, can one can muster the energy and focus needed to grasp the eternal's hidden nature. We shall see, however, that such an interpretation clearly misses the mark. Not only are the active and contemplative lives for Augustine compatible and equally legitimate routes to Truth, he holds that the two actually complement each other and indicates in several places that we can progress toward a contemplative state of awareness even while engaged in the world. The third chapter will focus on his understanding of this process and will show how it fits with his general theory of knowledge. In particular, we will see that for Augustine multiple functions of the soul can operate simultaneously in a given moment of experience, and that mental energy devoted to temporal affairs does not necessarily detract from intellectual apprehension.

²⁵ This will be a topic of focus in the next section of the chapter.

In addition to its rational and experiential dimensions, Augustine's quest for truth is also a deeply ethical endeavor: perturbed and divided by misguided and inordinate desires, the mind must progressively purify and reshape itself if it is to gaze upon its source and the ground of all knowledge. Accordingly, contemplation and everyday moral behavior are deeply intertwined. Augustine's perspective stems largely from an ontology that recognizes the divine's presence not only in other human beings but in everything that exists. As we shall see, he believes that we can grow in our awareness of the divine ideas as they are instantiated in the world, and this by actively engaging empirical reality with the overarching intention of participating and unifying with the eternal structure at its basis.

Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth in Action

Gandhi was a student of both eastern and western thought and his philosophy integrates ideas from both traditions. A close analysis of his personal correspondence and the columns he wrote for *Indian Opinion*, *Young India*, and *Harijan* reveals a particular indebtedness to Plato and Socrates.²⁶ Indeed, among these sources we find several references to Plato's dialogues and discover that, early in his career, Gandhi authored an

²⁶ There are only two references to Augustine in the *Collected Works*. Interestingly, however, one of them appears in a discussion about the inner voice. Gandhi writes that following conscience may or may not lead to mystical experience, depending on the degree of one's humility before God. According to Gandhi, Augustine enjoyed mystical experiences while following his conscience because, unlike those who believe themselves "self-made men," Augustine considered himself to be utterly dependent on God. See M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (hereafter *CWMG*), 100 vols., rev. 6th ed. (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 2000-2001), 65:461, "Talk with Mary Chesley," 12-15-34.

abridged translation of the *Apology* for Gujarati readers.²⁷ Gandhi later refers to this translation as a “Gujarati rendering of Plato’s immortal work printed in order to illustrate the virtue and the true nature of passive resistance.”²⁸ In several places, he refers to Socrates as a “great *satyagrahi*” (one who clings to truth). Explaining his reasoning, Gandhi writes:

Satyagraha differs from passive resistance as the North Pole from the South. The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one’s end; whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest, and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form. . . . Socrates would not refrain from preaching what he knew to be the truth to the Athenian youth, and bravely suffered the punishment of death. He was, in this case, a *satyagrahi*.²⁹

What Gandhi admires most in Socrates is his attempt to live out his ideals no matter the cost. To know and love Truth, Gandhi believes, is to cling to it in everyday life. Philosophical study can put one on the right track, but the bulk of divine insight occurs as Truth becomes manifest in and through oneself by following it in the workaday world. Socrates is a *satyagrahi* because of his unflagging pursuit of Truth and willingness for self-

²⁷ See *CWMG* Vol. 8, “Story of a Soldier of Truth,” translated from English sources and originally released as a serial in six parts in *Indian Opinion* from 4 Apr. 1908 to 9 May 1908. Interestingly, along with some of his other publications, Gandhi’s rendering of the *Apology* was banned by the Bombay Government in March of 1910 for containing “matter declared to be seditious” (*CWMG* 11:35-36, *Indian Opinion*, 5-7-10). See also “Statement on Laws for Civil Disobedience” (*CWMG* 17:391-393, *The Bombay Chronicle*, 4-8-19) for the Satyagraha Sabha’s plans in 1919 to disseminate Gandhi’s translation of the *Apology* and other works, which were still proscribed at the time.

It is not clear how much of the Platonic corpus Gandhi read. In an appendix to *Hind Swaraj*, he includes the *Defense and Death of Socrates* in a list of books suggested to readers for further study. We can assume that he knew this work, which probably consists of at least the *Apology* and *Phaedo*, and perhaps the *Euthyphro* and *Crito* as well. In several places, Gandhi also mentions having read Plato’s *Dialogues* during his imprisonment at Yeravda Jail from 1922 to 1924. Because he calls this volume by a different name, it is quite possible that it contained more or different works than the *Defense*.

²⁸ *CWMG* 11:36, *Indian Opinion*, 7-5-10.

²⁹ *CWMG* 20:39-40, “Report of the Commissioners Appointed by the Punjab Sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress,” 3-25-20.

sacrifice. He never compromises his principles for personal gain because it would diminish the soul's integrity. Instead Socrates provides a vivid example of someone capable not only of seeing beyond immediate concerns, but of acting on this awareness. This is of particular interest to the student of nonviolence, says Gandhi, because such self-transcendence is what ultimately provides the nonviolent practitioner with the inner vitality needed to overcome brute physical force.

Like Plato and Augustine, Gandhi identifies a clear *telos* to which all his actions are directed, and from which he believes the morality of all things have their measure. This *telos* is God, or Truth (Gandhi believes these terms designate the same reality). In one of his more famous accounts of the all-encompassing nature of humankind's relationship with Truth, he writes:

Devotion to this Truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be centered in truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort and obedience to them will be instinctive. . . . Generally speaking, [observing the law of] Truth is understood merely to mean that we must speak the truth. But we in the Ashram should understand the word *satya* or Truth in a much wider sense. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action. To the man who has realized this Truth in its fullness, nothing else remains to be known, because . . . all knowledge is necessarily included in it. What is not included in it is not Truth, and so not true knowledge; and there can be no real bliss without true knowledge.³⁰

As with Plato and Augustine, Gandhi places a program of Godlikeness or divine assimilation at the center of his philosophy. The search for Truth is at once an ethical and epistemological enterprise: the *satyagrahi* comes to know Truth by joining with it, by seeking to embody it in his life. More than just telling the truth or developing an accurate

³⁰ *CWMG* 49: 383, "Letter to Narandas Gandhi," 7-22-30.

system of beliefs, one seeks Truth by allowing it to progressively emerge in thought, speech, and action. The upward path is grounded in moral experience of this reality, and the *satyagrahi*'s goal is to harmonize both with the divine's eternal nature as well as its emergence in the phenomenal world. In due course, the accompanying struggle sheds light on which parts of life are healthy, and which need adjusting so as to provide less resistance to divine expression.

Of the *Bhagavad Gita*'s three roads to liberation—action (*karma*), contemplation (*jnana*), and loving devotion (*bhakti*)—Gandhi undoubtedly emphasized the first. The popularity of his approach sparked a re-evaluation of the virtue of the *karmayogin* within India's philosophical circles. Few before Gandhi had seriously challenged the spiritual preeminence of the *sannyasi* (renunciate; religious mendicant), the vast majority of Indians adhering to the traditional view that divine knowledge was best achieved through permanent retreat from the world.³¹ Gandhi brought this assumption under scrutiny, for while being almost universally recognized by his fellow citizens as the “Mahatma” or “great soul,” his search for wisdom was thoroughly pursued through community development and political activism.

But if Gandhi was committed to the active life, he was not “a mindless activist or busybody,” as one commentator aptly points out.³² Rather he favored a program of

³¹ The contrast was perhaps brought most to a head in a failed correspondence between Gandhi and the famous religious teacher Sri Aurobindo, the latter refusing to meet with the Mahatma because it conflicted with his self-imposed silence and withdrawal from the world. See Anthony J. Parel, *Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 178-80.

³² Fred Dallmayr, “Gandhi and Islam: A Heart-and-Mind Unity?” in *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Douglas Allen (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2008), 145.

integrated awareness developed through contemplative action. We find a powerful description of the holistic nature of this process in the introduction to his autobiography:

What I want to achieve,—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years,—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *moksha*.³³ I live and move and have my being in this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed towards this same end.³⁴

Working toward progressively closer epistemic approximations to the eternal—the ongoing quest to see God face to face—stood at the core of Gandhi’s thought and actions. He viewed *moksha* both as his central moral duty and ultimate philosophical goal.³⁵ Involvement in the political struggle for India’s independence (*swaraj*) was just one component of this more overarching pursuit; *moksha* was something Gandhi would not give up “even for the sake of *swaraj*” as for him “the effort for attaining *swaraj* is a part of the effort for *moksha*.”³⁶

Gandhi contrasts absolute Truth with the ephemeral, illusory nature of the phenomenal world. Even as Truth provides genuine insight and lasting happiness, worldly objects, he believes, bring only incomplete knowledge and fleeting pleasure. His understanding of this dichotomy, however, did not lead him to disengage with the temporal sphere. If the world is constantly changing, Gandhi says, it nevertheless has

³³ *Moksha* can also mean assimilation to God, or liberation from rebirth.

³⁴ M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), xxvi.

³⁵ Gandhi stresses that all human attempts to know and embody Truth are only approximations. Like Plato and Augustine, he thinks that perfect union with the divine is rarely—if ever—achieved during embodied life.

³⁶ *CWMG* 25:37, “Letter to Mathuradas Trikumji,” 11-1-21.

“something about it which persists and is therefore to that extent real.”³⁷ Truth may transcend material reality, but it is also present to a greater or lesser degree in everything that exists. And because of this he was strongly committed to reducing what he believed to be the very real suffering that takes place in the world.³⁸

If Gandhi was a person of social and political action, he was also a proponent of traditional contemplation and meditative retreat. Indeed, he considered prison life—to which he committed 27 years—quite conducive to his philosophical/spiritual quest, not least because of the serenity and peace it afforded him in turbulent times. When out of prison, he spent most of his days in the ashrams that he and his colleagues founded; prayer and meditation were crucial parts of ashram life and centered on the desire for communion with the divine. Gandhi set aside times during the day to cultivate this inward communion, which he felt lent a calmness and order to his active life.³⁹ He also practiced a weekly day of absolute silence, believing it beneficial to quietly observe and reflect on his and others’ thoughts and behavior.⁴⁰ But in spite of all of this, he did not think it necessary for the mind and body to be inactive or disengaged from the world in order to enjoy divine insight. For those who allow the divine to express through them,

³⁷ *CWMG* 33:409-10, *Young India*, 1-21-26.

³⁸ For more detailed discussion of this point, see Dharendra Mohan Datta, *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), 26.

³⁹ *CWMG* 48:242-45, *Young India*, 1-23-30.

⁴⁰ For this point in relation to the contemplative side of Gandhi’s philosophy, see William Johnston, *The Inner Eye of Love* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 29.

he says, “to labor is to pray.”⁴¹ And this was the standard he constantly worked towards—one in which all of life becomes a prayer and public service a form of active contemplation.

As we shall see, Gandhi follows Plato and Augustine in identifying a faculty of the soul that provides access to the eternal. The inner voice, he teaches, is our window into the divine and is cultivated by actively clinging to Truth. With practice, it can become a reliable source of insight, but developing it requires a great deal of self-inspection and close assessment of one’s motivations and priorities. One must be willing to undertake a lifelong *sadhana* (spiritual effort) for the voice to express itself reliably. Increasing self-purification and selflessness are essential to the pursuit, and like the search for Truth itself, this inward faculty is best nurtured by acting in the world, not retreating from it. Ultimately the voice enables one to serve and love others with greater sensitivity and insight, and in turn these practices strengthen and sharpen one’s ability to listen to the voice.

To make our account more concrete, we will look at an example of Gandhi’s use of the inner voice during the weeks leading up to the famous Dandi Salt March of 1930. This analysis will shed light on what he takes to be some of its more subtle dimensions, while enabling us to see more clearly how listening to the inner voice works out in practice for him. We will also investigate the demanding principles Gandhi believes should be observed in order to listen to it with consistency and success. Following the

⁴¹ CWMG 35:342-43, *Young India*, 6-10-26.

inner voice, it turns out, is a complex practice: its promptings can change with the shifting dynamics of situations and one must always be on guard against baser motivations that can masquerade as the voice. Still, Gandhi advises that as with other vital human capacities, difficulty, risk, proneness to error, and the possibility of misuse should not deter one from cultivating this fundamental tool.

Among other things, we will see that while abstract reflection and empirical investigation are essential elements of the *satyagrahi's* enterprise, following the inner voice is also a largely intuitive endeavor. Emphasizing the limitations of human thought in the face of infinite Truth, Gandhi places the inner voice above discursive reasoning in his epistemological hierarchy. But this prioritization should not be taken as a form of anti-intellectualism or romantic dogmatism: Gandhi does not propose a program of blind faith in whatever feelings or sentiments happen to emerge. He thinks rather that we draw closer to Truth through a form of contemplative experimentation, combining reason and the physical senses with the inner voice so as to properly gauge the virtue of different actions. The process requires the highest degree of “accuracy, forethought, and minuteness” among those who are willing to test and sharpen it.⁴² One must, Gandhi says, adopt a scientific attitude similar to a Galileo or Newton when experimenting with the inner voice, carefully discerning false impressions from true inspirations, cross-checking one’s intuitions through exacting experiential trials, and discarding hypotheses that the experimental evidence does not bear out. The search always remains a work in

⁴² Gandhi, *Experiments with Truth*, xxvii.

progress, for while one can draw tentative conclusions, it runs counter to Gandhi's approach to claim ultimate finality about one's experiments.⁴³

A FEW PRELIMINARY CLARIFICATIONS

A few other clarifications are in order before we proceed to the main chapters of the study. At first glance, it may seem that one of our primary concerns is with the relative worth of the active *versus* contemplative life in pursuing knowledge of the eternal. Is such knowledge best realized by acting in the world or by engaging in question-and-answer, meditation, and other contemplative/theoretical endeavors? We should note, however, that for all three authors the issue is less a case of either/or, and more one of both/and. For as we shall see, they think that integrating elements of *both* the active *and* contemplative lives makes for the best approach to developing awareness of eternal reality.

Likewise, as has already been mentioned, they make no easy distinction between the moral question of what we ought to do in the world as humans, and the epistemological question of what approach or method best enables our grasp of truth. For according to these authors, our fundamental ethical aim is to discover the eternal, to come to understand this reality by harmonizing with it. The issue of whether we ought to

⁴³ Ibid.

flee from the world or remain as active participants thus ultimately folds into the question of which lifestyle best accommodates our ability to realize this goal.

Accordingly, by examining these authors' views on the action/contemplation distinction we are not only evaluating questions about how one ought to behave in the world, but also joining an ancient epistemological discussion about the bearing of certain lifestyle choices on one's ability to apprehend the divine. Is an active life as compared with, say, the life of a desert recluse or forest renunciate necessarily less conducive to cultivating divine knowledge? Or do these authors think that one can seriously pursue truth and wisdom while involved in worldly affairs as well?

One might argue that the latter capacity must be restricted to the wise if we are to avoid falling into a vicious circle. For one cannot appeal to wisdom to account for an individual's ability to grasp the eternal in the day-to-day (something all three authors do) and at the same time hold that it is through this process that one becomes wise. Wisdom, it would seem, must be achieved beforehand through other means—through contemplation—and only *after* having become wise can one perceive the intelligible in daily affairs.

As we shall see, our authors no doubt indicate that to be able to consistently grasp the divine in the day-to-day requires a great deal of moral training and discipline; only the vain and foolhardy, they emphasize, would presume possession of such a capacity prior to radical inner transformation. In an important sense, only Plato's philosopher-rulers, Augustine's wise man, and Gandhi's sage can effortlessly move through the world, joining their actions with their awareness of the eternal, perfectly

reflecting the whole in the part, allowing the infinite to manifest through the finite. And only those who are well on their way to this ideal, they believe, can be said to grasp the divine in any strong sense of the phrase.

But if our authors reserve clear, deep, and regular apprehension of the eternal in the everyday for the wise, they do not regard divine insight impossible for the unwise. To the contrary, they hold that ordinary people can and *do* apprehend the eternal in daily life, just not nearly to the same extent as wise people. For our mind/soul's connection to the eternal, they argue, is what in fact makes knowledge and morality possible. Were it not for this contact, those searching for truth would have no objective measure by which to gauge their thoughts and actions.

The Scope of Embodied Knowledge

Plato

Some further clarifications are needed. First, we should note that all three authors do not consider full-fledged knowledge and wisdom possible during one's embodied existence. According to Plato, humans are inherently limited by space and time, while Forms—the proper objects of knowledge—are bound by neither. The embodied soul is, moreover, continually faced with distractions, fear, and confusion, which prevent it from fully grasping *what is*. If pure knowledge is possible, it can only be achieved once we are

released from our mortal body; unqualified knowledge stands as an ideal the embodied philosopher moves closer toward, but never fully attains.⁴⁴

The limitations of human knowledge are also underlined by Plato's epistemological holism. In the *Republic* genuine knowledge of any aspect of reality requires knowing its relation to the larger whole of which it is a part. The Sun analogy, for example, teaches that other realities exist and are knowable because of their participation in the Good, and that understanding is achieved only by apprehending them in the light of the Good. Without knowing this first principle, the soul has no genuine knowledge of anything else. Knowing any reality requires knowing the Good, and complete knowledge of anything requires complete knowledge of the Good.⁴⁵

Some commentators have taken the *Republic's* dictum that there can be no opinions about Forms, and no knowledge of particulars, to be equivalent to the thesis that any cognition short of full-fledged knowledge is of something other than Forms. Lloyd Gerson, for example, has suggested that for Plato *all* embodied cognition is essentially representational, and that knowledge of Forms is simply not available to

⁴⁴ Cf. esp. *Phaedo* 65e-67b. On this subject, see recently Lloyd Gerson, *Knowing Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 57-59, 149-50; and Reshotko, "Socrates and Plato on Sophia," 1-20.

⁴⁵ See e.g. *Rep.* 511a-d, 531c-d, 534b, 537b-c. For different interpretations of epistemological holism in the *Republic*, see e.g. R. Hackforth, "Plato's Divided Line and Dialectic," *Classical Quarterly* 36 (1942): 7; Gail Fine, "Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* V-VII," in *Cambridge Companions to Ancient Thought, i: Epistemology*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 114; C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 79; Gerson, *Knowing Persons*, 176-80; and Terry Penner, "The Forms in the *Republic*," in *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic*, ed. Gerasimos Santas (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 246, 260 n. 26. For comparison between holism in the *Republic* and the *Theaetetus*, see Myles Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, trans. M. J. Levett (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990), 216-17. For a more general discussion, see e.g. Hugh Benson, *Socratic Wisdom: The Model of Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 249-256.

embodied persons.⁴⁶ His opposition to partial knowledge rests primarily on his interpretation of Plato's holism and understanding of the Form of the Good as containing all Forms: "If knowing a Form means really knowing the Form of the Good and therefore knowing one thing, then one cannot, it seems, know any Form without knowing the Forms comprehensively."⁴⁷ Accordingly, Gerson suggests that for Plato the highest kind of cognition one can hope for is *dianoia* (representational thinking), and that *noêsis* is impossible during this life.

This reading seems right insofar as it claims that full-blooded Platonic knowledge cannot be possessed by embodied persons. But while Plato indicates that one cannot fully come to know a Form without knowing the Good, we should not take this to mean that humans have no epistemic access to Forms during mortal life. Such a reading would imply that *noêsis* (as opposed to full-blooded *epistêmê*) always requires knowing the whole, and that cognitions short of this mark are dianoetic at best. *Noêsis*, however, does not seem to be an all-or-nothing affair. The holistic nature of Plato's epistemology no doubt renders *full-fledged knowledge* a goal that one can only seek to approximate. But this does not mean that philosophers cannot be directly acquainted with Forms, or that all embodied cognition is necessarily representational.

Noêsis is certainly the faculty by which the fully-developed *disembodied* soul ultimately grasps the whole of intelligible reality, but it also refers to whatever direct

⁴⁶ Gerson, *Knowing Persons*, 193. Gerson distinguishes his position from skepticism by recognizing that there are different levels of cognition, knowledge being the highest.

⁴⁷ Gerson, *Knowing Persons*, 177-78.

grasp of Forms—as opposed to the hypothetical, picture-like thinking of *dianoia*—that humans enjoy during this embodied existence. The alternative would mean that *noêsis* only consists in one apprehension—the comprehensive grasp of the whole of intelligible reality—and that no other kind of grasp of the Forms is possible. Such comprehensive understanding may be what Plato has in mind for full-blooded *epistêmê* (something impossible for embodied persons), but it is not required of every instance of *noêsis* (something possible for embodied persons).

And in several places Plato indicates that embodied persons *do* have epistemic access to Forms. At the end of *Republic* 4, for instance, Socrates apparently has acquaintance with certain aspects of the Forms of the virtues, for he is able to give definitions of them, though he explicitly disavows full-blooded knowledge of the Form of the Good.⁴⁸ Likewise, in Book 5 we learn that it is the very ability of philosophers to love and apprehend Forms that separates them from sight-lovers, who are unable to distinguish between beautiful objects and the beautiful itself. We are told moreover in Book 6 that philosopher-rulers “know in what ways just and fine things are good” because of their deep familiarity with the Good itself (506a-b). Indeed, it is precisely this kind of knowledge that guides their management of the city. And Plato is quite clear that this management is distinctive for its being undertaken with a non-representational

⁴⁸ So Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 271. Indeed, it seems that the distinction between *noêsis* and full-blooded *epistêmê* is what allows Socrates to consistently disavow genuine knowledge of the Good while at the same time offering accounts of the virtues.

awareness of Forms: as opposed to others who act based on images, rulers rule well because they have access to the Forms themselves.

These and other examples indicate that while humans may not be able to know the Good and other Forms in their entirety (because of their embodied status), their apprehensions of the intelligible can be substantive enough to lend their perspective a noetic—as opposed to dianoetic—character. The alternative would mean that, at least during this life, philosophers practicing dialectic are on no better epistemological footing than *Republic 6*'s mathematicians who, as we shall see, study reality through the use of images and hypotheses. Such a conclusion, however, would be in clear contradiction with Plato's distinction between the dialectical and mathematical dimensions of the philosopher's education. If dialecticians were limited to the same grasp of reality as mathematicians, there would not be any sense in which the practice of dialectic would represent a higher epistemological stage in the *Republic*'s educational program.⁴⁹ But, of course, it *does* represent a higher stage, and this because *noêsis* affords dialecticians insight into the Forms themselves.

Plato uses the term *epistêmê* multivocally. The *Republic* speaks of several types of knowledge, including the garden variety involved in temporal matters, such as house-building and health (438c),⁵⁰ and we shall see that the *Philebus* provides us with a full

⁴⁹ Likewise, if we limit knowledge of Forms to knowledge by hypothesis, if we say that during embodied life humans just recognize that there must be Forms in addition to particulars (as opposed to being able to apprehend them directly), we neglect what the *Republic* has to say about the capacity of true dialecticians to rise above the method of hypothesis. As we will discuss more in the following chapter, this capacity is in fact one of the primary features that distinguishes dialectic from the mathematical sciences.

⁵⁰ Neil Cooper, "Between Knowledge and Ignorance," *Phronesis* 31 (1986): 240.

classification of different kinds of knowledge that are to be included in the mixture of the good life. Among other things, Plato deploys the term to designate both the ever-elusive ideal to which the philosopher aspires, as well as the distinctive kind of knowledge that accompanies whatever direct, non-representational awareness we *do* have of Forms.⁵¹ In the *Republic* and *Philebus* cognitive accessibility to Forms is a foregone conclusion. Such access is what separates dialectical knowledge from other types. And as will be discussed in detail, according to the *Philebus* it has been the basic human capacity to apprehend Forms that has made all our discoveries in the arts and sciences possible.

The *Philebus*'s requirements for full-fledged dialectical knowledge are as demanding as those of the *Republic* in terms of the ideal knower's having to grasp the greater intelligible wholes to which different Forms are connected. But we shall also see that this dialogue presents dialectical knowledge in less exclusive terms, for while dialectic remains the purview of those devoted to truth, it is also portrayed as being accessible to non-philosophers. If not in the *Republic* (though the case can be argued there as well), in the *Philebus* Plato endorses a theory of knowledge that allows for the dialectical apprehension of Forms by those who have not yet fully grasped any subject in its entirety, but who seek to deepen their existential and epistemological awareness of intelligible realities by searching out and observing their unitary, plural, and unlimited nature wherever they are found.⁵²

⁵¹ Cf. *Rep.* 505a, where Socrates says our knowledge of the Form of the Good is insufficient.

⁵² These basic distinctions also cohere with other dialogues that will not be our focus, such as the *Phaedo*, where we learn that ordinary people have greater or lesser epistemic access not only to mathematical Forms such as the Odd and the Even, but also moral Forms like Love and Beauty. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates and his

Augustine

Similar to Plato's indications about full-blooded knowledge, Augustine specifies that the *visio Dei* is not to be enjoyed until the afterlife. This, however, is best understood as referring to the unfettered beatific vision he believes has been promised to the faithful in the hereafter.⁵³ Though for Augustine *perfect* vision may not be attainable during one's earthly existence, through a virtuous and devoted life he believes one can nevertheless enjoy increasingly clearer and deeper insight into the eternal.⁵⁴ Indeed for him the human soul is "naturally connected" to the divine ideas and depends on them (*De lib. arb.* 3.5). Like Plato's Forms, they are both the source of the mind's true ideas and the standard by which it measures the phenomenal world.

The divine ideas have a distinct nature in that they remain whole and immutable even while simultaneously existing in the mind of every human being. Augustine writes, for instance, of Truth itself:

We can all enjoy it equally and in common; there is ample room, and it lacks for nothing. It welcomes all of its lovers without envy; it belongs to them all but is faithful to each. . . . No one tears off a piece as his own food; you drink nothing from it that I cannot also drink. For what you gain from that communion does not become your own private property; it remains intact for me. When you breathe it in, I need not wait for you to give it back so that I can breathe it too. No part of it ever

interlocutors are able to make elementary distinctions about the nature of different Forms, and these distinctions seem manifestly graspable by the virtuous and unvirtuous, the philosophically trained and untrained, alike. The ordinary ability to distinguish Forms from particulars there described—e.g. the capacity to tell equal sticks and stones from the Equal itself—appears open to the not yet wise, and, at least at rudimentary levels, seems accessible even in everyday life.

⁵³ On this topic, see esp. *Ep.* 147.3, *Trin.* 15.25.45.

⁵⁴ For a thorough treatment of this distinction, see Dewey Hoitenga, *Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 107-113.

becomes the private property of any one person; it is *always wholly present to everyone*.”⁵⁵

While mutable objects can be “consumed” or held in private, Truth is inexhaustible and perpetually accessible. Never diminishing or receding from consciousness, it is always present to the mind, even if the mind is rarely present to it.

A dominant theme in Augustine’s works is the notion that we could not search for something unless we already knew it. Finding something requires the ability to remember it when found and we cannot be said to have found something we are looking for if we cannot recognize it (*Conf.* 10.18.27). Thus, according to him, the search for something we have lost implies knowledge of that very thing. This is manifest, he points out, in humankind’s search for happiness. For if asked, no one would deny their desire for happiness, and the fact that all people love the happy life is reflected by their universal pursuit of it, however misguided that pursuit may be. Every person, he contends, must know what the happy life is if each desires it, and this universal desire attests to the fact that all humans beings possess the memory of it.⁵⁶

According to Augustine, not only are Truth and Happiness “known to everyone” (10.20.29), for in an important sense all eternal realities are present and universally accessible.⁵⁷ Logical and mathematical intelligibles are available even to those who are

⁵⁵ *De lib. arb.* 2.14. Italics mine. Translation from Thomas Williams, *Augustine: On Free Choice of the Will* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993).

⁵⁶ *Conf.* 10.20.29; cf. *De mag.* 14.46, *De lib. arb.* 1.13-14.

⁵⁷ See e.g. *De lib. arb.* 2.8; *Conf.* 10.9.16, 10.17.26.

immoral,⁵⁸ while realities such as Love, Justice, and Wisdom can be partially grasped by those who are not yet loving, just, or wise. Through the divine ideas, for example, we know that “one ought to live justly, inferior things should be subjected to superior things; like should be compared with like, everyone should be given what is rightly his,” and a wide variety of other truths (*De lib. arb.* 2.10).

But what about day-to-day affairs? Can ordinary people apprehend the divine ideas in practical encounters, and if so, do these encounters add anything to an ordinary person’s quest for wisdom? Intellectual perception is at the basis not only of Augustine’s conception of *sapientia*, but also *scientia*, the cultivation of which takes place at the crossroads of the eternal and temporal. Though the wise and virtuous possess *scientia* in a much greater degree, Augustine explicitly indicates that the unwise and corrupt—and, of course, everyone falling in between these two camps—have it to some extent as well. *Scientia* is developed by applying whatever awareness we have of the divine ideas to the sensible world, and its possession implies at least a minimal capacity for intellection.⁵⁹

According to Augustine, our connection to the intelligible is what provides the basis for our logical, mathematical, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual judgments. Like Plato, he holds that intellection is at the foundation of our cultivation of the different arts and sciences (an enterprise contributed to by the wise and unwise alike), and *scientia* is reflected in our use of the divine standards in daily encounters with other people, music,

⁵⁸ See e.g. *Retr.* 1.4.2.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Conf.* 10.9.16, 10.10.17, 10.17.26; *De lib. arb.* 2.8, 3.5.

literature, architecture, etc. This conscious and unconscious awareness of the divine ideas enables us, among other things, to build monuments and other works of art, to appreciate the beauty and order of nature, and to love and be sensitive toward others.

In turn, as we shall see, Augustine believes that daily experiences can enrich our understanding of the divine ideas; for he holds that we come to know the ideas by embracing and becoming more like them in every aspect of life. Wisdom consists in taking the right path toward discerning the Good and realizing Happiness. The closer one gets to these objectives, the wiser he is (2.9). It is a path of approximation through active participation in the ideas, one that we never complete. In contrast to “each human being having his own personal wisdom,” there is, Augustine says, “one single wisdom that is universally present to everyone, so that the more one partakes of this wisdom, the wiser one is” (2.9). What counts as wisdom “in speech or action” is for something to share in the Form of Wisdom; it consists not only in discerning our highest good (God), but also in acquiring it. That is to say, for Augustine it is not enough to theoretically identify what the good is, to substantively know it one must also realize it in one’s life.

On his view, we engage in intelligent activity—i.e. activity where the intellect is active—not only in theoretical/contemplative endeavors, but also in everyday affairs. Even as he holds that we can only know material objects through the physical senses, he believes that in our practical experiences we can exercise our perception of intelligible reality and strengthen it. Augustine stresses that we are multi-dimensional beings and that in our everyday lives we do not cease to use intellect; different life situations call us to act upon our awareness of Justice, Beauty, Love, and other eternal realities, adding a depth

to our pursuit of the intelligible that cannot be realized through theoretical and contemplative practices alone. When approached from the right perspective, moreover, interaction with phenomenal reality can elevate our thoughts toward the divine. For those seeking wisdom, worldly objects act as signs that point the mind to its eternal source.

The primary goal of the third chapter is not merely to show that Augustine believes it possible to cognitively access the divine ideas in everyday life. As we have just seen, even a cursory reading of his works reveals that he grants a minimal level of everyday apprehension even to those with the dimmest minds. The main issue is rather whether the active life serves as a viable vehicle for those set on cultivating divine wisdom (*sapientia*), which involves developing more *substantial* knowledge of the eternal. If in some places Augustine describes intellectual vision as a faculty enjoyed by all, in others he indicates that only a small fraction of people exercise it with any depth. The third chapter provides an epistemological account of what allows Augustine's seeker to become and remain wise (as opposed to merely knowledgeable), even if he chooses to partly pursue an active life over an extreme life of contemplation. The account is based largely on his view that we can grow in our awareness of the eternal by engaging the phenomenal world in such a way as to increasingly imitate and participate in the divine ideas (e.g. seeking to become more loving so as to increasingly grasp and participate in the Form of Love).

I show, moreover, how for Augustine the intellect can be at work even when the divine ideas are not at the forefront of conscious awareness. Augustine believes that the

mind (especially the mind of a person well on his way to wisdom) can do several things at once—the fact that someone is involved in a practical activity at a given moment (as opposed to a contemplative one), does not necessarily place him within poor epistemic proximity to the Forms. Because one mental function does not necessarily lose energy when another one gains, Augustine believes that we can devote our attention to temporal affairs without necessarily compromising our capacity for intellectual apprehension.

The aspiring sage's intellectual vision far exceeds the minimal level required for grasping basic logical, mathematical, and moral truths. Having undergone a great deal of mental transformation, he begins to experience phenomenal reality through the lens of the eternal. He can deepen and strengthen this knowledge, moreover, both through traditional contemplative practices and by attentive interaction with the everyday world. The radical restructuring of his mind puts him in close proximity to the divine ideas even when he is not consciously thinking about them. The divine ideas progressively form the backdrop of his mental states, and he is not forced to keep them at the center of his thoughts in order to move about the world with wisdom and grace.

Gandhi

Gandhi considers intuition or the “inner voice” the supreme faculty by which we come into contact with Truth and develop a self-transcendent outlook. Like Augustine, he distinguishes intuitive encounters from the full realization of God—the complete merging of the seeker with the divine. And like Augustine he adopts Pauline terminology in this regard, insisting that the “face-to-face” vision of God is not possible during this

earthly life, pointing to the limitations of spatiotemporal existence to explain why no incarnate soul perceives absolute Truth in its entirety.⁶⁰

While emphasizing that he is far from realizing Truth, Gandhi tells us that the individual who does so is “freed from sin forever. He has no desire to be fulfilled. Not even in his thoughts will he suffer from faults, imperfections, or impurities. Whatever he does will be perfect because he does nothing himself, but the God within him does everything. He is completely merged in Him.”⁶¹ For Gandhi the merging of the self with “God within” involves surrender to something infinitely greater. It progressively manifests in one’s actions as one becomes a servant to Truth and a purer conduit of its workings.

But full merging and realization remains an ideal. “The quest is more than the attainment,” Gandhi says, “an ideal ceases to be an ideal if it is realized. One can contemplate it, come ever close to it, but never reach it.”⁶² Moreover, he does not conceive of the pursuit of Truth as taking place in discrete stages, but presents instead a model of continual development, one where the soul progressively removes its layers of ignorance and transforms through its enduring connection with the eternal. The intuitive faculty is there from the start and slowly grows over the course of the lives of those who cling to Truth. Human knowledge, in turn, falls along different points on a continuum,

⁶⁰ *CWVG* 95:201, “Letter to Surendra,” 6-4-47.

⁶¹ *CWVG* 61:219, *Harijan*, 7-8-33.

⁶² *CWVG* 95:200, “Letter to Surendra,” 6-4-47.

with full-fledged knowledge representing an ideal pole that can be better or more poorly approximated, but never fully attained.

Gandhi emphasizes that we should attempt to integrate whatever small grasp we do have of the eternal into our daily life right from the start. For the inner voice is always present, he insists, though often stifled by passions and fears that constantly vie for our attention. Indeed, the *atman* within can offer glimmers of insight even to the most hardened of individuals. Were it not for this fundamental connection, he argues, humans would never be able to get the pursuit of Truth off the ground.

As we shall see, however, Gandhi stresses that one must proceed with a great deal of caution even after having become well-acquainted with the inner voice. For it only becomes a consistent and reliable source of insight to those who genuinely devote themselves to humble, selfless service. And Gandhi is certainly the most vocal of our authors about the insufficiency of theory and contemplation by themselves. The Gandhian search for Truth is necessarily a social endeavor. “The only way to find God,” he writes, “is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all . . . I am part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. . . . If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity.”⁶³ This topic will be taken up in detail in the fourth chapter.

⁶³ *CW*MG 69:320-21, *Harjan*, 8-29-36.

METHODOLOGY

Before we proceed to the main chapters of the study, a few words about methodology are in order. First, it should be noted that my aim is not to offer a comprehensive analysis of the ethics or epistemologies of Plato, Augustine, or Gandhi, but rather to highlight certain passages—while admittedly tabling others—that help us to understand their views on the relationship between action, contemplation, and intuitive insight. My treatment of Plato focuses on Books 4-7 of the *Republic* and the *Philebus*.⁶⁴ I analyze these dialogues separately before proceeding to the general model of “active *noêsis*” I think can be drawn from them,⁶⁵ and I also examine their relevance to Plato’s aforementioned conception of “Godlikeness” or “assimilation to the divine.” Discussion of this principle, which, after a long period of neglect, was revived in the late 1990s as a guiding feature of Plato’s ethical theory, has centered largely on issues concerning its practicality and the degree to which it implies otherworldliness and escapism. My focus with Godlikeness, however, will for the most part be on its relationship to Plato’s understanding of dialectic. In this regard, I examine how ethical behavior impacts an individual’s level of receptivity to Forms, and I show ways in which these dialogues

⁶⁴ Stylometric studies have led to somewhat of a general consensus that, along with the *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*, the *Philebus* was one of Plato’s last dialogues (see e.g. John Cooper, ed., *Complete Works of Plato* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997], xiii-xiv). With few exceptions, however, there is little hard evidence from which to base a chronology. Nevertheless, in addition to assigning the *Philebus* a late position, it also seems reasonable to place the *Republic* in a non-chronological grouping of “middle” dialogues that share a number of thematic and stylistic affinities, and which can be generally distinguished from the larger set of works known as “Socratic” dialogues.

⁶⁵ I think a strong case can be made for a coherent reading of the *Republic* and *Philebus*, at least with regards to this study’s main themes: *noêsis*, Godlikeness, and dialectic. I take up this topic in the second chapter.

suggest that we must work to imitate Forms if we hope to come into closer epistemic contact with them.

Augustine's views on intellection and participation in Forms remain fairly stable over the course of his career and scholars raise few concerns in this regard. I examine these concepts primarily in *De animae quantitate* (388), *De magistro* (389), *Confessions* (397/401), *De Genesi ad litteram* (401/415), and Books 8-15 of the *De Trinitate* (399-422/426). Particular focus is given to the *Confessions* and especially the *De Trinitate*, for here we find the most developed and comprehensive account of Augustine's theory of knowledge. Books 8-15 provide us with a more detailed description of the mind and its relation to Forms than any other of Augustine's texts.

Gandhi was not a systematic writer and the bulk of his work consists of letters and articles written for various periodicals. For both of these reasons, I have chosen to base my research on the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* as a whole, as opposed to any particular subset of the corpus. I try, however, to note relevant places where his views may have changed over time.

PLATO'S PRACTICAL DIALECTIC

It is not uncommon for readers of Plato to think that he views directed question-and-answer as the only appropriate method for pursuing truth and genuine knowledge.¹ Donald Davidson refers to Plato's belief in "the good Socratic intuition" that "it is only in the context of frank discussion, communication, and mutual exchange that trustworthy truths emerge."² Christopher Gill remarks that Plato, throughout his compositional career, seems to retain the belief that "sustained participation in systematic question and answer is the only way to reach—or to move towards—knowledge of the deepest and most fundamental truths."³ There are, of course, obvious reasons for

¹ For this claim with respect to Plato's writing career as a whole, see e.g. Christopher Gill, "Dogmatic Dialogue in *Phaedrus* 276-7?" in *Understanding the Phaedrus, Proceedings of the II Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Livio Rossetti (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1992), 156-72; Christopher Rowe, "The Place of the *Republic* in Plato's Political Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35-37; Richard Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1941), 85-88, 92. For this claim with respect to the *Republic*, see Gail Fine, "Knowledge and Belief," 112; Robin Waterfield, *Plato: Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 422-23; and in relation to the Socratic dialogues, see Gregory Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983): 28, and "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 35 (1985): 18, 20.

² Donald Davidson, "Plato's Philosopher," *Apeiron* 26 (1993): 194. More specifically, Davidson argues that the *Philebus* demonstrates Plato's renewed confidence in the Socratic *elenchus*.

³ Gill, "Dogmatic Dialogue," 157.

thinking that question-and-answer enjoys exclusive status in this regard. To approach life's questions with sufficient depth and clarity, the dialogues teach, we must be careful in our analyses and pay close attention to the associations and distinctions we make. The give-and-take of thoughtful conversation allows us to achieve these goals. We find it at the core of Plato's theory of philosophical method, and practiced by most of his leading characters. Moreover, the different forms of question-and-answer—the *elenchus*, hypothesis, collection and division—seem to provide a comprehensive picture of Plato's conception of dialectic, and he quite explicitly presents dialectic as the only method sufficient for yielding the kind of high-powered knowledge associated with Forms.

Drawing primarily from the *Republic* and *Philebus*, however, in this chapter I argue that, contrary to this popular view, (1) Plato indicates that we can also pursue knowledge of the eternal through attentive interaction with the everyday world, and (2) in several places he makes clear that dialectic is not limited to the question-and-answer method. As we shall see, both of these dialogues place a great deal of emphasis on the importance of practical experience in arriving at a substantive understanding of Forms and their participants. They portray dialectic as an enterprise that is at once intellectual and ethical. The *Republic* closely links dialectic to participation in Forms and the development of a particular kind of practical expertise guided by *noêsis*. The *Philebus* identifies practical experience as an essential element of collection and division, and portrays dialectic more generally as the process by which we seek to coordinate all of our actions in pursuit of truth.

PLATO'S DIALECTIC

Systematic question-and-answer undoubtedly constitutes the dominant form of dialectic in the dialogues. Plato's various accounts of the practice, as well as the modes of discourse his speakers employ, demonstrate its prominence. In its common usage, the verb *dialegesthai* means "to converse" or "discuss"—literally "to speak across"—and quite often Plato has this ordinary meaning in mind. When speaking more technically, he uses *dialegesthai*, *dialektikê*, and their cognates to refer to philosophical conversation or exchange—as opposed to, say, eristic or rhetoric. *Dialegesthai* is typified by Socratic question-and-answer, a method of discourse that pursues truth through the systematic search for various definitions, distinctions, and rules.

The shape of dialectic varies significantly between dialogues. We search for truth with the Socratic *elenchus* by arriving at premises that our interlocutors will accept, but that will also cause them to deny their original theses. The practice is epistemologically therapeutic: it encourages participants to improve and strengthen their system of beliefs by acknowledging and removing inconsistencies. By identifying false beliefs, the *elenchus* can sometimes lead to positive insights.⁴ Being primarily a negative practice, however, it contrasts with the distinctively constructive nature of the method of hypothesis—a form of dialectic that takes center stage in dialogues such as the *Meno* and *Phaedo*. The hypothetical method essentially aims to arrive at tentative conclusions based on premises

⁴ In the *Gorgias*, for instance, Polus arrives to the positive conclusion that "the good is different from the pleasant" by realizing that the logical contradictory of this proposition is false (495a-500e). See Vlastos ("The Socratic Elenchus," 44-57) for this point and for an explanation why Socrates finds it justifiable to proceed from the demonstration of a given thesis' inconsistency with a set of agreed upon, but unproven, premises to the otherwise logically unwarranted conclusion that the thesis is false.

that are also tentatively held.⁵ We posit a thesis (*hypothesis*), evaluate its consequences, and determine to the best of our ability whether it is true, either providing an account of it or discarding it.⁶

Other forms of dialectic appear elsewhere in the corpus. In the middle books of the *Republic*, Socrates describes a high-powered procedure by which, after having successfully completed rigorous physical and mental training (among other prerequisites), philosophers gain direct insight into the nature of reality. The *Republic* relegates the method of hypothesis—or at least a certain version of it—to *dianoia* and pure mathematics, while specifically identifying dialectic with the apprehension of the Good and other Forms. We find still other variations of dialectic in the methods of collection and division outlined in the *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*. Here dialectic consists, among other things, in investigating various Forms by examining the genera and species into which they are distributed. Dialectic can also take on the form of internal question-and-answer (q & a within one's own mind) using any of the abovementioned methodologies, and perhaps others as well.⁷

⁵ Nicholas P. White, *Plato on Knowledge and Reality* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 7-78. See also Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 118-50.

⁶ See e.g. Charles Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 292-328, for reasons why the hypothetical method of the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Parmenides*—while containing important differences—can be viewed as different facets of a single general theory. See also Hugh Benson, “Plato’s Method of Dialectic,” in *A Companion to Plato*, ed. Hugh Benson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 85-100 for discussion of the parallels between the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic* in this regard.

⁷ David Sedley (*Plato's Cratylus* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 2; and *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 129-31) argues that, along with inter-personal discussion, internal question-and-answer is an equally, if not more fundamental, mode of dialectic in Plato. On this point, see also H. F. Cherniss, “Some War-Time Publications Concerning Plato,” in *Harold Cherniss: Selected Papers*, ed. L. Taran (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 168; Robinson, *Plato's Early Dialectic*, 87; and

Noting the different shapes that dialectic takes over the course of the dialogues, Richard Robinson famously said that Plato tends to use the term to refer to “the ideal method, *whatever that may be*.”⁸ But while fluid in his conception of dialectic’s form, Plato remains quite particular about its purpose. For despite formal differences, each of its incarnations shares the fundamental aim of developing a better understanding of objective reality. As opposed to sciences that deal with “what comes to be and perishes,” dialectic is “concerned with what is free of that, the eternal and self-same” (*Phlb.* 61e).⁹ It is the only form of inquiry that enables one to grasp the being or essence (*ousia*) of things (*Rep.* 533b, 534a-b). Whether by ferreting out contradictory views about piety, testing and verifying the attributes of virtue, or identifying the nature and number of different kinds of pleasure, dialecticians search for what these realities are in themselves. If there exist forms of dialectic beyond the standard variations of question-and-answer, we should expect to find intelligible truths as their principal concern as well.

Waterfield, *Plato: Republic*, 422-23). Recognizing the internal dimension of dialectic already goes a long way in broadening its scope. As we shall see, however, there are still other elements that deserve our attention.

⁸ Robinson, *Plato’s Earlier Dialectic*, 74. Robinson, however, limits Platonic dialectic to various forms of philosophical discourse. Indeed, he writes: “From the *Meno* to the *Philebus* Plato is convinced of these two propositions: (1) that dialectic is the supreme method of discovery as well as of teaching, and (2) that dialectic has its being only in question-and-answer” (85).

⁹ Cf. *Phil.* 58a.

PRACTICAL DIALECTIC IN THE *REPUBLIC*

Dialectic and *Noêsis*

In Book 5 of the *Republic*, Plato constructs his well-known comparison between philosophers and “lovers of sights and sounds.” Identified by their devotion to Forms (*eidê, ideai*), philosophers are familiar with the Just, the Good, the Beautiful, and other eternal realities. Sight-lovers, by contrast, perceive the colors, shapes, and sounds of the sensible world, but are unable to grasp Forms; they live in a dream-like state, failing to realize that the physical objects they perceive are but images of intelligible reality (476a-d). True philosophers, we are told, have knowledge (*epistêmê, gnôsis*), while sight-lovers possess only opinion (*doxa*) (476d). *Doxa* and *epistêmê* are identified with two different cognitive faculties (*dynameis*) and two different sets of corresponding objects. *Epistêmê* is concerned with Forms, *doxa* with sensible particulars. *Epistêmê*'s objects are the same in every respect, *doxa*'s are subject to flux. *Epistêmê* is infallible; it apprehends “being” or “what is” (*ousia*) and knows things as they are. *Doxa* is fallible and cognizes objects that are intermediate between “what is” and “what is not” (477d-478e).

Plato first articulates the particular relationship between *epistêmê* and dialectic in the Line analogy of Book 6. There Socrates describes a line divided into two unequal segments, one representing the visible realm, the other representing the intelligible. He then divides these portions into two subsections each, according to the same ratio. The four subsections represent four different cognitive states and their respective objects. At the lowest level we locate *eikasia*, which perceives shadows and reflections, and just

above *pistis*, which grasps the corresponding physical objects of these images. The cognitive states of the upper¹⁰ two subsections—*dianoia* and *noêsis*—are more difficult to decipher and deserve special attention.

Socrates explains the division of the intelligible (*noêton*) through a comparison between mathematics and dialectic. Mathematicians fail to adequately grasp reality for two reasons: first, they employ visible models in their studies, such as diagrams of the square and diagonal; second, they proceed to conclusions from starting points (*archai*) they take for granted. Though concerned with intelligible realities, mathematicians are linked to *dianoia* because they take their hypotheses as first principles, and are unable to grasp the true nature of the objects they study (511c-d).

By contrast, Plato identifies dialectic with genuine knowledge and *noêsis*, the mode of cognition through which Forms are apprehended.¹¹ Indeed, he uses all three terms—*epistêmê*, *noêsis*, and *dialegethai*—to designate the top subsection of the Line. Dialectic consists both in the soul’s upward ascent to the Form of the Good, as well as its subsequent grasp of other realities from this newly-acquired perspective (510b-511e).

Dialecticians neither use physical images in their investigations, nor leave their hypotheses unquestioned. Instead, they strive toward an “unhypothetical first principle

¹⁰ Some scholars have suggested that the Line should be oriented horizontally. At 511a, however, Plato situates the objects of *pistis* below those of *dianoia*, and at 511d he indicates that *noêsis* corresponds to the highest subsection. This clearly implies a vertical orientation. Plato also intends the shortest division at the bottom of the Line, for he makes clear that the Line represents the varying degrees to which the four different mental states share in clarity and their corresponding objects share in truth (511d-e). See Nicholas D. Smith, “Plato’s Divided Line,” *Ancient Philosophy* 16 (1996): 25-46.

¹¹ *Noêsis* has been variously translated. Though somewhat antiquated, “intellection” probably comes closest to its meaning. Other common renderings include “understanding,” “intuition,” “intelligence,” and “knowledge.”

of everything,” using Forms as stepping stones along the way. Unlike mathematicians, they recognize that the intelligible footholds they use are but tentative hypotheses until the Good itself is reached (511b).

Because the *Republic* ties dialectic closely to genuine knowledge and *noēsis*, interpreters rightly look to the dialogue’s description of the method for insight into Plato’s epistemology. In an important section of Book 7, Socrates says that dialectical knowledge is reflected in the ability to give and receive a *logos*, and that true dialecticians are able to “give an account of the being of each thing” (531e, 534b). If a person is incapable of explaining something, “either to himself or to another,” he does not possess understanding (*nous*). By contrast, someone with adequate knowledge of the Good (and, we may presume, other eternal realities) will be able to explain why it differs from everything else, and defend his view from every possible attack (534b-c). Dialectic is again set in contrast to the mathematical sciences, which, while having “some grasp of reality,” are still “only dreaming about it” because they take their hypotheses for granted and cannot give an account of them (533b-c). These remarks reiterate what has already been said in the Line analogy: mathematicians fall short of the truth because they hypothesize “the odd and the even, the various figures, the three kinds of angles, and other things akin to these. . . . and don’t think it necessary to give any account of them, either to themselves or to others, as if they were clear to everyone” (510c).¹² Similar principles are found in other dialogues, where the key distinction between *epistēmē* and

¹² Unless otherwise noted, translations of the *Republic* follow, with slight modifications, G. M. A. Grube, *Plato: Republic*, revised by C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992).

doxa is the ability to argue successfully for one's position, or to tie one's true beliefs down with an *aitias logismos*.¹³

Is Dialectic the Search for Propositional Knowledge?

If we are to make the case that dialectic requires engagement with the practical domain, we must be able to account for the *Republic's* abovementioned identification of the possession of sufficient *logoi* as the principal measure of the true dialectician. Some commentators have considered Plato's focus on *logoi* as evidence that he views dialectical knowledge primarily as justified true belief. On this interpretation, knowledge is propositional: to know something is to believe true propositions about it, and to be able to successfully defend one's view.¹⁴ If this is how Plato understands knowledge, an overemphasis on question-and-answer no doubt follows in short order. If dialectic is mainly concerned with the truth of propositions, as opposed to the knowledge of *things*,

¹³ Cf. *Meno* 97a-98c; *Prot.* 336c, *Phdo.* 76b, 78c-d, *Tht.* 202c-d, *Pol.* 286a. Of course, it is disputable whether Plato actually endorses this view in each of these dialogues.

¹⁴ See e.g. Gail Fine, *Plato on Knowledge and Forms: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5-15; "Knowledge and Belief," 85-115. For contrasting interpretations that also take *epistémé* to be propositional, see e.g. Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 192-93, 200; and Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 163-65. Fine views the distinction in Book 5 between knowledge being set over what is (*esti*), and belief being set over what is and is not, as a distinction in their propositional content, as opposed to their objects. She proposes a veridical reading of *esti* for most of the book's final argument, as opposed to an existential or predicative interpretation. On this view, the thesis that "knowledge is set over what is" should be understood not as "knowledge is set over what exists," or "what is F (where F designates a given property)," but rather "what is true." Knowledge and belief do not have different objects but only different propositional contents—knowledge is concerned with true propositions, belief with both true and false propositions (87-91). Fine points out that her interpretation does not commit her to the view that all knowledge is propositional; rather, she adopts the considered position that one can only know something if one knows a proposition that is true of it. See "Knowledge and True Belief in the *Meno*" *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 27 (2004): 49, n. 23. But her analysis does commit her to the view that knowledge consists primarily in propositions and that Plato is primarily interested in propositional knowledge.

then question-and-answer will emerge as the dominant approach for pursuing knowledge.¹⁵ For question-and-answer is, no doubt, the method par excellence by which according to Plato we examine, sharpen, and justify the beliefs that we hold to be true.¹⁶

But as several critics have pointed out, in the *Republic* and elsewhere dialectic is mainly concerned with the knowledge of *things* as opposed to the truth of propositions. In the final argument of Book 5—to take a prominent example—the disagreement between sight-lovers and philosophers concerns not the knowledge of propositions but whether there exists a Form of Beauty distinct from the many beautiful things. Talk of knowledge is about knowledge of Forms, a strong indication that the argument about the existence of Beauty should be read as an argument about what exists, not about what propositions are true. The sight-lovers show no interest in propositions. They do, however, think there are things that can be “known,” and, like philosophers, they believe that to know is to know some *object*—philosophers claim to know the Beautiful itself, sight-lovers beautiful things.¹⁷

¹⁵ This will become more clear as we proceed, for much of our argument for widening the scope of dialectic hinges on the notion that the practice also consists, among other things, in the imitation and participation in *objects*—in Forms.

¹⁶ This is not to say that those who think that knowledge is propositional deny the role of observation and experience in refining one’s beliefs about the world. Rather, the point is that a focus on propositions tends to lead to an interpretation of dialectic that leans more heavily on question-and-answer—a method by which we critique and defend different sets of propositions.

¹⁷ See Michael Stokes, “Plato and the Sightlovers of the *Republic*” *Apeiron* 25 (1992): 103-32, esp. 108-111, 129-30; Francisco Gonzalez, “Propositions or Objects?: A Critique of Gail Fine on Knowledge and Belief in *Republic V*” *Phronesis* 41 (1996): 245-75, esp. 263; Julius Moravcsik, *Plato and Platonism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 15-45. See also Gonzalez, “Propositions or Objects,” for a detailed examination of Fine’s position and a compatibilist existential/predicative reading of Book 5.

Likewise, as has already been mentioned, in Book 7 Plato tells us that the true dialectician “attempts to grasp the being of each and every *thing*” (533b), and is able to give a *logos* of each one (534b). Among other ideas, he likely has in mind the familiar notion that someone with genuine knowledge will be able to accurately answer “What is X?” questions. Dialecticians are capable of giving sufficient accounts of what Justice, Beauty, Courage, and other eternal realities actually *are*. One cannot, however, ask “What is X?” questions of propositions; of propositions the appropriate questions are rather “Is X true?” or “Why is X true?” “What is X?” can only be appropriately asked of objects.¹⁸ And objects are clearly the focus of Plato’s account of dialectical knowledge in the Sun, Line, and Cave analogies: as the sun makes physical objects perceptible to the faculty of vision, so the Good makes intelligible objects perceptible to *noēsis*; the four subsections of the Line each have their corresponding objects; and the prisoners of the Cave progress from one type of object to another while making their upward ascent. The ubiquitous parallels between *epistēmē* and visual perception also confirm an “objects analysis” of Plato’s theory of knowledge. Intelligible objects are things we perceive with the mind’s eye—*noēsis* takes place through the soul’s epistemic contact with Forms.¹⁹

¹⁸ R. M. Hare, “Plato and the Mathematicians,” in *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, ed. Renford Bambrough (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 22-23. Hare’s treatment of the subject, however, comes within the context of defending the claim that the mathematicians’ hypotheses are *not* propositions, while I suggest that these hypotheses often times are propositions, though the objects they reflect are not.

¹⁹ As we discussed briefly in the last chapter, according to the *Republic*, full-blooded knowledge of any aspect of reality requires knowing its relation to the larger whole of which it is part, and Plato seems to consider such knowledge impossible during one’s embodied existence. This should not be taken to mean, however, that any instance of *noēsis*—that is to say, any direct, non-representational apprehension of a Form—requires complete knowledge of the whole of reality. Plato uses the term *epistēmē* multivocally, and seems to indicate that one can apprehend forms without knowing them or the whole of existence in their entirety.

Platonic methodology relies heavily, of course, on inquiry into propositions. As just mentioned, one of the ways that dialectical mastery reveals itself is through the ability to give and receive an account, which involves defending different propositions and explaining why they are true. Dialecticians depend on propositions to represent reality; propositions are the central constituents of philosophical *logoi*. Moreover, if propositional thought did not regularly accompany *noêsis*, among a host of other problems, there would be little to distinguish those with insight from those lacking it. The dialogues teach us that philosophical conversation—when practiced properly and in a suitable environment—provides ideal conditions for engendering *noêsis* and thoroughgoing *logoi*. Nevertheless, on Plato’s view, genuine knowledge is not of propositions, but of the eternal realities they represent. As the famous adage has it, *the word is not the thing*. *Epistêmê* can only be of *what is*—of Forms—and propositions are of a different ontological order.²⁰

The *Republic*’s Ultimate Subordination of *Logoi*

There are other important reasons for thinking that question-and-answer is not the end-all, be-all of philosophical inquiry for Plato,²¹ and chief among these is the *Republic*’s ultimate subordination of *logoi*. At 511d-e, Socrates explicitly coordinates four

²⁰ Gerson (*Knowing Persons*, 158-63) is aware of this distinction. Contrast Robinson, *Plato’s Earlier Dialectic*, 165. Cf. also Moravcsik, *Plato and Platonism*, 15-45, for discussion of other elements of Plato’s conception of understanding involving more than propositional knowledge.

²¹ Here again it is worth stressing that I do not deny that for Plato question-and-answer can lead to *noêsis*. Indeed, it is quite clear that he regards it as one of the primary methods for pursuing knowledge of Forms. Instead, my aim is to show that dialectic is not *limited* to the different types of question-and-answer.

distinct sets of objects with the Line's four mental states. Each state, he informs us, shares in clarity to the extent that its objects share in truth. *Noêsis* is superior to *dianoia* because its corresponding objects are Forms. The objects of *dianoia*, by contrast, are of a lower ontological order and have less of a share in truth. David Gallop has argued, I think correctly, that the distinctive objects of *dianoia* are those of *logoi*, where *logoi* can be understood as the non-physical images through which we initially perceive mathematical and moral truths. As Socrates' account of the Kallipolis provides a verbal image of moral and political Forms, so the *logoi* of mathematicians serve as image-like representations of mathematical Forms.²² We find their analogues in the reflections of objects that prisoners first see (in water, etc.) once outside the Cave. Mathematicians operate at the level of *dianoia* because they fail to penetrate the depth of their subject matter. The mathematical sciences do not, on this interpretation, exhaust the province *dianoia*, but are chosen by Plato to designate the third subsection because, among other things, their practitioners provide excellent examples of representational thinking—a cognitive state that is distinct from the direct apprehension of reality characteristic of *noêsis*.²³ Gallop rightly notes that we find parallels to this notion in both the *Phaedo* and *Cratylus*. In the former, Socrates introduces the method of hypothesis as an alternative to empirical investigation—it is, as we have said, one of the forms of the question-and-answer method. Through it, we approach Forms using *logoi*, which Socrates likens to observing

²² David Gallop, "Image and Reality in Plato's *Republic*," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 47 (1965): 122.

²³ Ibid. Cf. Hackforth, "Plato's Divided Line," 2-3; and Fine, "Knowledge and Belief," 105-06. Contrast Annas, *Republic*, 250, who restricts *dianoia* to mathematical thought.

phenomena through reflections in water. He describes the hypothetical method as a “second-best” (*deuteros plous*), one which makes less use of images than empirical studies, but which relies on images nonetheless (99d-100a). Similarly, the *Cratylus* compares well-given names (*onomata*) with images, and indicates that it is better to learn the natures of things through the things themselves than through their likenesses (439a-b). The use of word-pictures is again treated only as a second-best.²⁴

As we have briefly seen, *dianoia* attempts to investigate reality by using hypotheses it takes for granted, and never proceeds to a first principle because of its inability to move beyond these hypotheses (511a). As a result, its view remains obscured. It can arrive at different sets of coherent concepts, but cannot transform these concepts into knowledge because “it begins with something unknown and puts together the conclusion and steps in between from what is unknown” (533c). *Dianoia* trades in verbal and mental *logoi*; its objects are propositions and other incorporeal representations of Forms. Among these images are the dialectician’s *logoi*, which, while being truer and clearer, are still representational. They are the *products* of *noēsis*, not its objects. Accordingly, Socrates expressly says that his *logos* of dialectic is itself only an image, and that Glaucon would not be able to follow him any further in an account of dialectic, since to do so would mean no longer seeing an image of what he is talking about but the truth itself (533a).

By this Socrates does not mean that it is impossible for humans to grasp the truth about dialectic. To the contrary, his statement about Glaucon’s inability to follow can be

²⁴ Ibid. 122-23.

taken as a hint that Socrates has himself gone further than verbal *logoi* in this regard. Nor can Socrates mean that dialectic never results in *noêsis*, for as just mentioned, in several places he closely identifies the two, using both the terms *noêsis* and *dialegesthai* to designate the top subsection of the Line, and portraying question-and-answer as a launching pad by which one arrives at *noêsis*. Indeed, if anything is clear about dialectic's function in the *Republic's* educational program, it is that it brings student-philosophers to eventually move beyond images so that they may grasp the Forms themselves. Philosophical conversation is one of the best means for tracking truth in its various forms.

Socrates' point, rather, is that verbal *logoi* can only go so far in bringing the interlocutor to an understanding of different Forms. Truth is not ultimately to be found in the accounts themselves, but in the realities they represent. In turn, question-and-answer and other forms of philosophical discussion may or may not lead to *noêsis*—everything depends on one's ability to move from verbal *logoi* (and other images of the Forms) to the Forms themselves. These crucial distinctions should point us in the right direction as we examine the place of practical experience in the cultivation of dialectical knowledge.

Dialectic in the World

In Book 6, Socrates emphasizes that hearing other people's opinions about the Forms cannot bring about genuine understanding. Without direct acquaintance with the Just, the Beautiful, and the Good, beliefs remain at best true opinions, with those

possessing them like “blind people who happen to be traveling the right road” (506b-c). The point recalls Socrates’ observation in the *Meno* that we do not *know* the road to Larissa until we have traveled it ourselves (97a-b). Genuine understanding requires more than a representational grasp of reality—true dialecticians must have personal experience of the intelligible; they must seek to “grasp the being of each and every thing” for themselves (532a, 533b). In Book 9, we are told that proper judgment requires having not only reason (*logos*) and intelligence (*phronêsis*), but also experience (*empeiria*) (582a). Because philosophers have the widest range of experience, they are the most competent judges of which of the three competing lifestyles—loving wisdom, honor, or material gain—is the best and most pleasant (582a-d). Similarly, Book 10 specifies that we only come to know the essence of things—whether manufactured goods, living creatures, or actions—by coming to know the “use for which each is made or naturally adapted” (601d). In contrast to makers or imitators, whose awareness is, at best, restricted to right opinion, only those who engage in the actual use of different things possess knowledge of them (601e-602a).

With these points in mind, we should not be surprised to find that the student-philosophers’ initial ascent from the Cave does not mark the completion of their education.²⁵ The largest set of years of their training—from age thirty-five to fifty—are devoted to political engagement, and this long phase of preparation *follows* the period of

²⁵ 539e makes clear that student-philosophers have journeyed outside the Cave, for it is said that they must return to it after their five years of philosophical study. However, as will be discussed shortly, 540a also specifies that they have not yet seen the Good upon completion of this phase.

theoretical study. Significantly, it is only after this phase that they find themselves in a position to behold the Good itself (540a). In other words, and to emphasize the point, students do not engage in the *Republic's* highest conception of dialectic during the five years of training in question-and-answer. Genuine apprehension of “the being of each thing” requires familiarity with the Good, which can only come to fruition after a much longer period of social and political involvement. Prior to this training, dialecticians presumably remain at best at the level of *dianoia*—they can apprehend the images of Forms outside the Cave, but are not yet in a position to grasp the Forms themselves.

Practical experience, then, is crucial to the proper cultivation of *epistémé*. Upon returning to the Cave, philosophers are somewhat blind and awkward due to the change from light to darkness (517d). As they acclimate, their continued progress will depend largely on their ability to keep the virtues and other realities (or at least the images they have of them) firmly in their mental view. Among other things, they must work to maintain equilibrium and constancy amidst various temptations (539e-540a). The fifteen years of social and political activity mark the final step of the philosophers' formal education. Plato makes no mention of any further theoretical preparation. And “once they've seen the Good itself, they must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in order, using it as their model” (540a-b). Practical integration of the Good proceeds directly from the philosophers' climactic view of it. Only during this further stage of integration do they become fully dialectical, arranging their lives and managing the city with an awareness grounded in a direct grasp of Forms. More so than student-philosophers, philosopher-rulers navigate the Cave with clear vision and manage their

lives and the city in ways that best reflect the divine. Once they have “grown accustomed to seeing in the dark,” philosopher-rulers “discern things infinitely better than the other people there.” They “know (*gignôskein*) each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image” because they “have seen the truth about fine, just, and good things” (520c).

We should also note briefly that the *Republic* repeatedly extols the practical utility of dialectic. It is the “coping stone” of the other sciences (534e), and through it one can achieve a synoptic view of the different branches of knowledge (537b-c). Dialectic is also indispensable for acquiring adequate (*hikanôs*) knowledge of the sensible world (506a). If philosophers are to lead the city successfully, we are told, they must not be “in the dark” about how the Good relates to practical affairs. No genuine philosopher relies on popular belief about just and beautiful things—he acts, instead, with awareness of what things truly *are* just and beautiful, and this because he ultimately knows how they share in the Form of the Good (506a).²⁶ Philosophers contemplate “all time and all being,” they attempt to grasp “everything both divine *and* human as a whole” (486a). Their comprehensive understanding of both intelligible and mutable reality helps them, among other things, to avoid petty entanglements, various fears, and the mismeasurement of situations.²⁷

In Book 4, Socrates observes that to be entirely good, the Kallipolis must be based on philosophic wisdom, and that such wisdom involves “good judgment”

²⁶ Cf. *Rep.* 484c-d.

²⁷ Cf. *Rep.* 500b-c, *Thet.* 173e-174a, *Phdr.* 270c.

(*euboulia*)—a type of knowledge distinct from the know-how of other *technai* (428b-c). This knowledge “doesn’t judge about any particular subject in the city” (e.g. carpentry, bronzework, farming), “but about the city as a whole and the maintenance of good relations, both internally and with other cities” (428c-d). Socrates insists that it is the only kind of knowledge that deserves to be called wisdom (*sophia*), for it allows the city to be managed “according to nature” (*kata phusin*) (429a, 428d-e). Though *euboulia* combines both practical and theoretical insight, it remains a form of dialectical knowledge, for it is only possessed by the class of philosopher-rulers (428e). Plato compares the city’s rulers to artists who work with the various materials at their disposal to create an image of the city that best resembles the divine model. To paint well, they must “continually look in both directions”—both to the eternal Forms, and to the copy they are creating in the human sphere (501b). This twofold ability allows rulers to select and blend the characteristics of human behavior in ways that best reflect the divine (501b). Through direct insight into Justice, Beauty, and other Forms, they arrange the city and their own lives in the best possible way.²⁸

Malcolm Schofield observes that the painters of the *politeia*, while drawing from their knowledge of eternal Forms, are simultaneously engaged in a process of trial and error as they create their picture, “rubbing one bit out and drawing another bit in (501b).” Their expertise in this regard cannot be reduced to theoretical knowledge, for it

²⁸ 501b is specifically concerned with the philosopher-rulers’ consultation of Forms in the creation of the city’s constitution. It is reasonable to think, however, that the intelligible sphere guides other behaviors and decisions as well.

also involves, as Schofield puts it, “the experimental methods of the artist.”²⁹ Good judgment develops over time as philosopher-rulers become increasingly aware of how best to translate their awareness of the Good and other Forms into political affairs and everyday life. They must, among other things, experiment to see which ideas and initiatives work and which do not. The Forms are eternal and unchanging, but temporal affairs are in flux; trial and error is a necessary component of the ongoing task of shaping social and political institutions, cultural structures, and more day-to-day policy decisions in ways that best approximate and reflect the intelligible.

With all of this in mind, we may wonder which of the segments of the Divided Line best corresponds to enlightened management of the polis. At first, it may seem that anything having to do with the sensible world falls squarely into the field of *pistis*. But the characteristic mental state of the engaged philosopher-ruler seems in many ways superior even to *dianoia*, for *dianoia* is marked by its reliance on unquestioned hypotheses and a lack of acquaintance with Forms, while philosopher-rulers act on the basis of direct insight into reality. They are entrusted with the city’s affairs because they see *what really is*, as opposed to the dream-like state of the rest of the citizenry. Nor do *pistis* or *eikasia* seem likely mainsprings of a practical dialectic. Sense images of animals, plants, and other physical objects provide little truth and clarity, and perceptions of the shadows and images of such objects offer less clarity still. *Noēsis*, of course, emerges as the obvious choice, at least insofar as the philosopher’s thoughts are marked by wisdom and

²⁹ See Malcolm Schofield, *Plato’s Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 162-63.

knowledge. But because *noēsis* is concerned with eternal reality—because, according to the Divided Line, its corresponding objects are Forms—it is hard to see how it could, by itself, enable skillful interaction with the world.

Though Plato does not treat the topic explicitly, at various points he suggests that multiple cognitive functions can operate simultaneously in a given moment of experience. This is apparent in the case of the mathematicians, who use visual aids while studying abstract entities. Both *pistis* and *dianoia* comprise their mental states. We also see an overlap of different cognitive functions in Book 5's aforementioned comparison between sight-lovers and philosophers: while the sight-lover believes that beauty is reducible to beautiful sensible objects, the philosopher is aware both of the Form of Beauty and the beautiful objects participating in it (476b-d). His perception is epistemologically superior to the sight-lover's both with respect to Forms *and* with respect to the particulars he cognizes. Not only does his understanding of Forms consist in direct apprehensions of reality itself, but his grasp of different sensible participants *as* participants also entails awareness of Forms. His mental state contains both pistis and noetic elements.³⁰

When encountering, say, a beautiful statue of Phidias, the philosopher must have a noetic understanding of the Form of Beauty if he is to truly recognize that the statue

³⁰ This topic will be taken up in more detail in chapter 5. We should note, however, that the mental state will only contain both pistis and noetic elements if it grasps different sensibles as participants in Forms that it is aware of not just as hypotheses, not just as abstract objects it acknowledges must exist in addition to sensible particulars—but as realities that it directly apprehends.

shares in it.³¹ Because his thought is partly directed toward sensible reality, it falls short of genuine knowledge. Like all material entities, the statue is in a state of becoming—it shares both in “what is” and “what is not” and is ultimately an object of *doxa*.

Nevertheless, while the philosopher’s thought in such circumstances may not be as pure as when entirely dedicated to Forms, it remains the purview of someone “awake” both to Forms and their relationship with the phenomenal world. The temporal dimension of this type of cognition may ultimately render it doxastic, but it is unique to those who perceive particulars through the lens of *noêsis*.

Likewise, while enlightened management of the Kallipolis is a different type of enterprise than pure contemplation of Forms, it still features a dominant mental state proper to philosopher-rulers. Temporal concerns may occupy a great deal of their mental space when ruling, but they approach practical affairs with an overarching awareness of the Good and other Forms. Philosopher-rulers do not simply rely on mnemonic representations of the intelligible to govern the city. In contrast to the imagistic perception of *dianoia*, they base their judgment on direct access to eternal reality. At the same time, they are also deeply familiar with how Forms are instantiated in the world, and this is because they possess a great deal of first-hand experience of the relationships between Forms and their participants. Philosopher-rulers are, to use the terminology introduced at the beginning of the section, *users* of objects, as opposed to fabricators or imitators. They come to know the essence of the different levers of social and political

³¹ And more specifically, if the mind is to *directly* grasp this relationship, as opposed to merely hypothesizing it.

management by using these levers, and develop a unique kind of practical expertise by negotiating the world with an intimate awareness of Forms. *Pistis* and *dianoia* undoubtedly play supporting roles—these faculties enable philosopher-rulers to interact with sensible reality, to think abstractly, and to map their insights onto the world. But *noēsis* remains the guiding feature of their thought and the basis of their judgment.

Ultimately, the philosopher aims to approach every aspect of life dialectically. We will explore this topic in more detail in the *Philebus*, but consider already this passage from Book 3:

Then, by heaven, am I not right in saying that by the same token we will never be true musicians (*mousikoi*)—neither we nor the guardians that we have undertaken to educate—until we are able to recognize the forms of moderation, courage, generosity, and high-mindedness (*megaloprepeias*) and all their kindred and their opposites, too, in all the combinations that contain and convey them, and to apprehend them and their images wherever found, disregarding them neither in trifles nor in great things, but believing the knowledge of them to belong to the same craft and discipline? (402b-c)³²

The requirements outlined for true “musicians” are, obviously, a tall order and resemble criteria set forth elsewhere in the corpus for genuine knowledge and expertise. At 401c, Socrates insists that the ideal city must include artists and craftsmen who possess “the natural gift of tracking down true beauty and grace,” if works of art are to engender psychological health and lead young guardians to a friendly and harmonious relationship with “the beauty of reason.” Similarly, here he specifies that those who are truly cultured (*mousikoi*) must be able to recognize the Forms (*eidē*) of different virtues, their opposites,

³² Translation follows, with slight modifications, Paul Shorey, *Plato: Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

and their participants wherever they occur.³³ We are thus given a foreshadowing of the dialectician to come in later books. These “musicians” are able to perceive and are attentive to the forms of virtue and vice present even in the smallest of things. Their awareness extends beyond *pistis* and *dianoia*, for they can recognize different images (*eikones*) for what they are, as well as their corresponding *eidē*.³⁴ True “musicians,” it seems, must also be dialecticians.

In the preceding section, Socrates describes our enthusiasm for searching out the different letters of the alphabet when first learning to read. We look for these letters in both large and small words, knowing that we will not achieve literacy until we can recognize them in every context (402a-b).³⁵ Socrates asks rhetorically: “And isn’t it also

³³ One might wonder if, on this interpretation, any poet or craftsman would be admitted to the Kallipolis as none—or very few—could meet the abovementioned criteria. We must remember, however, that Socrates is describing an image of the ideal state; its standards are exceedingly high because it is intended more as a model worthy of approximation than a practicable blueprint.

³⁴ Scholars have disputed whether the *eidē* of virtues in this passage refer to full-blooded Forms. The main points against such an interpretation seem to be that 1) the forms discussed are not separate from sensible objects (*enonta*), and 2) Plato’s Theory of Forms has not yet been introduced at this point in the text. The passage can be read as only claiming that “we must learn to recognize the many varieties of virtues and vices in the world and in our images of them.” See Alexander Nehamas, “Plato on Imitation and Poetry in *Republic* X,” in *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 260-61. Cf. James Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 168, n. on 402c. Against this reading, we should note that 402b-c’s immanentist undertones are not reliable evidence that the passage is not about Forms, for we also find such language in passages that come during or after the formal introduction of Forms (see e.g. 476a, 490a-b, 590b). Second, the ability to recognize whether different objects are images, to know what they are images of, and to be able to discern moderation, courage, and other virtues in each of their possible instantiations, is a skill set held only by dialecticians, and strongly resembles language used in the middle books of the *Republic* to describe the dialectical knowledge of Forms, particulars, and their relationships. Only those “who have seen the truth about fine, just, and good things,” for example, can “know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image” (520c). For this point, see Norman Gulley, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge* (London: Methuen, 1962), 66-67. Moreover, Socrates says the ideal of the *mousikos* should be pursued by himself, his interlocutors, and future guardians, which we can take as further indication that it is a dialectical pursuit and that the forms in question are eternal Forms.

³⁵ Cf. *Rep.* 368c-d, 485b.

true that if there are images of letters reflected in mirrors or water, we won't know them until we know the letters themselves, as both abilities are parts of the same craft and discipline?" (402b). Plato intends the description as an analogy to the true musician's apprehension of Forms: as we do not know the images of letters until we know the letters themselves, so we must know Forms to know their images.³⁶ Knowing Forms and their images, according to Plato, are of course two very different capacities, but if the analogy holds, ultimately they are to be understood as being part of the same overarching *techné*. Expertise in this domain is not limited to discerning and providing *logoi* of different Forms during question-and-answer. As with the letters of the alphabet, philosophers only achieve dialectical literacy by developing the ability to recognize Forms in every context of life.

The following passage from Book 6 provides another good encapsulation of the fuller conception of dialectic that is at work in the *Republic*:

It is the nature of the real lover of learning to struggle toward what is, not to remain with any of the many things that are believed to be, that, as he moves on, he neither loses or lessens his erotic love until he grasps the being of the nature of each thing itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it, because of its kinship with it, and that, once getting near to what really is (*tô ontî ontos*) and having intercourse with it and having begotten understanding and truth, he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and—at that point, but not before—is relieved from the pains of giving birth (490a-b).³⁷

³⁶ The text at 402c is in fact ambiguous as to whether it is the ability to recognize both forms and their images that are the two parts of the same craft and discipline, or whether it is the ability to recognize forms and images in things both great and small. Grube-Reeve favor the latter interpretation, while Cornford endorses the former. Shorey, Lee, and Waterfield each keep the ambiguity in their renderings. As mentioned above, however, Plato is setting up a clear parallel with the preceding section, in which the two capacities of “the same craft and discipline” (*tês autês technês te kai meletês*) are plainly the ability to know the images of letters and the letters themselves. The “forms and images” reading of 402c seems preferable for this reason.

³⁷ Cf. *Rep.* 485a-d, 499c, 501c-d, 611e-612a.

This passage comes within the context of Socrates' attempt to show why philosophers—while presently being useless stargazers—should in fact be the helmsmen of the ship of state. It is their nature “to be guided by the truth and always pursue it in every way” (490a). Their disposition to this life-encompassing search is what allows them to become “fine and good” (*kalon te kagathon*) (489e). Union with Forms consists not only in the epistemological process of begetting intelligence and true ideas, but also the existential process of according one's life with them. Through intercourse with Forms, the philosopher “truly lives and is nourished” (*aléthōs zōiē kai trephoito*).³⁸ *Erōs* is needed to grasp the “being of the nature of each thing itself” (*autou ho estin hekastou tēs phuseōs*), and union is possible because of the soul's kinship with Forms. The passage echoes the *Phaedo*'s account of the philosopher's soul, which navigates the pitfalls of excessive pleasures and pains by following reason and clinging to the intelligible. In the process, the Forms nurture the soul and strengthen its resolve to assimilate itself to them (84a).

The passage also resembles Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* (209e-212a), which identifies reason and *erōs* as the dual engines of dialectical ascent.³⁹ Lovers rise from beautiful bodies to beautiful activities and laws, and from there to different beautiful

³⁸ Cf. *Prot.* 313c-d; *Symp.* 247d-e, 248b-c; *Soph.* 223e-224a.

³⁹ See e.g. J. Moravcsik, “Reason and Eros in the ‘Ascent’-Passage of the *Symposium*,” in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, ed. J. P. Anton and G. L. Kostas (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1971), 285-302. Moravcsik considers reason and *erōs* distinct powers. Contrast R. Hackforth, *Plato: Phaedo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 12. Vlastos speaks of the philosopher not only as a “formknower” but a “formlover” that loves Forms with great feeling, and not only as objects of knowledge. The philosopher loves the Form of Beauty, for instance, with a restlessness for something beyond the particular, a restlessness that only finds peace when the Form itself is reached (see “A Metaphysical Paradox,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 39 [1966]: 5-19. Repr. in *Platonic Studies*, 2nd ed. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981], 43-57, esp. 50-53).

kinds of knowledge, and finally Beauty itself. Part of dialectic, we learn, involves the experiential knowledge of coming “to know just what it is to *be* beautiful” (211c-d).⁴⁰ Philosophers enjoy the best life because they measure beauty not by gold, clothing, or beautiful youths, but by directly apprehending Beauty itself. In turn, the gods love them because they translate this vision into true virtue and actively cultivate it (211d-212b). Dialectic in the *Symposium* consists of more than the give and take of philosophical disputation. As lovers progress through the various steps of the ascent, they work to sublimate their desires by seeking to unite with the source of all love. As in the *Republic*, communion with Forms is at once intellectual and experiential: it results both in understanding and the fulfillment of *erôs*.⁴¹ Philosophers enjoy and delight in the intelligible objects they apprehend.

The experiential and ethical sides of dialectic are manifest in other places as well. In *Republic* 7, Socrates tells us that dialectic collaborates with the dianoetic sciences in order to help free the soul from corporeal preoccupations (533d). When the eye of the soul finds itself stuck in a bog of inordinate desires and distractions, dialectic “gently pulls it out and leads it upwards” (519a-b, 533d). Book 10’s likening of the soul to the barnacle-encrusted sea god Glaucus provides a particularly vivid portrayal of this dynamic:

⁴⁰ Cf. *Rep.* 479e, where philosophers are said to “love (*philein*) and embrace (*aspaskesthai*) the things that knowledge is set over.” Whether or not 479e’s philosophers are to be understood as yet having knowledge of eternal realities, what we already see here in a preliminary form is that these realities can be approached erotically.

⁴¹ See e.g. Hackforth, *Plato: Phaedo*, 12. Cf. Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics*, 302-06; and *Plato’s Moral Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 167-69.

We must realize what it grasps and longs to have intercourse with, because it is akin to the divine and immortal and what always is, and we must realize what it would become if it followed this longing with its whole being, and if the resulting effort lifted it out of the sea in which it now dwells, and if the many stones and shells (those which have grown all over it in a wild, earthy, and stony profusion because it feasts at those so-called happy feastings on earth) were hammered off it (611e-612a).

Though naturally drawn to the Forms, the soul's various accretions weigh on its higher aspirations. To rise out of the morass of worldly preoccupation, the soul must pursue the eternal with its entire being. Union with Forms enables the soul to transform and uncover its true nature—a thoroughly ethical endeavor. The passage comes within the context of an inquiry into whether the soul is ultimately simple or composite, and presumably the effort the soul undertakes with its “whole being” is none other than the unified movement of its rational (*logistikón*), spirited (*thumoeides*), and appetitive (*épitumêtikón*) aspects. We find another memorable expression of this model in Book 7, when Socrates encourages his interlocutors to abandon the popular notion that education involves putting knowledge into souls that lack it. The capacity for knowledge, he informs us, is innate in every human being and, “like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body,” the soul's eye “cannot be turned around from the realm of becoming without turning the whole soul” (518c). As the *technê* concerned with the easiest and most effective ways of bringing about this holistic transformation, education recognizes that sight, while already in the soul, needs reorientation (518d). Just as in Book 10, excessive indulgences and temporal attachments shackle the soul and drag its vision downward (519a-b). To discover its innate intelligence, it must regulate and harmonize all three of its constituent parts.

The turn from shadows and release from bondage requires not only theoretical study but also self-mastery. This overlap comes into clear view in a well-known passage from Book 6:

No one whose thoughts are truly directed towards the things that are, Adeimantus, has the leisure to look down at human affairs or to be filled with envy and hatred by competing with people. Instead, as he looks at and studies things that are organized and always the same, that neither do injustice to one another nor suffer it, being all in a rational order, he imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can. Or do you think that someone can consort with things he admires without imitating them?

I do not. It's impossible.

Then the philosopher, by consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can.

That's absolutely true (500b-d).⁴²

What exactly do philosopher-dialecticians imitate (*mimēsthai*) when they imitate Forms? Part of Socrates' answer is that they imitate their "order" and "divinity." Presumably this involves, among other things, cultivating psychic order—seeking to regulate and harmonize the appetitive, spirited, and rational aspects of the soul, which in turn leads to increased expression of the divine within. Socrates mentions further the order and organization that Forms exhibit in relation to one another, and here the analogue seems to be the philosopher's ability to act in harmony with other humans and

⁴² The statement that the philosopher has not "the leisure to look down upon human affairs" admittedly carries a strong otherworldly emphasis—one that, if read in isolation, would seem to count against the notion of a practical dialectic in Plato. But as we discussed in the introduction, and will see further in this chapter, a closer examination of his conception of Godlikeness reveals that, while in some places he focuses on one-pointed devotion to Forms (presumably to drive home their fundamental importance), the dialogues do not seem in the end to endorse a model of temporal neglect. To the contrary, for Plato becoming like the divine involves cultivating moral virtue, which in turn requires paying attention to one's worldly surroundings and interacting with them in an appropriate way. What philosophers must avoid is mistaking the things of the world for their primary concern, or as the ultimate guide of their behavior.

the rest of the world. Philosopher-dialecticians must seek both internal *and* external order in their lives if they seriously intend to pursue the divine.

The eternal stability of Forms is also presented as an essential moral touchstone. At first glance, the description of Forms as immutable entities that “neither do injustice to one another nor suffer it” might appear to indicate a program of temporal inactivity—one where philosophers dedicate themselves entirely to abstract musings and detach from human affairs as much as possible. But does Plato really envision true philosophers as stationary, immovable theorizers?

As we have seen thus far, there is good reason to think that he does not. Alternatively, we can interpret Socrates’ talk of imitating stability to mean that, as opposed to erratic behavior, philosophers seek to be steady, calm, and consistent in their thoughts and actions. The *Republic* seems to convey more generally that imitation and participation in Forms involves manifesting or instantiating them in ways particular to the temporality of human beings. For example, Socrates says earlier in the *Republic* that by striving to *be* just, philosophers enjoy a greater share in Justice—they increase their participation (*méthexis*) in the Form (472b-c). And throughout the dialogue, we learn that participating in Justice involves actively contributing one’s just share to the greater *polis* of which one is a part. Aside from the intelligible world’s order, immutability, and divinity, little more can be said about how the intelligible serves as a model for imitation until we look at the particular characteristics of individual Forms. And once we shift our focus in this direction, we see that we cannot limit our approach to imagining how individual Forms “behave” so as to embody their own essences in the intelligible

world—to imagining, for example, how the Form of Courage is somehow courageous in its relationship to other Forms. Instead, Plato seems to be saying more simply that by imitating Forms, by *being* just or courageous—by *participating* in these Forms and *instantiating* them in the temporal world, philosophers increasingly manifest the divine in their lives. At this level, imitation means actively seeking to instantiate the eternal through the particular, not duplicating whatever imagined behavior Forms exhibit in relation to one another in the intelligible world.

Mimesis and *méthexis* are linked to the Platonic ideal of Godlikeness: one assimilates oneself to the Forms by increasingly imitating and participating in their divine nature. How does Godlikeness in this sense relate to the dialectical pursuit of knowledge? Dialecticians do not ultimately perceive Forms in the same way one might, say, glimpse a distant star by straining one's vision. A substantive grasp of Forms is not acquired simply by "hard thinking" in private or with others, or through a particular method of philosophical exchange. The dialectician must also come to know the eternal by actively seeking to imitate and progressively participate in its nature. Plato advocates a strong connection between ethical behavior and the depth and clarity of one's thought. Imitation, participation, and psychic harmony play key roles even at the highest levels of the quest for knowledge. Closer approximations to knowledge are achieved by working to *manifest* or *instantiate* the virtues and other Forms. Such behavior, in turn, leads to a better understanding of the nature of Justice, Courage, Beauty, etc., which enables still further participation and understanding. Dialecticians aim not only to access Forms epistemically, but to imitate them existentially.

Conclusion

As we have seen, dialectic is closely related to *noēsis*—it is comprised of the different avenues by which we attain a waking view of the Forms. One of these ways is by investigating and improving our set of beliefs through philosophical conversation. Truth, however, is not ultimately found in the *logoi* of question-and-answer, but in the realities they represent. According to the *Republic*, philosopher-rulers must have diverse, personal experience of the Forms if they are to develop any substantive degree of dialectical knowledge, and this is why their social and political training is an integral part of their education. Plato's account of the attributes of the truly cultured (*mousikoi*), and the philosopher-ruler's "good judgment," further confirm that the apprehension of Forms is not limited to question-and-answer, but can be realized in a wide variety of contexts.

The practical expertise that philosopher-rulers develop over time is distinctive in that *noēsis* ultimately becomes the guiding feature of it. But for this cognitive transformation to occur, rulers must work to imitate and progressively participate in Justice, Beauty, Courage, and other Forms, and this is by nature a largely experiential and ethical process. It involves, among other things, the sublimation of desires and the turning of the whole soul from preoccupations with ephemera. The relation between dialectic and action in the world will be further strengthened as we turn to the *Philebus*. This dialogue provides us with what is arguably Plato's most elaborate account of

collection and division, and there we shall find that practical experience is central both to the initiation and completion of the dialectical ascent.

PRACTICAL DIALECTIC IN THE *PHILEBUS*

The Promethean Method

At the beginning of the *Philebus*, Socrates and his interlocutors agree to undertake a thoroughgoing analysis of pleasure and knowledge by evaluating the different branches of each. Before starting their investigation, however, Socrates declares they must first strengthen their approach to the one-many problems⁴³ arising from the proposed existence of eternal unities such as Man, Ox, the Beautiful, and the Good (15a). At least two questions⁴⁴ seem to be at issue: (1) Do Forms truly exist? and (2) How can Forms remain unitary and uncorrupted while being instantiated in a plurality of mutable particulars? (15b-c)

In an effort to deal with these problems, Socrates presents his discussants with a dialectical method that, according to him, humanity has received as a gift from the

⁴³ Socrates takes care to distinguish popular one-many puzzles from more serious difficulties about unity and plurality. Common conundrums focus on the part/whole paradoxes of sensible objects and the compresence of opposites within particulars.

⁴⁴ A great deal of debate surrounds the question of the exact nature and number of problems outlined at 15b1-c3. For discussion, see e.g. R. Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1945), 20, n. 1; J. C. B. Gosling, *Plato: Philebus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 143-53; Cynthia Hampton, *Pleasure, Knowledge, and Being* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 14-21; Dorothea Frede, *Plato: Philebus* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), xxi-xxii; and C. C. Meinwald, "One/Many Problems: *Philebus* 14c1-15c3," *Phronesis* 41 (1996): 95-103. Meinwald offers compelling reasons for accepting the existence of a third *aporia* (second in order) at 15b2-3, which concerns a form's ability to preserve its unity despite its plurality of species (see esp. 101-02).

gods—and specifically from “some Prometheus” who transmitted it from heaven.⁴⁵ The method’s value, however, extends beyond its use in dealing with one-many problems, for it is the means by which *all* discoveries in the arts and sciences are made intelligible (16c). Grounded upon two key principles, *peras* (limit) and *apeiron* (the unlimited), the method’s primary subject matter is intelligible realities,⁴⁶ which share in both these principles and are thus one, many, and unlimited (16d). Significantly, Socrates specifies that the method investigates the intermediates (*ta mesa*) lying between the one and the unlimited: to master a subject, we search not only for its unity and unlimitedness, but also for the units in between; we seek to learn both the number and nature of these units, as well as their placement in relation to each other and the whole (17a-c). Mastering the art of letters,⁴⁷ for example, requires not only knowing the unity of vocal sound, but also the nature and number of its different kinds (17b). As with other unities, one can only achieve sufficient

⁴⁵ This is an unmistakable allusion to the mythical Prometheus, who delivered the gift of fire to humankind. It strongly resonates with Aeschylus’ account of the Titan in *Prometheus Bound*, which tells of Prometheus’ having not only brought fire, but also the arts and the knowledge of number. See Sedley, *Plato’s Cratylus*, 25. We may take this allusion as further indication that the *Philebus* casts the net of dialectic very wide indeed, for it connects the divine method with the full range of Promethean gifts.

⁴⁶ The scope and overall purpose of the method is controversial. As it is introduced just after Socrates’ suggestion that discussion move to an evaluation of the different kinds of pleasure and knowledge, and since it is prefaced by a description of the one-many paradoxes associated with eternal unities, Forms are almost certainly the method’s primary object of study. In this regard, I follow e.g. Hampton, *Pleasure, Knowledge, and Being*, 23-35; Frede, *Plato: Philebus*, xxix-xxx; and Allan Silverman, “Philebean Metaphysics,” in *Plato’s Forms*, ed. William A. Welton (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2003), 193-220. Pace J. M. E. Moravcsik (“Forms, Nature, and the Good in the *Philebus*,” *Phronesis* 24 (1979): 81-104), however, I do not think the dialectical section of the *Philebus* is only about Forms. The notion that the *apeiron* of the divine method and fourfold classification refer to highly specific universals seems implausible, for Plato is quite clear that there are *infimae species* for each unity—a claim inconsistent with the notion of a limitless number of minor universals.

⁴⁷ For the argument that *Philebus* 17-18 is strictly concerned with phonetic expertise, see Gilbert Ryle, “Letters and Syllables in Plato,” *Philosophical Review* 69 (1960): 440. For what looks, however, to be conclusive evidence that the subject of the passage is written characters, see David Gallop, “Plato and the Alphabet,” *Philosophical Review* (1963): 367-8.

understanding of vocal sound by grasping every intermediate between the genus and its *infima species*. Similarly, an expert in music will have strong familiarity with high, low, and equal pitch, and know the character of the intervals existing between these pitches, both as these intervals are in themselves, as well as in combination with one another (17d).

The *Philebus* sets an extremely high bar for full-blooded knowledge. Knowing a unity requires apprehending both its single nature and the full measure of its different kinds and relations (17d-e).⁴⁸ We first locate its single form, and, after having attempted to grasp it, move to an examination of related unities, contemplating them in like fashion (16d). Specifically, we are obliged to determine “the exact number of every plurality that lies between the unlimited and the one” before we can proceed to a substantive understanding of a form’s unlimited number of participants (16e-17a).⁴⁹ A unity’s intermediates are many, but unlike their sensible counterparts, there is a definite and unchanging number of them. Intermediates resemble the unities in which they participate: with an objective number and nature, they form part of the intelligible structure of reality.

⁴⁸ A musical interval, for instance, can be approached both as part of the set of intermediates between high pitch and low pitch, and as a unity in its own right. This interval, in turn, has its own continuum of intermediates, and any thoroughgoing knowledge of it requires both an understanding of how it relates to its subintervals and to pitch as a whole. Intermediates cannot be known in isolation, but rather only by developing an awareness of all the other intermediates with which they are associated. Epistemological holism is manifest at the level of the highest genera as well. Movement from the genus of knowledge to its many species and back implies, among other things, adequate comprehension of its relationship with love, justice, and any other form that, along with knowledge, shares in the Good. See also nn. 22 and 51.

⁴⁹ The accounts of collection and division in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* do not mention the principle of arriving at the exact number of a genus’s species. *Pace* Frede (*Plato: Philebus*, 9, n. 1), however, the *Philebus* is not the only dialogue to address the subject, for the *Phaedrus* specifies that the rhetorician-dialectician must know the number of the different kinds of speech and soul, and indicates that a similar standard holds for dialectical knowledge of other Forms as well (271d).

Socrates insists that great care must also be taken when approaching knowledge from the opposite direction, rising from the unlimited to an understanding of different unities.⁵⁰ Taking this route, we proceed not directly to the unity itself but first look for the *peras* behind its intermediates, developing a distinct understanding of these before grasping the overarching form (18a-b). Indeed, the collective understanding of the unchanging nature of different intermediates (e.g. musical pitches, numbers, vowels) allows for the depth of awareness needed to truly grasp the parent form (e.g. music, mathematics, the alphabet).

Aspiring dialecticians will not get far if their inquiries remain in the abstract; understanding a form's relation to the *apeiron* is a crucial first and last step in the process. The Promethean method progresses from the unlimited number of a form's instantiations to its determinate plurality, and then to its unity, and *vice versa*. If we are to begin the ascent on firm grounds and conclude it with sufficient depth, we must strive to discern the divine insofar as it is instantiated within the objects and relationships of the natural world.⁵¹ Understanding the unities of knowledge and pleasure, for instance,

⁵⁰ The bi-directional movement between particulars and Forms parallels the *Sophist's* description of the dialectician's ability "to chase a thing through both the particular and the general" (235c).

⁵¹ One might wonder if there is a chicken-egg problem with the Promethean method. For Socrates seems to say that we use knowledge of Forms to understand particulars, but at the same time we come to know Forms through a dialectical ascent that *starts* with knowledge of particulars. What must dialecticians know first, particulars or their parent Forms? As discussed in the introduction, Plato seems to indicate that, as opposed to an all-or-nothing affair, knowledge is an approximative endeavor and that full-blooded *epistémé* is not available to embodied persons. On this view, one does not need full knowledge of a Form to begin to see how it may be instantiated in the temporal world, and one does not need full knowledge of particulars in order for the sensible world to shed light on the Forms. Rather, one develops a progressively deeper understanding of both particulars and Forms by moving up and down the Promethean ladder, never needing complete knowledge of either to proceed.

involves determining (1) whether any kinds of pleasures or knowledge exist; (2) if so, how many there are of each; and (3) what sort each of them is (19b). Fulfilling these requirements, in turn, requires engaging with the world enough to recognize and properly grasp each of the different kinds of knowledge and pleasure. Socrates, for example, distinguishes the pleasure of debauchery from the pleasure of sobriety. He describes the fool's pleasure but also the pleasure a wise man takes in his wisdom (12c-d).⁵² Dialecticians know not only the different forms of knowledge and pleasure—they also know their respective intermediates and can fit them into an integrated whole. They must, then, be acquainted with instantiations of each of these species as well, and the same holds for any further subspecies subsumed under these.

Given the multifaceted nature of different unities and their vast network of relations, dialectical knowledge implies a strikingly diverse range of empirical experience. But we should keep in mind that a determinate number of intermediates correspond to any given unity. To understand music, the lyre-player need not be aware of every musical performance that has or ever will take place. Dialectical skill in this domain does, however, require familiarity with all the musical modes. And it also involves the ability to recognize Forms and their intermediates in different situations.⁵³ Someone who can

⁵² Cf. *Phil.* 63d-64a.

⁵³ Cf. *Soph.* 234d-e, 259d for discussion of how life experience brings humans closer to reality and helps them remove false opinions. We should also note again that the Promethean method runs in two directions. The dialectician moves both from the unlimited to an understanding of different unities, and vice-versa. Increasing apprehension of different Forms helps one recognize their presence in particulars, and the study of particulars plays an integral role in the upward path to the apprehension of different Forms. See also n. 48.

consistently identify the Dorian mode on the lyre but fails to recognize it in a voice cannot be said to *know* the mode.⁵⁴

Dialectic and the Human Good

As part of our inquiry into practical dialectic, it will be useful to look at what appears to be a partial application of the Promethean method at 55c-59b. At this point in the dialogue, Socrates and his interlocutors have already concluded their examination of pleasure and are now occupied with classifying knowledge (*epistēmē*) into its different kinds. An initial division is made between productive (*dēmiourgikon*) knowledge and knowledge concerned with “education and nurture” (*paideian kai trophēn*) (55d). Productive *technai* are then further divided into those learned primarily by trial and error, and those which frequently calculate, measure, and weigh (55d-56a). Success in trial-and-error disciplines rests on a kind of know-how developed through experience and a training of the senses. Flute players, for instance, improve their skill by rehearsing and adjusting their performance to the sounds they hear. House-building, on the other hand,

⁵⁴ Cf. *Tht.* 206a-b on the importance of recognizing and identifying different musical notes. Gail Fine also points out an excellent parallel between the knowledge of letters in the *Philebus* and the knowledge of names in the *Theaetetus*. The latter dialogue mentions the case of a boy who misspells “Theodorus” as “Teodorus” after spelling the name “Theaetetus” correctly. Socrates says this misspelling shows that the boy does not know Theaetetus’ name—for he lacks knowledge of its first syllable, as is demonstrated by his inability to recognize and use it correctly in another context (207d-208b). To know words we must know their constituent elements and be able to use them in different situations. Similarly, in the *Philebus* we learn that letters cannot be grasped in isolation, but can only be known by understanding all the letters in a given system. Knowledge of letters is demonstrated by our ability to use them successfully within a diverse and deeply interconnected system of other characters and words (see “Knowledge and *Logos* in the *Theaetetus*,” *Philosophical Review* 88 (1979): 387-88). The intelligible undergirds *all* the crafts; philosophers must be able to discern (*diagnōskein*) the share that various particulars possess in the intelligible if they are to proceed with any insight (cf. e.g. *Rep.* 522b-c, *Phdr.* 262a, *Tht.* 206a, and *Soph.* 267d). See also White, *Knowledge and Reality*, 179; 196-97, n. 56.

makes considerable use of “measures and instruments” (*metrois te kai organois*) and is more precise and reliable (56b). Socrates proceeds with a further cut between ordinary mathematics and the arithmetic of philosophers. House-builders, we are told, calculate and measure more than musicians or farmers, but their focus remains with the sensible world. By contrast, philosophers are concerned with pure mathematics and numbers themselves (56e).⁵⁵ Still, the philosopher’s proper craft is dialectic, which provides the highest degree of certainty and the purest kind of knowledge:

SOC.: But the power of dialectic would repudiate us if we put any other science ahead of her.

PRO.: What science do you mean by that again?

SOC.: Clearly everybody would know what science I am referring to now! For I take it that anyone with any share in reason at all would consider the discipline concerned with being and with what is really and forever in every way eternally self-same by far the truest of all kinds of knowledge (58a).⁵⁶

Here we find clear evidence that Plato retains a theory of Forms in the *Philebus*.⁵⁷

Dialectic puts us into contact with “being and with what is really and forever in every way eternally self-same” (*to on kai to ontôs kai to kata tauton aei pephukos pantôs*). In contrast to other forms of knowledge, which deal with opinions and mutable reality, the province

⁵⁵ For discussion of similarities between the twofold divisions of mathematics in the *Republic*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*, see Hampton, *Pleasure, Knowledge, and Being*, 75-6.

⁵⁶ Unless otherwise noted, translations of the *Philebus* follow, with slight modifications, Frede, *Plato: Philebus*.

⁵⁷ Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy 5: The Later Plato and the Academy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 141, n. 2; Winifred F. Hicken, “Knowledge and Forms in Plato’s *Theaetetus*,” in *Studies in Plato’s Metaphysics*, ed. R. E. Allen (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 187; C. J. de Vogel, *Rethinking Plato and Platonism* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 110-11; Hampton, *Pleasure, Knowledge, and Being*, 77-79; Frede, *Plato: Philebus*, lix-lx; Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, 384; 385, n. 1; Gabriela Roxana Carone, *Plato’s Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 90.

of dialectic remains pure and unmixed, and through it philosophers find certainty and truth (58e-59a).

The subject of dialectic's practical benefit follows directly on the heels of this discussion. Having heard Gorgias argue that rhetoric is the supreme discipline because it enslaves all others under their own voluntary consent, Protarchus asks Socrates for a defense of dialectic's superiority (58a-b). Socrates suggests that Protarchus can avoid offending Gorgias if he gives rhetoric the prize for the utility (*chreia*) it provides to humanity (58c). With respect to dialectic, however, he insists that

We must look for this science without concern for its actual benefit or its prestige, but see whether it is by its nature a capacity in our soul to love the truth and to do everything for its sake. And if thorough reflection and sufficient discussion confirms this for our art, then we can say that it is most likely to possess purity of mind and reason (58d).

This passage might appear to concede dialectic's lack of practical worth, and scholars have indeed often interpreted it as doing so.⁵⁸ In seeking to identify the surest and truest science, Socrates says we must look without concern for "its actual benefit (*ôphelias*) or its prestige (*eudokimia*)." And just above, he specifies that we should search not for the discipline which surpasses all others in being "the greatest, or noblest, or most useful to us" (*megisté kai aristé kai pleista ôphelousa hêmas*), but instead for the one whose concern is with that which is clear, precise, and truest (*to saphês kai takribês kai to alêthestaton*), even if it's a minor discipline and is of little benefit" (*kan ei smikra kai smikra oninasa*) (58c).

⁵⁸ See e.g. Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure*, 113-14; Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 73; Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 46; Frede, *Plato: Philebus*, 70, n. 1; and Gerson, *Knowing Persons*, 264. For an opposing view, see Gosling, *Plato: Philebus*, 129-30. Robinson interprets 58c as an abandonment of dialectic's practical superiority even while noting its connection to the Promethean method, which he acknowledges to be of widespread practical use.

Does Plato really think that Gorgian rhetoric is of greater use than dialectic? Should we also take literally his suggestion that dialectic is a “minor discipline” and that others surpass it in greatness and nobility? Such an interpretation would run counter to the dialogue’s earlier characterization of the method as the means for discovering all other *technai* (16c). When the pleasures are asked if they would like to be commingled with the different kinds of knowledge, they respond that it would be “neither possible nor beneficial (*ôphelimon*)” to be kept in isolation, and that they would prefer to live specifically with dialectical knowledge, because it “understands not only all other things but each one of [them], as far as that is possible” (63b-c). Dialectic, moreover, is the discipline most closely associated with *phronêsis* and *nous*, which, in the final ranking of goods, are ultimately placed second only to the Good itself with respect to their value to humankind (65a-66b). And we should not overlook the fact that Protarchus himself concludes that the other *technai* are fit for inclusion in the good life only if dialectical knowledge is part of the mixture (62d).

The *Philebus* also leaves little room for doubt about dialectic’s unrivaled nobility. As just mentioned, dialectic is intimately connected to *nous* and *phronêsis*, which, in their most accurate usage, are “applied to insights into true reality” and should be called by the “noblest names” (59c-d). It is also the discipline most closely allied with cosmic *Nous*, which is “our king both over heaven and earth” (28c). Cosmic *Nous* arranges the entire world order and governs everything (28e, 30c-31a), and, on a microcosmic level, dialectic

enables human *nous* to share in this governing power.⁵⁹ Other dialogues define dialectic not just as a major discipline but the supreme one.⁶⁰ We have already seen that it is the culminating subject of the *Republic's* educational program; it is the “coping stone” of the other sciences and “no other subject can be rightly placed above it” (534e). Like mathematics, which touches “every craft, every type of thought, and every science” (522b), dialectic is connected to every discipline.

For all of these reasons, Socrates’ remarks at 58c-d seem best interpreted as a hypothetical exercise intended to locate the source of dialectic’s superiority. He dismisses “benefit” and “prestige” to build the contrast with common views about rhetorical mastery, and to set aside criteria that are popularly thought to determine a discipline’s value.⁶¹ His simultaneous rejection of “greatness” and “nobility” should alert us to the fact that he means not to show that other disciplines surpass dialectic in these qualities, but rather that such qualities do not ultimately determine which knowledge is the purest or most reliable. Socrates’ further point seems to be that *even if* dialectic were somehow deficient in nobility, greatness, and practical benefit, it would still remain the purest and most reliable discipline. Likewise, the passage sets the stage for the dialogue’s emerging thesis that we should pursue dialectic not primarily for its practical use, but because loving and searching for truth is life’s central aim.⁶²

⁵⁹ Gosling, *Plato: Philebus*, 129-30.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Euthyd.* 290c, *Rep.* 534e, *Laws* 965b-c.

⁶¹ So Gosling, *Plato: Philebus*, 130.

⁶² Cf. *Rep.* 499a.

We can also take Socrates' remarks as further evidence that dialectic extends beyond the systematic examination of ideas through question-and-answer. For he tells us that dialectic is "by its nature a capacity in our soul to love the truth *and do everything for its sake*."⁶³ The definition contains a distinctively moral component. Like the *Republic's* account of the integrated movement of all three aspects of the soul toward Forms, here dialectic involves the soul's ability to coordinate all of its *actions* in pursuit of truth. Dialectic is not limited to any particular method, but broadly refers to the soul's general capacity (*dunamis*) to love and seek eternal reality. In this way, it closely parallels the *Republic's* characterization of the cognitive power of *noêsis*, and concurs with Book 6 and 7's almost interchangeable use of *dialegethai* and *noêsis* to designate the top segment of the Divided Line, as we saw in the second section.

On the Philebean scheme, rigorous dialecticians arrange their existence in such a way as to pursue knowledge, truth, beauty, and proportion in every domain of life. An all-encompassing pursuit of these ideals will not neglect worldly affairs, while a purely theoretical life, we are told, leads to manifest absurdities:

SOC.: So imagine a man whose reason comprehends the true nature of justice, whose understanding keeps pace with his intellect, and who also has a similar grasp of every other reality.

PRO.: All right.

SOC.: Can we say he is *sufficiently* endowed with knowledge (*epistêmê*), when he has the measure of the ideal circle and the ideal sphere, which belong to the divine realm, but knows nothing of this sphere we inhabit or about the circles that are found here, not even when it comes to using measures and circles in building and so on?

⁶³ *Phlb.* 58d4-5: "all ei tis pepuke tês psychês hêmôn dunamis eran te tou alêthous kai panta heneka touton pratein."

PRO.: The idea of being restricted to the divine sciences, Socrates, is ridiculous (62a-b).⁶⁴

According to Socrates' thought experiment, someone with genuine understanding of every form would still be deficient in *epistêmê* (and so, presumably, in truth, goodness, and so forth) if they lack practical knowledge and experience. Complete understanding of the Forms is not alone sufficient for the human good—other aspects of knowledge are also needed. *Epistêmê* consists not only in being able to grasp and give an account of the divine Sphere and Circle, but also the ability to recognize “this sphere we inhabit [and] the circles that are found here.” The distinction prepares the ground for inclusion into the mixture of the good life not only forms of knowledge with precise measure, but also those that use imperfect tools, and even *technai* that make no use of instruments. We need such knowledge, we are told, if we are to “find our way home” and “have any life at all” (62b-c). Sciences dedicated to the intelligible are the truest (61d-e), but all *technai* have a share in truth.⁶⁵ To arrive at the proper mixture, we are to take the “portions that possess the most truth” from *each* category of knowledge and combine them together (61e). We can, on this view, find truth—and indeed, truth that partially comprises the good life—not only in theoretical study, but also in our everyday interactions with the physical world.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Translation from Robin Waterfield, *Plato: Philebus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).

⁶⁵ Cf. *Phil.* 55c, where the same point is implied with respect to both purity and truth.

⁶⁶ Indeed, we are told that the presence of truth (*alêtheia*) in the mixture is what enables objects to come into existence and remain there (64b).

The ability to produce a seamless union between the practical and intelligible is part and parcel of what it means to be *dialektiké*. Plato indicates that, by giving the various domains of life their due measure (*to metron*), we enjoy the best existence available to human beings.⁶⁷ Through the mixed life of intelligence and pleasure (59d-64b) we most closely approximate Beauty, Proportion (*summetrias*), and Truth—the tri-fold manifestation of the Good (65a). Combining the pure pleasures—such as those of health and moderation—with the different kinds of knowledge allows us to capture the depth and fullness of human experience while seeking its intelligible source. Our share in *nous* sheds light on the right balance—one in which we may possibly discover both “what the good is in man and in the universe,” and also arrive at “some vision of the nature of the Good itself” (64a). An active and explorative life is essential to this endeavor and to the pursuit of ever-increasing participation in the Good and other Forms.⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

It is easy to assume that the question-and-answer procedure spans the full compass of Platonic dialectic given its pervasiveness in the methods that are introduced and practiced in the dialogues. We have seen, however, that there is good reason for thinking that dialectic extends to the practical domain as well. In addition to the *elenchus*,

⁶⁷ Cf. *Rep.* 486d-e.

⁶⁸ Though not traditionally identified among the central dialogues on the topic, several recent studies now recognize the importance of the *Philebus* for understanding Godlikeness in Plato. See Armstrong, “After the Ascent,” 171-83, esp. 174-77; and Russell, “Virtue as ‘Likeness to God,’” 241-60, esp. 246-50.

hypothesis, and standard interpretations of collection and division, dialectic also involves the search for deeper understanding of the eternal while actively engaged in the world. A diverse but balanced relationship with empirical reality is needed to develop comprehensive insight into the intelligible structure at its foundation. Philosophers, we have seen, are “always reaching out to grasp everything both divine and human as a whole;” they “strive for every kind of truth from childhood on” and “attempt to grasp with respect to each thing itself what the being of it is” (*Rep.* 486a, 485d, 533b).⁶⁹ A life dedicated entirely to theoretical study will not provide sufficient exposure to the wide range of eternal realities the philosopher seeks.

Moreover, armchair speculation does not furnish the kind of familiarity and deepened acquaintance with Justice, Beauty, and other Forms that comes with more hands-on participation in them. Philosophers, Plato tells us, are “measured and graceful and easily led to the form of each thing that is” (486d). Such attributes only come with interacting with Forms in a variety of different practical contexts. The insight gained through increasing participation in the intelligible improves not only one’s moral life and fluidity in the empirical world, but also enhances dialectical knowledge of the Forms themselves. By *being* courageous with an eye toward participating in Courage we develop a better cognitive grasp of the form than by simply examining it through question-and-answer.⁷⁰ Of course, Plato repeatedly warns of the myriad obstacles that are to be

⁶⁹ Cf. *Phlb.* 58e, 61e.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Laws* 964c.

overcome in our relationships with empirical reality, as well as the troubles that accompany an inordinate attachment to the things of the world. Active endeavors can serve both as stumbling blocks and stepping stones to genuine understanding. We find the right balance in our lives only by measuring them with eternal ideals in view. Advanced dialecticians possess more than abstract knowledge, for they can readily discern Forms in everyday experience and shape their actions in ways that best approximate Beauty, Proportion, and Truth.

3

ACTION AND DIVINE WISDOM IN AUGUSTINE

In several places, Augustine compares the merits of the life of action, the life of contemplation, and the mixture of the two. All three lifestyles, he says, can be lived virtuously and yield divine rewards.¹ In *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, he praises the virtues of the desert hermits of Egypt and surrounding areas. Free from the distractions of worldly life, the most virtuous of these anchorites, it seems to Augustine, must enjoy complete happiness in their uninterrupted contemplation of God's beauty (*De Mor.* 31.66).² Monasteries and smaller religious communities, he finds, can also provide an optimum environment for contemplation. When functioning properly, they allow retreat from the world while simultaneously providing friendship and support. Nor for Augustine do farming, cooking, or the other communal activities attendant upon

¹ Insofar as philosophy is understood as the pursuit of wisdom, Augustine believes it to involve both action and contemplation. Its active dimension is concerned with moral conduct, while its contemplative part investigates the laws of nature and truth in their different manifestations. Augustine congratulates Plato for having joined these two elements together with the development of a logical dimension that discerns the true from the false, and that could be applied to both. See *De civ. Dei* 8.3-4.

² *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* is an early work. Later in his career, Augustine adopts different views about the possibility of complete happiness during this life. See n. 21.

monastic life necessarily deter from a contemplative state of mind. Noting the various benefits of manual labor, he speaks enthusiastically about monks who “work with their hands at tasks that will support their bodies without distracting their minds from God” (31.67).

Augustine is even more impressed by those who remain virtuous while living in the world. Indeed, this is “the more commendable and worthy of admiration in that it is harder to preserve [virtue] when one is surrounded by all sorts of people and subjected to the turmoil of life;” it being no small challenge to remain tolerant, peaceful, and serene in a world beset with so many problems (32.69).

While sympathetic to the solitary life, in his own experience Augustine modeled a much more socially engaged approach to contemplation, and from his first days as a catechumen to the very end of his life, his aim was always to live in a community of like-minded individuals. As early as the *Soliloquies*, we already find him writing that love of truth and beauty in communion with others is one of the surest roads to wisdom (*Sol.* 1.13.23). He pursues a similar line of thought in later works, endorsing a moderate approach to the question of action and contemplation: contemplatives, he says, must not neglect their neighbors, and those who are socially active should remember to contemplate God. Delight in the life of *otium* “ought to consist not in idle activity, but in the opportunity to seek and find truth, so that each one may make progress in this regard, and not jealously withhold his discoveries from others” (*De civ. Dei* 19.19).³

³ Translations of *De civitate Dei* follow, with slight modifications, R. W. Dyson, *Augustine: The City of God against the Pagans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Likewise, the active life should be pursued for the benefit of the community, as opposed to honor or position. The correct path involves striving to “always have our eyes on the Lord . . . such action is not broken because of work, and it is not cold because of leisure. It is neither turbulent nor flagging, neither too bold nor cowardly, neither too hasty nor idle” (*Ep.* 48.3).⁴ To apprehend eternal reality with any consistency, a balance must be struck that keeps the mind both active and serene, steady and alive.

Augustine thus gives high praise to approaches that integrate the best elements of the lives of contemplation and action. We may wonder, however, whether his notion of “keeping an eye” on the eternal while engaged in the world—his model of “active contemplation,” so to speak—is in keeping with his more general theory of knowledge. What kind of epistemological account, we may ask, does he give of the wise man’s ability to “cling with great surety to the world beyond bodily forms” while living in the world (*Gn. Litt.* 12.36.69)?

In spite of his positive descriptions of the life of action, at first glance it might appear that for Augustine the pursuit of intelligible knowledge lies exclusively within the sphere of contemplative practice. For the proper objects of contemplation are Forms, which transcend space and time and correspond to the life of the mind. However, focusing primarily on the *Confessions* and the *De Trinitate*, in this chapter I argue that Augustine holds a rather strong integrative thesis with respect to the relationship of the

⁴ Translation follows, with slight modifications, John E. Rotelle, ed., *Augustine: Letters 1-99*, trans. Roland Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001). For discussion of this passage, see Adolar Zumkeller, *Augustine’s Ideal of the Religious Life*, trans. Edmund Colledge (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 196.

active and contemplative lives. For he believes that (1) in order to develop understanding of eternal reality one must—in addition to engaging in contemplation of that reality—engage ethically in the practical world, and (2) in order to engage ethically in the practical world, one must also seek to understand eternal reality through contemplation.

To provide a basis for discussion, in the first section I offer a brief recapitulation of his views on the relationship between the human mind and intelligible reality. Next, I offer a general defense of theses (1) and (2) above, and also provide biographical evidence of Augustine's endorsement of these ideas. In the third section, I analyze some important features of his theory of cognition, including his conception of the simultaneous operation of the soul's different functions. I then show how these features bear on his understanding of wisdom and action. Augustine maintains that the mind's memory of the divine ideas can progressively affect the shape of its view. As we shall see, he presents a theory of knowledge that describes how the intellect can be at work even when the divine ideas are not at the forefront of conscious awareness, and how the soul can apprehend intelligible objects even while engaged in active endeavors.

FORMS AND THE HUMAN MIND

Augustine's epistemology has been well-documented by modern scholars.⁵ Here it will be useful to provide just a brief summary of a few key elements relevant to the

⁵ See e.g. Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960); Paul Henry, *Saint Augustine on Personality* (New York: Macmillan, 1960); Ronald H. Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1969); Bruce

topic at hand. First, we should note that Augustine presents a theory of knowledge with strong Platonic underpinnings.⁶ At its core is a model of how the human mind relates to God and the divine ideas. The ideas are part of God's substance; they are immutable and eternal while the human soul, although immortal, is corruptible.⁷ The soul was created to love itself in such a way that it would never lose sight of God and never place the things of the world above him. However, due to the Fall, it has strayed from its original purpose and intended state of being. In the process, the soul's highest attributes, including its capacities for love and reason, have been co-opted by the desires of a misshapen appetite, and these weights hinder its intellectual ascent.

Though subject to flux and an inordinate desire for the things of the world, the human soul remains ontologically unique in the sense that it can consciously participate in God's unchanging nature, as Books 8 and 14 of the *De Trinitate* discuss at length.⁸ The link through which humans retain this unique relationship with eternal reality is the mind (*mens, animus*). Indeed, for Augustine, the human mind is the very image of God.

Bubacz, *St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge: A Contemporary Analysis* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1981); Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁶ Augustine's general epistemological framework remains fairly consistent over the course of his career. See e.g. Nash, *Light of the Mind*, 3-11; and O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, 4-5. His basic views on intellectual vision also remain relatively consistent. For discussion, see esp. John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading the Confessions* (London: Routledge, 2005), 129-137.

⁷ Augustine says, moreover, that while God is not mutable in any way, the human soul is mutable in time, but not space. See e.g. *Ep.* 18.2.

⁸ Cf. esp. *De Trin.* 8.3.5, 14.8.11, 14.12.15. See also *De Trin.* 3.2.8., 7.1.2., 14.14.18, and *De civ. Dei* 8.2. For general discussion of the participation of particulars in the divine ideas, see *De div. qu.* 83. 46.2, and *De Trin.* 5.10.11, 8.3.4. For the relationship between illumination and participation, see e.g. *Ep.* 140.7.

On Augustine's view, God is the continual source of all things, and all things participate in God at least to this extent. Because God is wholly good, this universal participation ensures that an element of goodness exists in every part of God's creation.⁹ Particulars derive both their being and goodness from their relationship with God, and their degree of each is a function of their level of participation.¹⁰ According to this principle, the constituents of the created world fall along a spectrum of being and goodness, with God as the true good and the only instance of pure or complete being.¹¹

In a stricter sense, Augustine's conception of participation involves a conscious turning toward God and a concerted effort to adhere thought and action to his will.¹² By improving our conduct and striving to imitate the divine ideas, we increase our share in God's being.¹³ As a prerequisite to higher-order participation, however, the mind must first discover God's image within it. It is only after discovering this that it can begin to share in the divine in a fuller sense (14.8.11). Put another way, the mind must first recognize what it is before it can be reformed into the proper image of what it was created to reflect.

⁹ See e.g. *De lib. arb.* 3.7.21. Among other observations, Augustine notes that if mutable objects did not share in the Good in any way, there would be nothing in them that could be corrupted. This point comes most famously at *Confessions* 7.12.18, but the principle is at work in the *De Trinitate* as well.

¹⁰ See e.g. *Ep.* 140.56.

¹¹ On God as being, see *De Trin.* 5.2.3. On degrees of being and participation, see e.g. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 21-22, 210-211; and Rist, *Ancient Thought Baptized*, 258-260.

¹² See e.g. *De civ. Dei* 8.1. Here Augustine says that it is specifically the rational and intellectual soul that participates in God's intelligible light.

¹³ Cf. John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), 40-41.

Thus, self-awareness plays an essential role in Augustine's account of the mind's journey back to itself, and to participation in its source.¹⁴ In its malformed state, the mind does not significantly share in the divine ideas. Its deficiency in this regard arises both from its voluntary turning from the divine and its inherent metaphysical and epistemological limitations. Despite these deficiencies, however, the mind has not entirely lost its connection to the divine and unconsciously retains its identity as God's image. Though it be "worn out and distorted" (*obsoletam atque deformem*), the image endures, and higher-level participation remains a latent potential (14.8.11).¹⁵

Augustine speaks of the mind's self-discovery in a number of different ways. First and foremost, he says that the divine Trinity is reflected in the mind's ability to remember, understand, and love God.¹⁶ These three activities form a unity in the mind and are inseparably related to one another. We cannot love something, for instance, if we do not remember it or are entirely ignorant of it (14.13.17). Likewise, memory and understanding of God are dependent upon one another and on love for their own functioning.

A closely related triad is found in the mind's relation to itself. Augustine tells us that, from the beginning of its existence, the mind has "never stopped remembering itself, never stopped understanding itself, never stopped loving itself" (14.10.13).¹⁷ Nor,

¹⁴ And indeed, participation is the mechanism by which the mind is reformed. See *De Trin.* 14.14.18.

¹⁵ Cf. *De Trin.* 14.4.6.

¹⁶ Augustine uses both "love" (*caritas*) and "will" (*voluntas*) to capture the third element.

¹⁷ Cf. *De Trin.* 14.14.18.

he observes, is the mind something adventitious to itself. Contrary to sense objects, memories of sense objects, or anything else that either enters the mind, arises in it, or is acquired by it, the mind has been with itself since the beginning of its existence (14.8.11). Memory, Understanding, Love, Justice, the Good, and other intelligibles have always been with the mind and remain with it, even if the mind is not itself loving, just, or good (8.3.4).

Augustine describes this dynamic in the following passage, where he writes of the soul's relation to the Good:

But when it does act with this intention and becomes a good soul, it cannot in fact achieve this unless it turns to something which it is not itself. And where is it to turn to become a good soul but to the good, when this is what it loves, and reaches for, and obtains? And if again it turns away from it and becomes not good by the very fact of turning away from good, it will have nowhere to turn to again if it wishes to reform, unless that good which it has turned away from remains in itself.¹⁸

When the soul turns inward and understands itself, it understands what it essentially is, and this essence is the reflection of the divine ideas within it. The ideas serve as standards that allow the mind to improve its understanding and love of God. Thus, the process by which it increasingly remembers, understands, and loves itself is also the path by which it can remember, understand, and love that of which it is the image.¹⁹ Though the mind can only contemplate the divine reasons insofar as they are available as

¹⁸ *De Trin.* 8.3.4: “Cum uero agit hoc studio et fit bonus animus, nisi se ad aliquid conuertat quod ipse non est non potest hoc assequi. Quo se autem conuertit ut fiat bonus animus nisi ad bonum, cum hoc amat et appetit et adipiscitur? Vnde se si rursus auertat fiatque non bonus, hoc ipso quod se auertit a bono, nisi maneat in se illud bonum unde se auertit, non est quo se iterum si uoluerit emendare conuertat.”

The Latin text of the *De Trinitate* is that of W. J. Mountain, ed. *De Trinitate*. Vol. 50 and 50A, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnholt: Brepols, 1968). Unless otherwise noted, translations are from Edmund Hill, *Augustine: The Trinity* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991).

¹⁹ See e.g. *Ep.* 120.12.

memories, these memories nevertheless serve as springboards for intelligible glimpses into God's nature, much in the same way that material objects serve as springboards for contemplation of the divine ideas in the mind.

CONTEMPLATION AND THE ETHICAL LIFE

When Augustine speaks of the rational soul's relation to the intelligible, his reference is directed more toward *ratio superior* (higher reason) or *intellectus* (intellect), which is the higher aspect of the *mens* and corresponds to its perception of knowledge through itself. This capacity operates non-discursively; it is like the faculty of vision, which directly perceives the objects in its view. The physical eye gives us vision of material reality; the mind's eye provides us with insight into intelligible reality.

One might assume that for Augustine developing intelligible knowledge has little to do with practical affairs. The grasp of the eternal is related to the life of the mind, while the active life has to do with our interaction with the everyday world—the world of the senses. Through contemplation we apprehend Forms—entities that are non-spatial and non-temporal; the contemplative life corresponds to rest, stability, peace, and the clarity of intellectual vision. By contrast, the active life is associated with the turbulence of the workaday world, with the distracting and often deceptive nature of the physical senses, and the transience of human affairs. However, as we shall see, Augustine believes that in order to develop understanding of eternal reality, we must ethically engage the

practical world. And conversely he maintains that contemplation is needed in order to improve our everyday moral lives.

The Virtue of Contemplation

In his early writings, Augustine echoes Stoic optimism about the possibility of full realization of the happy life (*vita beata*) during this earthly existence. According to him, one can accomplish this ideal through perfect knowledge of God—the highest good. By freeing oneself from the passions (*apatheia*) and contemplating God, one can achieve both wisdom and happiness.²⁰ In later years, Augustine took a different perspective, no longer endorsing the notion that the wise man can achieve complete happiness regardless of external circumstances.²¹ The happy life, he clarifies, is only fully realizable in the afterlife, when the body will no longer be corruptible and can follow the soul “without any vexation or resistance” (*Retr.* 1.2.1). The *visio Dei* is reserved for the eschaton, at which time we will be free from temporal limitations and “God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).²²

²⁰ Thus, for example, Augustine writes in the *Soliloquies* that after having grasped God’s true beauty, it is possible for the wise man’s soul to continue in blessedness by “fastening its eye with surpassing love and never withdrawing its gaze” (*Sol.* 1.7.14).

²¹ See e.g. Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 236; R. J. O’Connell “Action and Contemplation,” 38-58; Zumkeller, *Religious Life*, 121-24. O’Connell rightly points out, however, that though more emphasis is placed on human limitations after the Milan and Thagaste periods, the *De Trinitate* and other works of Augustine’s mature thought are still of a very eudaimonistic mindset.

²² See e.g. *De civ. Dei* 14.28; *Retr.* 1.4.3, 1.6.4-5. For discussion of rare occurrences during this mortal life, see e.g. *Gn. Litt.* 12.27.55, 12.35.68. Augustine distinguishes between intellectual vision of the divine ideas and vision of the source of those ideas. It is the latter which more properly constitutes the *visio Dei* so rarely

Augustine nevertheless remains convinced of the fundamental importance of contemplation in developing and maintaining a close relationship with the intelligible. Contemplation is best understood as a “foretaste” of the life to come in which we will be freed from the limitations of temporality (*Conf.* 7.17.23).²³ In the *Confessions*, much of Augustine’s inner turmoil results from what he believes is his inability to pursue what he increasingly knows will make him happy—God and a purified mind. The mind’s disturbances, he says, are at the root of its immorality and unhappiness—“the punishment of every disordered mind is its own disorder” (*Conf.* 1.12.19). Ultimately only God restores order to the mind, and humans must freely choose to orient themselves toward God if this healing is to take place. Wisdom arises as we untangle the mental knots that prevent us from accurately perceiving reality. And with clearer perception comes greater moral insight and virtue.

Away from the hustle and bustle of daily affairs, contemplative retreat fosters the mind’s revivification and development, leading it out of its incessant wanderings and the living death (*mors vitalis*) of alienation from God.²⁴ Contemplation is essential to the mind’s transformation and rebirth. Divided and malnourished in its fallen state, prayer, reflection on scripture, meditation, and other contemplative practices give the mind sustenance, enabling it to become whole again.

experienced during this mortal life. Apprehension of the virtues and other intelligible objects, by contrast, is a much more common occurrence and allow us to harmonize our lives with the Gods design (*Gn. Litt.* 12.31.59).

²³ On this point, see e.g. Hill, *The Trinity*, 176 n. 76; McGinn, *Foundations of Mysticism*, 232-36; Zumkeller, *Religious Life*, 123, 178.

²⁴ See e.g. *Conf.* 7.17.23; *Conf.* 9.10.23-25.

Contemplation for Augustine consists largely in turning toward the divine ideas as they exist in the mind. Abstraction plays a key role in the process. Contemplative mystical ascent involves directing one's thoughts to a progressively rarefied awareness of supreme goods as they exist in themselves, apart from any relation to mutable particulars.²⁵ But contemplation also sheds an indispensable light on the temporal world. According to Augustine, the mind contains within itself the moral and spiritual laws, and these laws offer not only guidance and insight with respect to the eternal, but also the morality of human affairs (*Conf.* 7.17.23; *Trin.* 14.15.21). Most people have at least a dim awareness of the divine standards within the mind, but the wise and virtuous have a much greater grasp of them (*Trin.* 8.6.9, 14.15.21). Similarly, Augustine speaks of the purified intellect's access to the theological virtues (faith, hope, and love) and classical virtues (practical wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice) (*Gn. Litt.* 12.31.59). By contemplating Love, Justice, Wisdom, and other eternal attributes, we gain greater understanding of how to become loving, just, and wise—how to integrate these attributes into our lives. As the mind uncovers its memories of the divine ideas, it operates not only with greater wisdom of eternal things (*sapientia*), but also with greater practical moral insight or knowledge (*scientia*).

Another way the contemplative mind recovers its health is by attempting to see the order, beauty, and goodness of the world when considered as a whole (*Conf.* 7.14.20-7.15.21). Even the “vipers and worms” were “created good, being well fitted for the

²⁵ See e.g. *Conf.* 9.10.23-25.

lower parts of [God's] creation" (7.16.22). Likewise, the problem of evil and other mysteries, Augustine says, should be contemplated in relation to the entirety of time and being, and through the lens of guiding principles such as human free will. Through reflection and meditation we come to realize that worldly objects are finite, contained in God, and owe their existence to him (7.15.21). We also come to see "that each thing is harmonious not only with its place, but with its time" (ib.).

To ethically engage the practical world—to approach the lower order of existence with wisdom and virtue—one must seek to understand how its various parts relate to the greater whole of reality. And Augustine insists that as this awareness becomes a guiding force in everyday conduct, we act in greater harmony with both eternal reality and the created world. The more we understand our relationship to God, the better we are able to love him and act in accordance with his law. Likewise, the more we understand life's purpose and the nature and worth of the virtues, the wiser and more just we become, and the better we are able to love and care for others.

The Active Contemplative

In his own life, Augustine placed a great deal of value on both the active and contemplative lives. The *Confessions* chronicles his struggle between secular and religious aspirations. Before his conversion, Augustine tells us, he was torn between his desire for praise and social position, and attraction to the life of spiritual wisdom. Inner turmoil

was the result of his placing lower goods over more elevated ones—he was in error, he says, because he could not let go of political pursuits and sexual attachments.

As was already mentioned, the burgeoning movement of desert monasticism greatly influenced Augustine, and he tells us that St. Anthony's decisive renunciation of wealth and worldly living played a pivotal role in his conversion (*Conf.* 8.6.14-15). In the months just prior to converting, Augustine already began to break with his profession as an instructor of rhetoric, retiring with his mother and a close group of friends to a country villa where he was “delivered from the slavery of worldly affairs” (9.8.17). Augustine describes Cassiciacum as a place of divine rest, and refers to this cherished time in his life as a “period of contemplation” (ibid.) Following his baptism and return to Africa he established a small religious community in Thagaste. And his cenobitic tendencies persisted even after his involuntary ordination as priest at Hippo a few years later. For he soon assembled friends and associates to form first a lay monastic community in the city, and later an episcopal one.²⁶

It is difficult to say exactly what mode of life Augustine would have settled on had he not been ordained. He complains of the burden of the administrative duties placed upon him as bishop, and makes clear that he would be happier dedicating less time to quarrelsome arbitrations, and more time to prayer, study, and meditation. Even so, he does not see himself as having abandoned the pursuit of wisdom by taking on ecclesiastical duties. Augustine's post-ordination works, which comprise most of the

²⁶ See e.g. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 125-38.

corpus, reveal an author still intent on seeking knowledge of ultimate reality, but one increasingly convinced that serving others was an important part of this endeavor. Peter Brown suggests that Augustine had already decided to shift from a tranquil, secluded lifestyle to more of an active one even before his ordination, and that this decision was partially motivated by a feeling of emptiness he began to associate with the pure life of the mind.²⁷ Thus Augustine writes while still in Thagaste, “Let us put off all empty duties, and take on useful ones. As for exemption from care: I do not think that any can be hoped for in this world.”²⁸

Augustine’s interest in communal living and contemplative retreat continued throughout his life, but what also emerges in his writings is an emphasis on the necessity of engaging the practical world with an ethical orientation, one that recognizes that serving God involves serving others, and that such service is a key element of coming to know God. Already in Thagaste Augustine’s correspondents commented on his service and fellowship—his “courage and patience in serving [his] fellow citizens”—even if it meant less time for private contemplation (*Ep.* 5). And of course, two of Augustine’s greatest influences—his mother Monica and St. Ambrose—were very much community-minded individuals. Monica is described as a selfless peacemaker, and as someone constantly caring for and working in the service of others (see e.g. *Conf.* 9.9.21-22). And it is Monica who enjoys the heights of intellectual vision with Augustine in the famous

²⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 125-30.

²⁸ *Ep.* 18. Quoted in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 128-29.

scene at Ostia. Likewise, Ambrose is described as a “divine oracle” (6.3.4) and a figure who was intellectually, spiritually, and ethically close to God. Augustine portrays him as constantly ministering to the needs of his congregation, and as affording himself only brief periods of private time to read and eat (6.3.3). Augustine ends up adopting a similar pattern in his own life, and his dedication to public service can be taken as substantive evidence of the value he places on everyday moral action in pursuing the divine.

Interacting with the World

Approaching the Divine Signs

When approached with the right orientation, Augustine insists, our interaction with the material world becomes a means through which we can apprehend the eternal. Physical objects are beautiful because they are part of God’s creation (*Conf.* 2.6.12). The world’s beauty proclaims the intelligence and divinity of the Creator (10.6.8), and by approaching physical reality with the intention of understanding the divine, our thoughts can be lifted upward (5.1.1). With a purified perspective, the created world becomes the ground upon which one praises God (4.10.15). Thus Augustine repeatedly cites the principle from Romans 1 that the eternal is “understood through the things which are made” (1:20).²⁹

Augustine believes that phenomenal objects can serve as signs or representations of the eternal, and that they can point the mind to their intelligible source. When

²⁹ See e.g. *Conf.* 7.17.23; 13.21.31.

regarded “carefully and piously,” he says, “every kind of creature and every movement that can be considered by the human mind speaks to us for our instruction. Their diverse movements and dispositions are like so many voices crying out to us, telling us to recognize their creator” (*De lib. arb.* 3.23.).

In the *De magistro* we learn that material objects, images, sounds, words, etc. act as signifiers of intelligible realities, realities that themselves are ultimately seen in no place other than the mind. The dialogue’s take-home message is that learning takes place by the mind’s consulting with realities present to itself, as opposed to information being imparted by an external source. Augustine writes:

Regarding each of the things we understand, however, we don’t consult a speaker who makes sounds outside us, but the Truth that presides within over the mind itself, though perhaps words prompt us to consult Him. What is more, He Who is consulted, He Who is said to *dwell in the inner man*, does teach: Christ—that is, *the unchangeable power and everlasting wisdom of God*, which every rational soul does consult, but is disclosed to anyone, to the extent that he can apprehend it, according to his good or evil will.³⁰

According to the *De magistro*, the temporal teacher teaches nothing—all knowledge is made possible through the mind’s share in God’s wisdom. Inner intellectual consultation takes place through our permanent connection with the divine ideas. Teachers are better understood as “prompters” and their words “prompts” for this inner consultation, which is the only path that leads to knowledge (14.46). The seeming phenomenon of learning from an external source is the result of the often instantaneous manner in which the

³⁰ *De mag.* 11.38. Translation from Peter King, *Augustine: Against the Academicians and the Teacher* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995).

learner internally confirms the truth of a proposition after hearing it spoken. Teachers convey information through the use of words, but these words are not the same as the realities they signify.

In the same way that the teacher's words can prompt the mind to access what in a certain sense it already knows, so too can the mind's interaction with other aspects of the empirical world deepen its conscious acquaintance with the corresponding realities existing within itself. By approaching the world with the proper aesthetic awareness, the mind can be lifted to progressively rarefied planes of reality, much in the same way that the *Symposium's* lover progressively climbs the ladder to the Beautiful itself, as described in chapter two.

Divine Participation

But as with Plato, for Augustine the mind's ascent in empirical affairs does not consist only in allowing different temporal signifiers to trigger its awareness of the intelligible. Mental reformation and progressive apprehension of the divine ideas also takes place by actively seeking to *participate* in them. The happy life consists in coming to know and love the divine reasons, and the search for truth is the quest to better adhere oneself to these realities. The soul remains divided and unhappy as long as it does not devote itself to this fundamental task.

Augustine endorses what he calls the Platonic notion that "God is the cause of existence, the ground of understanding, and the pattern according to which we are to live (*De civ. Dei* 8.4). Echoing Plato's ideal of assimilation to God through imitation, he

writes, “One does not approach God by moving across intervals of space, but by likeness or similarity, and one moves away from him by dissimilarity or unlikeness” (*De Trin.* 7.6.12). We become like God, Augustine argues, by imitating and participating in the divine attributes. Though for Augustine the Forms are more or less expressed in the basic structure of every human mind, they have a far greater influence and presence in the minds of those who imitate the Forms. We see this dynamic with respect to the mind’s relation to the form of Justice in the following passage:

And how will [humans] ever be able to be [just] but by cleaving to that same form [justice] which they behold, in order to be formed by it and become just minds, now no longer merely perceiving and saying that the mind is just which “knowingly and deliberately in life and in conduct gives each man what is his own,” but themselves now living justly and conducting themselves justly by giving each man what is his own. . . . And how is one to cleave to that form except by loving it? Why then do we love another man whom we believe to be just, and not love this form in which we see what a just mind is, so that we too may become just? Or is it perhaps the case that unless we also loved this form we would in no wise love him whom we love and appreciate by this form, but that as long as we are not just we love it less than is necessary for us to be able to become just ourselves?³¹

According to Augustine, by loving justice and the other Forms we progressively become the attributes of the Forms themselves. And as we will see in a moment, love for him is an entirely active process—it requires that the seeker accord every aspect of his being with the object of his love. Augustine holds that a program of increased participation in the Forms is essential to the cultivation of wisdom. Such participation is necessary if we

³¹ *De Trin.* 8.6.9: “Quod unde esse poterunt nisi inhaerendo eidem ipsi formae quam intuentur ut inde formentur et sint iusti animi, non tantum cernentes et dicentes iustum esse animum ‘qui scientia atque ratione in uita ac moribus *sua cuique distribuit*,’ sed etiam ut ipse iuste uiuant iusteque morati sint sua cuique distribuendo *ut nemini quidquam debeant nisi ut inuicem diligant*?” Et unde inhaeretur illi formae nisi amando? Cur ergo alium diligimus quem credimus iustum et non diligimus ipsam formam ubi uidemus quid sit iustus animus ut et nos iusti esse possimus? An uero nisi et istam diligeremus nullo modo eum diligeremus quem ex ista diligimus, sed dum iusti non sumus minus eam diligimus quam ut iusti esse ualeamus?”

aspire toward a deeper perception and understanding of intelligible reality. Psychological maturation consists in working towards progressively stronger instantiations of the divine ideas in all facets of life. It is not enough, for instance, to have the desire to perceive or develop a theoretical understanding of Justice, Love, and other Forms. One must also strive to *be* just and loving, orienting oneself toward greater manifestations of these Forms in one's daily life.

To grasp the divine, Augustine emphasizes, the seeker must redirect his priorities and restructure his ethical conduct. The immoral remain blind to God's presence, while those who devote their body, mind, and soul to the eternal become increasingly aware of Love, Justice, and other divine attributes. And by imitating these attributes they become more like them (*Conf.* 7.16.22; *Trin.* 8.6.9). For Augustine this transformation should extend to every area of life—seeking the eternal means diminishing one's pride, loving one's neighbors, regulating one's sexual and dietary behavior, etc (*Conf.* 5.3.4). As opposed to the “death” that accompanies one's absorption in the mutable world, setting one's thoughts and actions on the divine brings the soul to “life,” making it easier to avoid arrogance, indolence, lust, and other moral pitfalls (13.21.30). Augustine admires those who are able to conscientiously face the obstacles of practical life—seeking to overcome the traps of temporal power, curiosity, worldly praise, etc.—while keeping their focus on the intelligible. According to him, we progress morally as we learn to resist various temptations, and daily life gives us ample opportunity to observe how much or little progress we have made.

Of course, Augustine often speaks of the ultimate bitterness of temporal pursuits and the necessity of abandoning them.³² His sometimes harsh descriptions of worldly affairs might cause us to question whether he truly thinks that interacting with the world brings anything to the pursuit of intelligible knowledge. But closer examination reveals that Augustine is only critical of a degraded approach to material reality. For as just mentioned, he sees Creation itself as inherently good and beautiful. Carol Harrison succinctly notes that in Augustine's thought, "there is a simultaneous turning away from Creation and looking beyond it to its Creator, and a turning towards it, and looking in and through it for its Creator."³³ Both turns are integral to Augustine's outlook. We approach the ethical ideal in practical life by drawing closer to God *through* our interaction with the everyday world, and stray off course by abandoning God for material objects (7.16.22). Beauty and other divine attributes exist in beautiful objects, and Augustine believes that each of our physical senses—touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight—have an appropriate way of responding to these objects (2.5.10). We live healthy lives when we conduct ourselves in harmony with other people and the material world, and when we dedicate our everyday actions to our search for the eternal. The just and virtuous take delight in pursuing truth, beauty, and God's eternal law in every department of life (ib.). Augustine thinks we must approach the world ethically if we hope to become

³² See e.g. *Conf.* 6.10.17.

³³ Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 114. See also Michael Hanby's (*Augustine and Modernity* [London: Routledge, 2003], 148) reading of *De Libero Arbitrio*: "a proper *regard* for the soul *and sensibilia* is intrinsic to our capacity to intuit the standard [of Truth] and judge by its light."

wise, for only the just and virtuous can fully appreciate the extent to which sensible reality points the mind to the eternal. Corrupt behavior, by contrast, prevents one from grasping and fully enjoying both God and Creation. The challenge lies in reordering life so as to appreciate the divine beauty hidden in Creation.

Love and Selfless Service

Augustine believes, moreover, that as we mature ethically we regard others less as instruments of sexual, political, and emotional desire, and more as sacred beings connected to us in God. Such a perspective engenders an awareness of *caritas*. And by treating others as ends—not means—by loving others for their own sake, we better realize eternal beauty and goodness (6.16.26). Augustine contrasts the emptiness of self-serving activities with the satisfaction of selfless service. His ethic is one that regards others as one’s master—to serve God is to serve fellow human beings: “you have commanded me to serve them if I wish to live with you and in dependence on you” (10.4.6). Grasping and participating in *caritas* and other divine attributes involves such service, and for Augustine service means action, whether by aiding the destitute, protecting the exploited, educating one’s congregation, etc.³⁴

Augustine insists that *caritas* is by nature something active, being at the very foundation of man’s existence and will. As Carol Harrison puts it: “For Augustine the will is synonymous with love; to will is not just to rationally deliberate and choose to act, rather it is to love something and to be moved to act on the basis of that love. It is at the

³⁴ See e.g. *Conf.* 13.9.24.

root of everything that man does, it informs every movement he makes—‘Man’s will cannot be inactive’ (*en. ps.* 121.1)—and thus constitutes his very being, making it what it is.”³⁵ Humans exist, according to Augustine, through their participation in the divine nature, and to love others is essentially to love something that—in however small a way—shares in God. Augustine points to the twin ethical and epistemological elements in the first letter of John, where it is written, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 Jn 4:7). To grow in love toward God and others, Augustine says, is to participate in a fundamental element of the eternal nature. Loving, moreover, is largely an active endeavor: to love is to will and to act in accordance with God’s will, and to love God is to know God (*De Trin.* 8.7.10; 8.8.12).³⁶

As opposed to invariably hindering our understanding of the divine ideas, Augustine believes that when the will is pointed in the right direction—that is to say, when it is directed toward the divine aspect of reality—our everyday experiences provide us with continual opportunities for developing and broadening our familiarity with the eternal. An act verges on the contemplative when the object of one’s love is ultimately the divine, and when one wills or is moved to act on the basis of that love.

³⁵ Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 94-95; cf. Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Leadership* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 270-74.

³⁶ See also Torchia, “Contemplation and Action,” 233.

INTELLECTION AND THE MULTI-TASKING SOUL

We might wonder whether Augustine's conception of contemplative action coheres with the rest of his general theory of knowledge. Active endeavors might at first appear to necessarily detract from attention devoted to intellection so as to prevent us from grasping Forms with the same quality or depth that we would during meditative leisure. But as we saw with Plato in the last chapter, in this section we shall see that Augustine holds that multiple functions of the soul can operate simultaneously in a given moment of experience. More than the rather obvious point that he thinks that humans can in some sense grasp the intelligible while in a body, what we will see is that for him multiple mental functions can be strongly and simultaneously active *without the operation of one necessarily impeding or negating the operation of the other*. Our aim will be not only to show that for Augustine multiple functions can operate at the same time (making "contemplative action" a feasible notion) but also that the intellect can be active in the background of our conscious states—forming our general outlook so to speak—without the Forms themselves having to be at the forefront of conscious thought.

The Soul's Multiple Functions

Augustine is most explicit about the simultaneous operation of multiple mental functions in *De animae quantitate*, where seven such activities are outlined: animation (*animatio*), sensation (*sensus*), art (*ars*), virtue (*virtus*), tranquility (*tranquillitas*), entering

(*ingressio*), and contemplation (*contemplatio*).³⁷ The first three are primarily concerned with the soul's relation to the body and the corporeal world. *Animatio* corresponds to the soul's power as a life-giving principle. The soul vivifies the body, nourishes it, maintains its harmony and proportion, and regulates growth and reproduction (*quant.* 33.70). The second level consists of sense perception and the various activities humans share with animals, but not plants, such as the enjoyment of bodily movements and gestures; the effortless coordination of the body; the care, protection, and nourishment of offspring; sense memory; and the development of survival habits. The third level, *ars*, is distinctive to humans, and, while primarily concerned with worldly aims, has its grounding in the soul's memory of intelligible realities. Here we find all of the arts and sciences flowering from the use of reason, such as farming, architecture, poetry, mathematics, music, language, social and political management, and other great achievements (33.72).

According to Augustine, *ars* is available to the virtuous and unvirtuous alike, while the levels above it trace the path of the soul's purification and union with the eternal. The fourth and fifth levels have to do with the soul's relation to itself, and the final two steps with its relation to God. *Virtus* corresponds to the soul's power to free itself from worldly preoccupations and progressively embody the virtues. Fear and insecurity characterize the soul's struggle at this step, while on the fifth plane, *tranquillitas*, it overcomes these challenges, enjoying the fruits of health and purification. Here also the soul calmly strengthens and preserves its virtue, while deepening its awareness of the

³⁷ Augustine remarks that these should not be taken as the exclusive or definitive names of these activities, and that, in fact, they can be designated by an unlimited number of names. See *quant.* 35.79.

greatness it possesses by divine participation (33.74). The soul's sixth capacity is its "yearning to understand what things are true and best." Through this activity it serenely and stably *directs* its gaze towards Truth and Beauty (33.75). The seven levels culminate in the soul's ability to contemplate and gaze upon Truth. Augustine describes this capacity less as a "level" and more as a "home" (*mansio*) to which the soul's other powers ultimately lead it, and to where it can abide (33.76). Here the soul finds its genuine source and good, enjoying supreme bliss and happiness.

Significantly, Augustine states that the soul can perform *all* of these activities at once,³⁸ *even though it may seem to it that it is only performing the one receiving the most attention* (35.79). He does not specify, however, exactly how he conceives the overlap of the soul's functions. Still, one can imagine instances that would integrate most, if not all of the abovementioned levels. We might, for example, envision a wise and devout artist at work on a painting. The artist will, no doubt, engage his animatory, sensory, and sciential functions as he adds brushstrokes to the canvas, coordinating his movements with a technical expertise acquired through reason and experience. And we can also imagine him dedicating his work to God as he paints in a calm, virtuous, and selfless state, occasionally glimpsing or perhaps enjoying sustained periods of contemplative insight.

³⁸ Augustine pursues a similar line of thought in Book 12 of *De genesi ad litteram*, where he describes three different types of vision—corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual. Through corporeal vision we perceive things with the bodily senses. Spiritual vision involves the recall of sense images stored in our memory, as well as the various arrangements and fabrications we construct from this data. Through intellectual vision we directly perceive and understand the divine ideas. Intellectual vision corresponds to *sapientia*, and Augustine tells us that all three types of vision can take place simultaneously. When we read, for example, the commandment, *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*, says Augustine, we can see the words on the page, think of a neighbor who is not present to our physical senses, and at the same time directly intuit love itself (*Gn. Litt.* 12.6.15, 12.11.22).

Presumably, once the soul's functions are activated and steadily integrated into the soul's general state of being, some of them—if not all—can operate without its undivided attention. As just mentioned, Augustine suggests that much of the soul's activity is *unconscious*, and that “offscreen” operations are not limited only to its lower functions, but can occur at the highest levels of cognition as well. While participating in a number of activities, the soul “may think that it is only really doing that act which implies some effort, or, at least, some fear” (35.79). According to Augustine, we could navigate the world more easily were it not for the psychological perturbations arising from the Fall and the subsequent perpetuation of various iniquities through our own free will. As the soul reconstitutes itself, it slowly discovers the natural fluidity it was intended to have, and can, little by little, arrive to a state where virtue and insight come with less struggle.

Augustine outlines the soul's functions in a stepwise, sequential progression. The soul only reaches *tranquillitas*, for example, after having overcome challenges posed at the level of *virtus*. We should not, however, understand him to be outlining an absolutely unidirectional or linear progression of psychological development. The soul continues to operate on the lower levels as it advances, and its upward movement complements the functionality of every level it has already reached. Regress is also possible. Deceiving a friend in a moment of weakness, someone living predominately at the level of *virtus* or *tranquillitas* may, for instance, descend to *ars* or perhaps *sensus*, depending upon the degree to which his behavior is driven by lower motives.

There is, moreover, a distinctively active element to each of the soul's functions. Augustine suggests that, in a sense, these functions might be better described as acts

(*actus*) than as levels (*gradus*) (34.78). As its title suggests, one of the main goals of *De quantitate animae* is to offer an account of the soul's greatness, for there is nothing closer to God than the soul, says Augustine, and nothing but God is more excellent (33.77). The magnitude of the soul is measured not by the amount of space it occupies, but by its power to act (19.33). Augustine emphasizes that *all* of the soul's functions have their own distinct and proper excellence or beauty (*pulchritudo*) (34.78). The soul grows in magnitude as it develops skill and adeptness at every level of its existence, and it matures by living out each "act" in such a way as to express its proper excellence.

With each upward step, Augustine tells us, the soul operates with increasing magnitude, which can perhaps be understood as an increase in its participation and instantiation of the divine ideas. The dynamic partially explains why proper functioning at the highest levels of the soul does not come only at the expense of lower ones. A great deal of previously misdirected energy, no doubt, naturally shifts upward as the soul reorders its priorities and perspective, but this shift only adds impetus to the vitality the soul derives from increased participation.

Augustine outlines a similar dynamic in the *De Trinitate*. There we learn that while the divine trinity is always equal in itself, the memory, understanding, and will of humans are separate from one another because they differ in size: "memory is bigger in one man than understanding, in another the other way round . . . in a third these are surpassed in size by love, whether the two of them are equal to each other or not" (15.23.43). As the soul develops, all three aspects shift in magnitude. Moreover, their growth potentials are intimately interrelated. The size or degree of expression of love reaches a ceiling, for

example, unless accompanied by growth in memory and understanding. The ideal state is one of integration in which all three are expressed equally and maximally.

Wisdom and Daily Affairs

Augustine maintains that we need at least minimal knowledge of intelligible realities in order to function well in daily life.³⁹ To build, say, a house or ship correctly, one must be able to consult unchanging mathematical laws existing “above the mind.” Indeed, according to him, all rational judgments require a degree of intellectual vision (*De Trin.* 8.3.4). Without this type of epistemic access, we would have no stable way of measuring our actions or valuing one thing over another.⁴⁰

The degree of intellection required for shipbuilding, medicine, rhetoric, politics, and other worldly activities, however, is relatively minimal, which explains why such endeavors fit squarely into the field of knowledge (*scientia*) as opposed to wisdom (*sapientia*). The line becomes less distinct, however, when we consider a sage involved in such disciplines, or simply engaged in everyday activities such as eating. Because multiple psychological activities can operate simultaneously in a given moment, it is plausible to

³⁹ We can go so far as to say that for Augustine *sapientia* (wisdom, intelligible knowledge) is embedded in *scientia*. The converse relationship, however, does not obtain. A certain level of *sapientia* is required for *scientia* but, although there are ways in which *scientia* is needed for the life of wisdom, the activity of *sapientia* does not itself require *scientia*. Likewise, in *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine tells us that intellectual vision is not dependent upon spiritual vision for its functioning (*Gn. Litt.* 12.24.51). *Sapientia*'s self-sufficiency, however, should be distinguished from the question of whether *scientia* can be present when *sapientia* is dominantly expressed in the mind.

⁴⁰ Augustine specifies that the objects of spiritual and corporeal vision cannot be judged without the help of intellectual vision. See e.g. *Gn. Litt.* 12.24.50.

think that the intellect can be active even when the mind is engaged in everyday affairs. Nor obviously does anything in Augustine's epistemology seem to preclude sense perception—as for example, the physical awareness of sitting in a chair—during intellection.⁴¹

In several places, Augustine says that we possess intelligible truths in our awareness even when they are not in our mind's view. The mind's self-knowledge of its intrinsic features—including life, will, thought, love, understanding, and memory—form the very basis of mental experience, even when this knowledge is not being thought about consciously (*De Trin.* 15.15.25, *Ep.* 147.3). The following two passages convey this theme in detail:

There are, certainly, things which are so known that they can never escape us, because they are present and belong to the very nature of the consciousness, like our knowing that we are still alive. This remains as long as the consciousness or mind remains, and as the mind always remains, so does this always remain. This and similar cases that could be found, in which the image of God is for preference to be observed, may indeed always be known, but they are not always being thought about, and so it is difficult to see how one can talk of an everlasting word about these things, since our word is only uttered by our thought. To be alive is everlasting for the mind and to know that it is alive is everlasting. But to think about its life or about its knowledge of its life is not everlasting, since when it begins to think about something else it stops thinking about this, although it does not stop knowing it.⁴²

⁴¹ However, in his treatment of Paul's vision of Paradise in Book 12 of *De genesi ad litteram*, Augustine specifies that the face-to-face intellectual vision of God is only available in the afterlife or to the rare individual who "is turned away and carried out of the bodily senses, so that he really knows not . . . whether he is in the body or out of the body when he is carried off to this vision." See *Gn Litt.* 12.27.55-12.28.56.

⁴² *De Trin.* 15.15.25: "Illa etiam quae ita sciuntur ut numquam excidere possint quoniam praesentia sunt et ad ipsius animi naturam pertinent ut est illud quod nos uiuere scimus; manet enim hoc quamdiu animus manet, et quia semper manet animus et hoc semper manet; id ergo et si qua reperiuntur similia in quibus imago dei potius intuenda est, etiamsi semper sciuntur, tamen quia non semper etiam cogitantur, quomodo de his dicatur uerbum sempiternum, cum uerbum nostrum nostra cogitatione dicatur, inuenire difficile est. Sempiternum est enim animo uiuere, sempiternum est scire quod uiuit, nec tamen sempiternum est cogitare uitam suam uel cogitare scientiam uitae suae quoniam cum aliud atque aliud coeperit, hoc desinet cogitare quamuis non desinat scire."

So the only alternative left is that its view is something that belongs to its own nature, and that when the mind thinks about itself its view is drawn back to itself not through an interval of space, but by a kind of non-bodily turning round. But when it is not thinking about itself, it is indeed not in its own view, nor is its gaze being formed from itself, and yet it still knows itself by being somehow its own memory of itself. It is like a man learned in many disciplines; everything he knows is contained in his memory, but nothing is in the view of his mind except what he is actually thinking about. The rest is stacked away in a kind of confidential file of awareness which is called memory.⁴³

The second passage compares the mind's self-knowledge to "a man learned in many disciplines; everything he knows is contained in his memory, but nothing is in the view of his mind except what he is actually thinking about." Augustine says that it is possible for the mind to remember and understand itself, even when it is not thinking about itself. And it is specifically the intelligible aspects of the mind that it knows without having to think about them. Because the mind is contained in its own memory, it does not need to remain constantly at the forefront of its own awareness to know its essential attributes.

When read in context, it is clear that the main goal of both passages is to demonstrate that the mind's self-knowledge comes from nowhere but itself. Augustine's intention is to show that the human mind is like the "man learned in many disciplines," in that it already knows itself by being its own memory of itself (*De Trin.* 14.6.8).⁴⁴ But

⁴³ *De Trin.* 14.6.8: "Proinde restat ut aliquid pertinens ad eius naturam sit conspectus eius, et in eam quando se cogitat non quasi per loci spatium sed incorporea conuersione reuocetur. Cum uero non se cogitat, non sit quidem in conspectu suo nec de illa suus formetur obtutus, sed tamen nouerit se tamquam ipsa sibi sit memoria sui. Sicut multarum disciplinarum peritus ea quae nouit eius memoria continentur, nec est inde aliquid in conspectu mentis eius nisi unde cogitat; cetera in arcana quadam notitia sunt recondita quae memoria nuncupatur."

⁴⁴ At first it might seem that this claim implies that everyone—even the unenlightened—are equal with respect to their understanding of the eternal. But as we shall see in the next section, while for Augustine all human minds are the same in the sense that all possess latent knowledge of the Forms, what explains different levels of wisdom or ignorance are the differing degrees to which each mind becomes consciously aware of its eternal features, and the extent to which they shape its perception of reality.

these passages also have interesting implications for other aspects of Augustine's theory of knowledge. The mind's memories, he tells us, "form the very nature of the consciousness (*animus*)."⁴⁵ In an important sense, wisdom (*sapientia*) is measured by the degree to which the mind knows the Forms insofar as they are instantiated as images within it—the degree to which it knows itself. And if the mind's self-knowledge is the measure of its wisdom, then we can extrapolate from Augustine's analysis that it is possible for someone to be wise without the Forms being the continual subject of their conscious thoughts.⁴⁵ The wise person going about their daily activities may be in closer epistemological proximity to the eternal ideas than another person who, though making a focused effort to contemplate the intelligible, remains strongly impeded by different psychological weights.

Though Justice, Love, and other permanent contents of the memory do not always remain in the mind's view, they nevertheless affect the shape of its view. And this dynamic helps us to understand Augustine's notion of the mind's reformation into the image of God, as well as the relationship of *sapientia* to this inward movement: the mind's reformation involves the increasing presence of its memory of the *rationes aeternae* in its general awareness and state of being. As the mind draws closer to wisdom, these memories become more present to it, and it becomes more present to them. Moreover,

⁴⁵ According to Augustine, souls become wise by participating in wisdom. Once acquired, wisdom remains in the soul even if the soul becomes foolish. Wisdom's permanence can be contrasted, for instance, with the whiteness that temporarily makes an object white, but that disappears when the object changes color (*De Trin.* 7.1.2.). In what sense is wisdom "acquired" if the mind already possesses it latently from the start? Augustine seems to indicate that the process involves allowing the divine ideas to become more present to conscious awareness—what is "acquired" is a conscious understanding of these ideas and a new perspective from which to perceive the world.

the more the mind becomes present to itself, the easier it becomes for it to access the forms relevant to different situations. This mechanism allows the intellect to function even when the eternal reasons are not at the forefront of conscious awareness. Though in moments of active life a mature mind may not be engaged in full-fledged intellection (in the sense that part of its awareness is also occupied with things in the world), its wisdom nevertheless helps to ensure that even the most quotidian activities are performed more in harmony with the divine ideas reflected within.

CONCLUSION

Augustine undoubtedly gives pride of place to the contemplative life for the cultivation of wisdom. He reminds his readers that there are few who enjoy true wisdom and the fluidity of thought and action that accompanies it. Full-fledged wisdom only arises once the mind has undergone a great deal of reordering and transformation; it occurs when the forms of the mind have become so present that they serve as the dominant feature or lens of consciousness itself. Augustine specifies that few minds have made pure contact with intelligible reality⁴⁶ and that even strong apprehension of the divine ideas only brings one to a certain proximity to God.

At the same time, as we have seen, he indicates not only that contemplative practices shed light on the virtues and how we should conduct ourselves in the world,

⁴⁶ See esp. *De Civitate Dei* 11.2.

but that engaging ethically in the world is a key part of developing knowledge of the eternal. By imitating and progressively participating in Love, Justice, and other divine attributes, one's mind becomes reshaped so as to be able to perceive the intelligible with greater consistency and clarity. Moreover, because the mind can process mutable and immutable reality at the same time, active engagement in temporal affairs does not necessarily detract from the mind's ability to apprehend intelligible objects—the purified mind can interact with the world and retain an awareness of the divine simultaneously.

Gandhi on Contemplative Action and the Inner Voice

On the night of April 28, 1933, while incarcerated at Yeravda Prison, Gandhi received an inspiration in the midst of a great inner struggle. He writes in his weekly journal that he was called by his “inner voice” to undertake a twenty-one day fast for self-purification, with the aim of promoting the removal of untouchability. To the consternation of friends, associates, and adversaries alike, Gandhi followed the message and on May 8th began an unconditional fast that he completed on May 29th. He writes of the experience:

For me the voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth or the Inner Voice or “the still small Voice” mean one and the same thing. I saw no form. I have never tried, for I have always believed God to be without form. . . . The night I got the inspiration . . . my mind was restless. I could see no way. The burden of my responsibility was crushing me. But what I did hear was like a Voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain that it was the Voice, and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fast were fixed. Joy came over me. This was between 11 and 12 midnight. . . . Could I give any further evidence that it was truly the Voice that I heard and that it was not an echo of my own heated imagination? I have no further evidence to convince the skeptic. He is free to say that it was all self-delusion or hallucination. It may well have been so. I can offer no proof to the contrary. But I can say this—that not the unanimous verdict of the whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I

heard was the true voice of God. . . . For me the Voice was more real than my own existence. It has never failed me, and for that matter, anyone else.¹

While Gandhi had been thinking a great deal about how to approach the problem of untouchability, he insisted that the inspiration for the fast came unexpectedly. His daily correspondence shows no indication that such a measure was on the horizon, and the length of the fast, he stressed, was beyond his imagination.² He remarked in an interview years later that during that night he had gone to sleep without any idea he would be declaring a fast the next morning. The voice's beckoning was sudden and literally woke him up. It was a unique type of experience, and the only time he encountered the voice in such a dramatic fashion.³

While the inspiration for the fast was, on Gandhi's own account, unprecedented, he claimed to have received insight from the inner voice quite often. Usually Gandhi has something more subtle in mind when describing the faculty. Like wisdom, the inner voice develops imperceptibly—a process he compares to the gradual growth of hair.⁴ We should not, he says, look for thundering commands from the heavens, but rather a source of intelligence from within that grants insight and understanding.

For Gandhi, following the inner voice is one of several ways by which we commune with eternal reality and gain moral knowledge. This chapter investigates his

¹ *CW*MG 61:219-20, *Harijan*, 7-8-33.

² *Ibid.*, 222.

³ *CW*MG 74:276, *Harijan*, 12-10-38.

⁴ Mahadev Desai, *The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, ed. Valji Govindji Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1953), 1: 275.

understanding of this process and other practices he believes have a bearing on knowing and joining one's life with the divine. We shall see, among other things, that according to him, (1) in order to develop understanding of ultimate reality one must—in addition to engaging in contemplation of that reality—engage ethically in the practical world, and (2) in order to engage ethically in the practical world, one must also seek to understand eternal reality through contemplation.

To provide a context for discussion, the first section opens with a brief examination of Gandhi's understanding of Truth and the practice of nonviolence. I then move to an analysis of the just-mentioned dynamic of developing divine knowledge through ethical engagement of the everyday, and cultivating practical ethical knowledge through contemplation. Here among other things I look at what Gandhi has to say about political involvement and prayer to isolate two activities which, more often than not, are placed into the active and contemplative spheres, respectively. The third section gives special attention to Gandhi's conception of the inner voice, for it provides an outstanding example of how his philosophy unites the active and contemplative lives into a unified whole. Among other things, I analyze an historical example of his use of the voice—the Dandi Salt March of 1930—in order to articulate Gandhi's nuanced concept of the faculty. The fourth section explores the exacting criteria he believes must be followed in order to listen to the voice with any consistency, and the fifth section responds to contemporary objections to his position.

As we shall see, Gandhi conceives of Truth as a governing principle and living force that one comes to know by actively seeking to harmonize one's life with it.

Following the inner voice, he maintains, serves as an invaluable tool for seeing beyond the concerns of the immediate self and developing a practical awareness of the eternal laws and mechanisms underlying phenomenal reality. While a latent potential in every human being, this tool, according to Gandhi, can only fully benefit those who make efforts to elevate and transform their lives. His philosophy is particularly distinctive for endorsing a program of what we might call “active contemplation,” in which one conscientiously engages in practical affairs with the overarching aim of increasing awareness of ultimate reality and drawing closer to it.

ETHICAL CONDUCT AND DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

God, Truth, and Ahimsa

To properly contextualize Gandhi’s views on ethical action and divine knowledge, we must first take a brief detour through his metaphysics. At its foundation is the principle that God is Truth and Truth is God. Truth (*satya*) for Gandhi is identical with ultimate being or reality or that which *is*.⁵ While numerous words can be used to describe this reality, he insists on the impossibility of language to fully capture its essence, since it

⁵ Gandhi emphasizes that the statement “God *is* Truth” must be understood in a particular sense if it is to have meaning. He writes: “In ‘God is Truth,’ *is* certainly does not mean ‘equal to’ nor does it merely mean, ‘is truthful.’ Truth is not a mere attribute of God, but He is That. He is nothing if He is not That. Truth in Sanskrit means *Sat*. *Sat* means is. Therefore, Truth is implied in *Is*. God is, nothing else *Is*. Therefore, the more truthful we are, the nearer we are to God. We *are* only to the extent that we are truthful.” See *CWVG* 56:128 “Letter to P. G. Mathew,” 7-9-32. Cf. e.g. *CWVG* 66:112, “Questions and Answers,” 1-23-35.

is beyond reason and the senses.⁶ “Truth,” “God,” and “Brahman” are but names used to designate something ultimately unfathomable and ineffable. Still, Gandhi believes that we can apprehend Truth enough to know that it is immutable, eternal, and yet the underlying force behind all that exists. The world is in constant flux, he says, but “underlying all that change a living Power exists that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves, and recreates.”⁷

Likewise, Gandhi finds that a universal root underlies all religions, as all have a share in the same guiding Force, Law, or Principle.⁸ For him, Truth manifests in infinitely many ways, which he believes explains the wide diversity of conceptions of God that exist among different cultures. Accordingly, though he conceives of God as being formless and beyond the senses, Gandhi does not hesitate to offer positive—and ostensibly contradictory—descriptions of the divine: God is “ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life. . . . He is a personal god to those who need his personal presence. He is embodied to those who need his touch. He is the purest essence. He simply *is* to those who have faith. He is all things to all men.”⁹

Gandhi places ethics and self-realization at the core of his philosophy. His overarching aim is *moksha*—to see, as he says, “God face to face.” One pursues this goal by practicing *ahimsa* (non-injury), which is based on love and the fundamental unity of all

⁶ CWMG 69:126-27, *Harijan*, 6-13-36. See also CWMG 30:334, *Young India*, 3-5-25.

⁷ CWMG 43:95-97, *Young India*, 10-11-28.

⁸ CWMG 30:334, *Young India*, 3-5-25.

⁹ *Ibid.*

things. “For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same Creator,” Gandhi writes, “and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.”¹⁰ More than just the negative duty of not harming others, *ahimsa* involves a continual effort to deepen one’s awareness of the interconnected nature of reality, as well as the ongoing endeavor to progressively manifest this awareness in day-to-day affairs. It stands as an ever-elusive ideal; like Euclid’s point, it is “incapable of being drawn by human agency” but “has an imperishable value.”¹¹ One pursues *ahimsa* knowing that embodied existence carries an unavoidable degree of *himsa* (injury), and that one can only strive toward closer approximations to the ideal.

Gandhi is less concerned with doctrines and beliefs, and more with the daily awareness of a living force that guides and yet transcends all things. Truth, he contends, is not to be found on a separate and isolated plane of existence, but in the different spheres of everyday life. One finds it in simple, honest, and loving acts, and by deepening one’s sensitivity to the needs and interests of others. Ultimately, one comes to know Truth by seeking to unify one’s body, thoughts, and soul with it. Involving as much a life of action as of contemplation,¹² he calls this process *satyagraha*, or “clinging to truth.”

¹⁰ Gandhi, *Experiments with Truth*, 276.

¹¹ CWMG 91:326, *Harijan*, 7-28-46.

¹² See the introduction for a developed analysis of the action/contemplation distinction.

According to Gandhi, to cling to truth is also to adhere to the moral law. While this law is unchanging in itself, he says, it calls upon us to act in diverse and often unpredictable ways as we search for its traces in newly emerging situations. We follow it by practicing *ahimsa* and listening to the inner voice, which bring increasing satisfaction and enjoyment to the ardent seeker, delivering inner peace and “a meaning of the mysteries of nature.”¹³ As the *satyagrahi* becomes less “self-centered” and more “truth-centered,” he also achieves greater self-mastery and freedom, and the happiness and well-being that accompanies *swaraj* (self-rule) on a personal level goes hand-in-hand with the greater *swaraj* to be sought after at the local, national, and global levels.¹⁴

Divine Insight through Ethical Engagement with the World

Gandhi’s involvement in politics might at first glance appear incongruous with his spiritual aims. Why, we might ask, does he voluntarily suffer the violence and petty quarrels of the political world if his heart is set on eternal reality? Why not instead retire from the world altogether so as to fully concentrate on the eternal? Gandhi was of course well aware of the traps of political life and the time and energy it involved. Still, he insisted that public service was integral to his spiritual path. He writes:

¹³ *Young India*, 10-1-31.

¹⁴ For an extended analysis of Gandhi’s multivocal use of *swaraj*, and the place of this concept in his moral and political philosophy, see Anthony J. Parel, “Gandhian Freedoms and Self-Rule,” in *Gandhi, Freedom, and Self-Rule*, ed. Anthony J. Parel (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2000), 1-23. Parel accurately links personal *swaraj* with *moksha*, describing the search for it as a duty that Gandhi felt all humans possess by destiny.

You will be astonished to hear from me that, although to all appearances my mission is political, I would ask you to accept my assurance that its roots are—if I may use that term—spiritual. It is commonly known, though perhaps not believed, that I claim that at least my politics are not divorced from morality, from spirituality, from religion. I have claimed—and the claim is based upon extensive experience—that a man who is trying to discover and follow the will of God cannot possibly leave a single field of life untouched.¹⁵

Gandhi felt that he should center all his actions in Truth, and that ones comes to know the eternal by seeking it out in thought, speech, and conduct. This drew him into the economic, social, and political arenas, where he believed he must experiment so as to fully pursue his goal.

Gandhi warns against excessive theological speculation, believing that answers to eternal mysteries arrive in due course to those who dedicate their lives to the practical search for Truth.¹⁶ Likewise, he maintains that it is difficult to follow one's *dharma* (duty) by fleeing from the world:

Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. . . . I am part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. . . . If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity.¹⁷

¹⁵ *CWMG* 53:396, "Speech at Guildhouse Church," 9-23-31. Cf. *CWMG* 27:156, *Navajivan*, 4-3-24: "I am a humble seeker after truth. I am impatient to realize myself, to attain *moksha* in this very existence. My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh. Thus considered, my service may be regarded as purely selfish. I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the Kingdom of Heaven which is *moksha*. To attain my end it is not necessary for me to seek the shelter of a cave. I carry one about me, if I would but know it. A cave-dweller can build castles in the air, whereas a dweller in a palace like Janak has no castles to build. The cave-dweller who hovers round the world on the wings of thought has no peace. Janak, though living in the midst of 'pomp and circumstance,' may have peace that passeth understanding. For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and there through of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives."

¹⁶ *CWMG* 33:328, *Navajivan*, 12-27-25.

¹⁷ *CWMG* 69:320-21, *Harjjan*, 8-29-36.

Here again Gandhi fuses spiritual insight with everyday ethical behavior. Serving others is moral because, among other things, it purifies the soul and helps one to see God. Gandhi believes that devotion to the eternal should not render one inept in practical affairs. To the contrary, “that which produces such ineptitude cannot be called *bhakti* (devotion). . . . A true devotee, though fully attentive to practical affairs, brings the spirit of *bhakti* into them. His conduct will always be in harmony with *dharma*.”¹⁸ According to Gandhi, “a devotee finds no difficulty in attending to the practical affairs of life,” *bhakti* and selfless service give him an inner peace that enables him to perceive reality with greater clarity, to transcend the commotion of the outside world while remaining within it.¹⁹

Of this study’s three figures, Gandhi is most vocal about the necessity of engaging ethically in the everyday world in order to apprehend eternal reality. By practicing truth and nonviolence in our daily lives, he says, “we shall in the course of time understand the meaning of perfect truth and perfect nonviolence.”²⁰ By realizing these ideals we ultimately achieve *moksha* and union with the eternal. Moral progress, in turn, is “progress of the permanent element within us”²¹—we advance ethically as the inner *Brahman* becomes increasingly manifest in our lives, and as we orient ourselves towards the needs and concerns of others. Such progress is reflected in a society showing

¹⁸ *CWMG* 33:328-29, *Navajivan*, 12-27-25.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *CWMG* 15:274, “Speech at Muir College Economic Society, Allahabad,” 12-22-1916.

“more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, [and] greater charity than love of self.”²² As will be discussed in the fourth section, the *satyagrahi* seeks to purify himself in every part of life in order to grasp and realize Truth. For his soul to become an effective conduit of the divine forces working through it, he must overcome attachment to temporal pleasures and cultivate courage, humility, love, and other virtues.

Gandhi’s moral and epistemological program ultimately turns on self-discovery: life’s fundamental aim is to know one’s higher Self. Such knowledge, he says, “is not possible until one has achieved unity with all living beings—has become one with God. To accomplish such a unity implies deliberate sharing of the suffering of others and the eradication of such suffering.”²³ Self-discovery hinges upon transcendence of selfish desires, and the willingness to take up others’ burdens. Selfless activities spark the realization of one’s identity with the whole of life. Through service one discovers the inner *Brahman*, and with it knowledge of eternal Truth. We serve our fellow human beings, Gandhi writes, “in order that we may see a glimpse of God through them; because they have got the same spirit as we have, and unless we learn that, there is a barrier drawn between God and ourselves.”²⁴ By grasping the divine element in other living things, he argues, we develop genuine understanding of the same divine element within ourselves.

²² Ibid., 278.

²³ *CWMG* 33:153, *Navajivan*, 10-25-25. Cf. *CWMG* 66:112, “Questions and Answers,” 1-23-35: “Realization of Truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in and identification with [the] limitless ocean of life.”

²⁴ *CWMG* 53:404-05, “Speech at Guildhouse Church,” 9-23-31.

Moral Insight through Contemplation

If Gandhi believes that we can only come to know eternal reality by engaging ethically in the everyday world, he also thinks we must engage in private contemplation in order to develop as practical moral beings. According to him, contemplative practices enable us to deepen our conception of Truth and see more clearly how and where to improve our day-to-day moral lives. Through contemplation we cultivate a better understanding of where our actions fall short of virtue, and how we can change them so as to better express the divine.²⁵ The connection between private contemplation and practical moral development is perhaps most apparent in Gandhi's conception of prayer. The following passage is representative of his view:

We are born to serve our fellowmen, and we cannot properly do so unless we are wide awake. There is an eternal struggle raging in man's breast between the powers of darkness and of light, and he who has not the sheet-anchor of prayer to rely upon will be a victim to the powers of darkness. The man of prayer will be at peace with himself and with the whole world, the man who goes about the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also miserable. . . . prayer has incalculable value for man in this world of the living. Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. . . . Take care of the vital thing and other things will take care of themselves. Rectify one angle of a square, and the other angles will be automatically right.²⁶

According to Gandhi, prayer helps us remain awake so that we may navigate worldly affairs with love and intelligence. The outward expression of these attributes flow from

²⁵ Gandhi says of his own experience, for example, that by contemplating his notion of the true sage he "gets some idea of *moksha* and its bliss," and "a faint glimpse of Divine Reality." The awareness of the distance between his own life and the ideal humbles and motivates him to put forth greater effort so as to better embody *satyagraha* in all its dimensions. See e.g. *CWVG* 27:237, *Navajivan*, 4-13-24.

²⁶ *CWVG* 48:243-45, *Young India*, 1-23-30.

those who have put their internal house in order—prayer gives us inward calmness, clarity, and peace.

Gandhi describes prayer as a yearning for union with the divine. It is for him a crucial element of both the active and contemplative life. In periods of rest we pray to invoke the divinity within—to realize greater communion with Truth before returning to the rough and tumble world. In its meditative form, prayer consists in “emptying the mind of all conscious process of thought, and filling it with the spirit of God unmanifest;” such prayer “brings one ineffable peace and attunes the soul with the infinite.”²⁷ There are also “moments when one reviews one’s immediate past, confesses one’s weakness, asks for forgiveness and strength to be and do better.”²⁸ “These are precious moments in one’s daily life,” Gandhi writes, “the exercises are intended to sober and humble us and enable us to realize that nothing happens without His will and that we are but ‘clay in the hands of the Potter.’”²⁹ As with other forms, this type of contemplation has a particularly ethical bent. We contemplate our actions in view of the eternal moral law, asking strength and forgiveness. Prayer helps us to see our way out of dilemmas so as to live in greater harmony with the whole of reality. He emphasizes that we petition God appropriately when we ask God that our conduct be improved—when we ask, for example, that the divine enable us to act more justly toward other living

²⁷ *CWMG* 90:202, *Harijan*, 4-28-46.

²⁸ *CWMG* 35:322, *Young India*, 6-10-26.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

beings.³⁰ Gandhi also speaks of petitionary prayer as a general means of “cleansing and purifying the soul,” of “freeing it from the layers of ignorance and darkness that envelop it” so that it can awaken to the divine within and ultimately act in greater service of others and Truth.³¹

Gandhi’s belief in the salutary moral effect of private contemplation was also demonstrated by his manner of living. His life philosophy was strongly oriented toward action—seeing God “through service of the millions”³²—but he also participated in various contemplative practices. In his writing and correspondence we often find him recounting the inner peace and sense of divine union he derived from daily prayer, reading verses from the *Gita*, reflecting on the divine mysteries, etc.³³ Gandhi insisted that these practices made him better fit for public service,³⁴ he set aside brief times each day for them, and would occasionally take leaves from political involvement in order to pray, contemplate, and more fully enjoy the benefits of ashram life.

Gandhi insisted, however, that prayer and contemplation should also serve as key ingredients of active life. Ideally, for him, all of one’s actions become prayers or dedications in God’s service, reflecting one’s continual attempt to “lose oneself in the

³⁰ See e.g. *CWMG* 35:322, *Young India*, 6-10-26; *CWMG* 48: 243-45, *Young India*, 1-23-30; *CWMG* 86:112, “Note to Gope Gurbuxani,” 3-26-45.

³¹ *CWMG* 48:243, *Young India*, 1-23-30.

³² *CWMG* 42:14, “Letter to Mrs. E. Bjerrum,” 5-11-28.

³³ See e.g. *CWMG* 48:243-45, *Young India*, 1-23-30.

³⁴ See e.g. *CWMG* 90:195, *Harijan*, 4-14-46.

Divinity which comprises all.”³⁵ As one matures ethically, one’s outlook becomes less egocentric, ultimately transforming to the point that thoughts and actions become permeated by an awareness of God. The right amount of time to dedicate to prayer, he says, will vary with the individual: for those filled with God’s presence, “to labor is to pray”—their lives are in fact “one continuous prayer or act of worship,” while for those only motivated by selfish desires, no amount of time is enough.³⁶ But “for us ordinary mortals,” he writes, “there must be a middle path between these two extremes. We are not so exalted as to be able to say that all our acts are a dedication, nor perhaps are we so far gone as to be living purely for the self.”³⁷ To Gandhi’s mind, one should thus both set aside times in moments of leisure and humbly try to retain a “prayerful heart” throughout the day, continually seeking to join this awareness with the handling of worldly affairs.

FOLLOWING THE INNER VOICE

We have said that for Gandhi prayer and other contemplative practices help one to become and remain morally and spiritually awake in day-to-day life. We shall now turn to the inner voice, which, as we shall see, he identifies as the main faculty by which we learn to improve our everyday moral behavior. We shall also see that Gandhi believes we

³⁵ *CWMG* 76:165, *Harijan*, 8-19-39.

³⁶ *CWMG* 35:322, *Young India*, 6-10-26.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

must work to purify ourselves by ethically engaging the world—by serving others, practicing nonviolence, etc—if we are to access the inner voice (and ultimately the divine) with any consistency. The remainder of the chapter will be devoted to investigating these two dynamics. In the present section we will examine Gandhi’s basic understanding of the inner voice and explore a concrete example of its use—the Dandi Salt March of 1930. In the next section we will look at the role of discipline, purification, and practical moral conduct in the development of the inner voice. The last section will address some objections to Gandhi’s position.

According to Gandhi, the voice is closely associated with the *atman* (soul), and both are ultimately identified as our window into the infinite. In this respect he endorses the Upanisadic tenet that the whole of reality is in fact present in each individual soul.³⁸ On Gandhi’s view, all people share in the Supreme *Atman* and are sparks of the divine. Because the inner *atman* is connected to the whole and reflects it in microcosm, he maintains that it can provide access to a comprehensive picture of reality and a clearer perspective of one’s place within it.³⁹ The inner voice is the indwelling *atman* insofar as it

³⁸ For discussion of Gandhi’s views in this regard, see e.g. Michael W. Sonleitner, *Gandhian Nonviolence: Levels of Satyagraha* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985), 33-37.

³⁹ While Gandhi’s metaphysics is certainly monistic, scholars disagree about the extent to which it is Advaitin. The belief that humans are sparks of the divine and that the inner *atman* reflects the whole in microcosm clearly do not accord with traditional Advaitic thought. For each implies the existence of individuated selves or parts of the whole, which conflicts with the school’s understanding of the identity of *Atman* and *Brahman*, and its core principle that there is only one *Atman*. When Gandhi says that some of his ideas are Advaitic he tends to have a much looser, non-technical meaning in mind, one that recognizes more minimally the fundamental unity of all things (as opposed to Sankara’s absolute, undifferentiated monism), and one that regards phenomenal existence as *maya* (illusion) only to the extent that it is impermanent. For further analysis, see e.g. Datta, *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, 21-31, 62-71; Nicholas F. Gier, *The Virtue of Nonviolence: From Gautama to Gandhi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 39-50. See also n. 57.

speaks to the individual and guides him or her on a spiritual level.⁴⁰ The inner voice helps us to see beyond the limits of our circumscribed existence, shedding light on our relationship to the eternal and enabling us to develop greater sensitivity to the needs and concerns of fellow human beings. It also provides key insight into our *svadharma* (personal duty), and can be used as a compass to keep our moral lives on course, helping us to humbly pursue whatever small role is ours in the larger scheme of things.⁴¹

Gandhi frequently remarked that he made his most important decisions by following the inner voice. Examples include the famous discontinuation of civil disobedience at Bardoli in 1922, the Dandi Salt March of 1930, the suspension of the Satyagraha movement in 1934, and the Rajkot fast of 1939.⁴² In volatile circumstances, such as India's partition in 1947, he would wait for the inner voice to determine where to focus his efforts. Likewise, his choice to pursue *khadi* (homespun cloth) as a means to India's independence was largely intuitive, and in prayer meetings, correspondence, and various publications, he reports relying on the inner voice as a guide in everything from negotiations with the British government to his diet and travel agenda.⁴³ We have seen,

⁴⁰ For explicit identification of the inner voice with the inner *atman*, see e.g. *CW/MG* 48:47 "Letter to Prabhashankar Pattani," 12-2-29.

⁴¹ Gandhi also describes *dharma* itself as a "quality of the soul." Parel ("Gandhian Freedoms," 9) links this type of *dharma* with self-knowledge, arguing that through it "humans have access to basic moral insights about what is right and wrong, good and evil."

⁴² B. Pattabhisitaramayya, "Gandhi in His Many Aspects," in *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1957), 218-221. For further discussion of Gandhi's use of the inner voice in historical context, see H. S. L. Polak, H. N. Brailsford, and Lord Pethick-Lawrence, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Father of Modern India* (Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1986), 209-11.

⁴³ As mentioned above, Gandhi describes the inner voice as an indispensable source of insight into one's *svadharma*. A fitting example would be his choice, upon the promptings of the voice, to leave off from

moreover, that Gandhi felt that all his practical decisions—personal, social, political, economic—should tie into the more general effort to grasp and reflect Truth. Thus for him, following the voice by initiating, say, a fast against untouchability, or, as we are about to discuss, a protest march to the sea, were all part of his more overarching pursuit of the eternal.

Historical Analysis: The Dandi Salt March

In his approach to social justice and self-realization, Gandhi combined discursive strategizing with what he felt to be the direct intimations of the inner voice. Many felt that this gave him an added layer of creativity and unpredictability—his adversaries would also say an uncanny shrewdness—that proved vital to his success. Gandhi’s inspiration for the Salt March provides us with a particular helpful glimpse of this approach in concrete historical terms. The basic idea for the campaign was to embark on a 241-mile march to the sea to make salt in protest of Britain’s repressive salt statutes, which had outlawed the possession, production, and sale of non-government-manufactured salt. In making the trip by foot, Gandhi intended to gradually build public awareness and anticipation until all eyes were focused on either his and his companions’ resulting imprisonment, or their nonviolent act of defiance at journey’s end.

conferences with Lord Mountbatten, Jawaharlal Nehru, and other political leaders in Delhi in the months prior to India’s partitioning and independence. He felt that his own personal duty rested more in actively addressing the violent civil conflicts that had arisen in Bihar, Noakhali, and other locations. See *CW/MG* 94:287-89, “Speech at Prayer Meeting,” 4-11-47.

The march captured the imagination of India and the world. Hundreds of thousands joined the movement by illegally producing salt, protesting arrests, resigning from government posts, and other acts of civil disobedience. The campaign significantly weakened the administration's hold on the country: the Raj's public image was permanently tarnished; revenues plummeted from boycotts, *hartals*, and other acts of non-cooperation; the police and military found themselves in complete disarray trying to contain the movement; and the prisons overflowed with more than 60,000 "seditionists" by the end of the year.⁴⁴ The march also sparked a cultural revolution. By the time the struggle was over, "hundreds of thousands of women, who had never before emerged from the hidden quarters of their own homes or cast off the dark veils that hid their faces and bodies, would join the picketing for Swaraj."⁴⁵

The inspiration for the march did not arise out of thin air. In the months leading up to it, Gandhi had taken on the responsibility of planning and deciding upon the independence movement's next big step. He retreated to his ashram at Sabarmati in January of 1930 to reflect on various strategies. Responding in the middle of the month to an inquiry about his plans, he revealed, "I am furiously thinking day and night, and I do not see any light coming out of the surrounding darkness."⁴⁶ The challenge was to arrive at a solution that would take full advantage of the strength of *satyagraha*, while

⁴⁴ See e.g. Louis Fischer, *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World* (New York: Mentor, 1954), 102-103; and Stanley Wolpert, *Gandhi's Passion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 144-51.

⁴⁵ Wolpert, *Gandhi's Passion*, 148.

⁴⁶ Fischer, *His Life and Message*, 95.

averting as much as possible the risks of a national outbreak of violence. The situation was tense. The Raj's political maneuvering had sparked heated responses from opposition leaders, creating a context of "double violence" that Gandhi felt must be rapidly addressed. By the beginning of February, he was resolved that the administration's deceitful posturing had made it necessary to take the "boldest risks" through a new campaign. He writes to a colleague: "I have arrived at this definite conclusion as a result of deep and prayerful thinking. . . . The nature of the action is not yet clear to me. It has to be civil disobedience. How it is to be undertaken and by whom besides me, I have not yet seen quite clearly. But the shining cover that overlays the truth is thinning day by day and will presently break."⁴⁷

In the middle of February, a solution finally emerged. Gandhi recounted the experience to an audience two weeks into the march:

Today I am doing what the nation has been yearning for during the past ten years. Have I not been rebuked for delaying civil resistance? Have not friends angrily said, "You are stopping the progress of the nation towards its goal? You have only to say, 'Let there be civil resistance', behold! there is *swaraj*." There is some truth in the taunt. Full civil resistance does mean *swaraj*. But I was staying my hand. I had no confidence in myself. I was straining my ear to listen to the still small voice within, but only up to yesterday there was no response. It was in Lahore I had told a journalist that I saw nothing on the horizon to warrant civil resistance. But suddenly, as in a flash, I saw the light in the Ashram. Self-confidence returned. Englishmen and some Indian critics have been warning me against the hazard. But the voice within is clear. I must put forth all my effort or retire altogether and for all time from public life. I feel that now is the time or it will be never.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ CWMG 48:282, "Letter to C. F. Andrews," 2-2-30.

⁴⁸ CWMG 48:478, *Nanjivan*, 3-30-30.

As the preceding accounts show, Gandhi undoubtedly used discursive thought to arrive at the inspiration for the march. Much of the process took the form of intensive reflection, “deep and prayerful thinking,” and meditation. He researched various issues and options, weighed the costs and benefits of different outcomes, and specifically contemplated the degree of resonance that more poignant opposition to the salt tax would achieve in India and the rest of the world. But while inferential processes played a significant role in the decision-making process, Gandhi insisted that it was the direct insight of the inner voice that ultimately precipitated the solution. The idea for the march arrived in a flash of immediate insight, and he reported that its rationale occurred to him only *after* he “had first seen the way.”⁴⁹

Not only did Gandhi stress the importance of the inner voice in practical decision-making, he also gave a brief account of the process. Sometimes, he suggests, the inner voice can indicate a course of action without us knowing all the particulars involved. Other times, it speaks only once we have digested all such information. Some intuitions come unexpectedly, without a period of conscious gestation; others arise only after having extensively mulled over a problem. He also describes the inner voice as a kind of monitor that measures the correctness of different actions:

It is true that I do not depend upon my intellect to decide upon any action. For me the reasoned course of action is held in check subject to the sanction of the inner voice. I do not know if others would call it the mysterious power or whatsoever. I have never deliberated upon this nor analyzed it, I have felt no need of doing so either. I have faith, and knowledge, too, that a Power exists beyond reasoning. This

⁴⁹ See *CW/MG* 48:390-91, *Navajivan*, 3-9-30.

suffices for me. I am unable to clarify this any further as I know nothing more in the matter.⁵⁰

Reasoning and the inner voice represent distinct cognitive powers for Gandhi. The voice enjoys a kind of executive authority, and can ultimately approve or deny decisions arrived at by discursive reasoning. More than just a sanctioning mechanism, however, it also serves as a source of ideas and insights. When functioning properly, it can produce ideas whose wisdom becomes fully apparent only in hindsight.⁵¹

While such insights may not have their immediate basis in inferential reasoning, Gandhi held that any genuine intuition will ultimately be found to harmonize with reason. Moreover, he observed in his own experience that the promptings of the inner voice tended to have a *prima facie* logic.⁵² Whether marches against unjust taxes, fasts aimed at combating untouchability, or boycotts against the importation of British textiles, he believed that its objectives were not so mysterious as to contradict reason.

In the case of the Salt March, a strong rationale could be articulated even before its effects were observed. The idea was brilliant, among other things, for its selection of a palpable target with universal import, a tax which touched the lives of virtually every Indian, and was a special burden on the poor, who were often obliged to purchase it in

⁵⁰ *CWMG* 55:422, "Letter to Bhuskute," 5-25-32. Cf. e.g. *CWMG* 29:156-57, "Letter to C. Rajagopalachari," 9-15-24.

⁵¹ In the case of the Salt March, for example, some of Gandhi's close colleagues thought the salt laws too small an issue to serve as the movement's symbol. Likewise, many British officials wildly underestimated the march's significance. Only after the campaign had begun did its genius come into focus. See e.g. Horace Alexander, *Gandhi Through Western Eyes* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1969), 61-63; and Ved Mehta, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 146-48.

⁵² See e.g. *CWMG* 58:10-11, *The Bombay Chronicle*, 11-18-32.

greater quantities for cattle, and for whom salt was their only condiment.⁵³ Gandhi did not hesitate to look for supporting reasons for decisions he arrived at intuitively, and to explain these reasons to others. After “seeing the way,” he reports, he “consciously reasons out why it is the best way.”⁵⁴ After “one has heard the inner voice, one finds arguments in support of it.”⁵⁵

The Salt March, moreover, provides us with an example of following the inner voice that, though *initiated* through private reflection and contemplation, was *executed* in the domain of practical life. Gandhi’s stroke of genius emerged after retreating to his ashram, and after a great deal of prayerful reflection. But according to him he moved still closer to Truth—both morally and spiritually—once he brought this insight into the field of action, interacting nonviolently with his adversaries and serving his fellow citizens. We will take a closer look at Gandhi’s emphasis on ethical action in the next section.

ACTION, DISCIPLINE, AND INNER PURIFICATION

On one level, Gandhi apparently rejects the notion that everyone has an inner voice. Children, he says, lack it, as do many adults. He finds it would be absurd, for

⁵³ *CWMG* 48:349-50, *Young India*, 2-27-30.

⁵⁴ *CWMG* 65:461, “Talk with Mary Chesley,” 12-15-34.

⁵⁵ *CWMG* 48:391, *Navajivan*, 3-9-30. For example, following his inspiration for the twenty-one day fast, Gandhi searched for a rationale and ultimately became convinced of the practicality of the measure, despite its unorthodoxy. According to him, the problem of untouchability was so deeply entrenched that by itself no amount of political power, money, or grass-roots organization could guarantee its eradication. Personal transformation was also needed. In addition to strong external mobilization, India had to cultivate “inward wealth,” “inward organization,” and “inward powers” if lasting change was to occur. The fast, he concluded, would promote purification at this inward level. See *CWMG* 61:38, *Harijan*, 5-6-33.

example, to insist that the cannibal be allowed to act upon the directive of his so-called conscience, which calls upon him to eat other people.⁵⁶ One can make claims of conscience without necessarily possessing a conscience, and by themselves such claims do not provide sufficient moral justification for one's actions. But it is more accurate to say that Gandhi believes that the inner voice lies dormant in those in whom it appears absent. Highlighting the principle of the *atman's* ultimate unity with *Brahman*, he holds that all humans are "born equal" and "have the same soul as any other."⁵⁷ As one of the soul's basic features, the inner voice is present in every human being, even if it frequently remains undeveloped.

Is following the inner voice for Gandhi the same as obeying conscience? In many instances he uses the expressions interchangeably, while acknowledging the latter phrase's greater appeal among those with more naturalistic inclinations. In other cases he indicates that listening to the inner voice is a practice reserved for those who have undergone a great deal of moral and spiritual training, while referring less restrictively to "conscience" as the basic moral sense that most people possess. When he does distinguish between conscience and the inner voice, it signals a difference, not in source, but in the degree of "listening:" the former refers to a marginal level of listening to the inner *Brahman*, while "following the inner voice" indicates a higher degree of attunement.

⁵⁶ CWMG 36:344, *Young India*, 9-23-26.

⁵⁷ CWMG 40:121, *Young India*, 9-29-27.

Gandhi acknowledges that other inclinations can easily be mistaken for the voice. Warning against the supposition that one is “always listening to God,” or that the voice involves “a kind of ‘open sesame’ which has just to be shown to the millions,”⁵⁸ he stresses that one must be devoted to a lifelong *sadhana* or spiritual effort to hear it with any consistency. This condition should come as no surprise, he points out, for acquiring even the most ordinary capacities requires practice and discipline.⁵⁹ To follow the inner voice, the mind “must be attuned to the five necessary rules of love, truth, purity, non-possession, and fearlessness.”⁶⁰ Based partially on the *yamas* (spiritual exercises) of Patanjali’s *Yogasutra*, these rules promote self-restraint, self-transcendence, and a clearer perception of reality. Gandhi and his colleagues incorporated these rules into the observances established at his ashram in Sabarmati; they were considered necessary to make oneself suitable not only for following the inner voice, but also for serving India and humanity at large.⁶¹

Gandhi finds that lack of discipline largely explains why there are so many false and conflicting claims of conscience, and why manipulative behavior and self-deception often pass for moral insight:

⁵⁸ CWMG 76:348-50, *Harijan*, 10-7-39.

⁵⁹ CWMG 61:219, *Harijan*, 7-8-33.

⁶⁰ CWMG 65:461.

⁶¹ For an updated compilation of four key texts on daily observances that Gandhi composed while living at Satyagraha Ashram, see M. K. Gandhi, *Vows and Observances*, ed. John Strohmeier (Berkeley: Berkeley Hills, 1999).

But those who have made these experiments know that it is not proper for everyone to claim to hear the voice of conscience and it is because we have at the present moment everybody claiming the right of conscience without going through any discipline whatsoever that there is so much untruth being delivered to a bewildered world. All therefore that I can in all humility present to you is that Truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth, you must reduce yourself to a zero.⁶²

If spiritual discipline is for Gandhi a prerequisite for claiming the inner voice as a guide, listening to it also requires a great deal of humility and right motivation. Contemplative practices do not by themselves guarantee success on this count. “A man,” Gandhi observes, “may chant Ramanama or tell his beads all day long, and move in society like a sage, but if he is selfish at heart, he is not meek but only hypocritical.”⁶³ Humility, to Gandhi’s mind, cannot be directly cultivated, but is rather a quality that naturally accompanies the increasing awareness of life’s transitory nature and one’s comparative smallness in the grand scheme of things.

On his view, humans are but tiny specks in relation to the whole of Reality—specks that nevertheless participate in its greatness as parts of its eternal nature. The inner voice can shed light on both sides of this relation, enabling the *satyagrahi* to develop a healthy and accurate perspective on life. Echoing the famous Vedantic metaphor in this regard, Gandhi compares human life to a drop in the ocean that dries up when it “enter[s] upon an existence independent of the ocean.” He adds, however, that “if we shatter the chains of egotism, and melt into the ocean of humanity, we share its dignity. To feel that we are something is to set up a barrier between God and ourselves; to cease

⁶² *CWMG* 54:270, “Speech at Meeting in Lausanne,” 12-8-31.

⁶³ *CWMG* 50:117, “Letter to Narandas Gandhi,” 10-7-30.

feeling that we are something is to become one with God.”⁶⁴ If egotism blocks the proper relationship and flow of communication between the self and the Whole, Gandhi suggests that realizing our comparative insignificance in relation to it can lead to a greater understanding and awareness of Truth and our share in its divine nature. Such insight revolutionizes our outlook and motivations, and, with progress, ego ceases to be the primary driving force behind our actions.

According to Gandhi, a number of factors can hinder the proper functioning of the inner voice, including pessimism, fear, worldly attachments, and an inflated ego. Optimism and love, by contrast, act as antidotes that strengthen it. By listening to the voice, the optimist develops virtue and lives happily:

The optimist lives delighting in thoughts of love and charity and, since there is none whom he looks upon as his enemy, he moves without fear whether he is in the forest or in the midst of men. . . . The optimist will not kill or harass any human being. With his inner ear ever attuned to the sweet music of his soul, he will live floating on an ocean of joy.

The pessimist, being himself a prey of violent attachments and dislikes, looks upon every person as his enemy and fears him. He has of course no such thing as the inner voice. Like the honey bee, he flits from pleasure to pleasure, daily tiring of them and daily seeking new ones and, finally, dies, unloved, unwept and unsung.⁶⁵

As this passage demonstrates, for Gandhi the inner voice can also serve as a source of contemplative understanding, whether one is alone or in the company of others. By attuning the inner ear “to the sweet music of his soul,” the optimist lives with joy and fearlessness, which, as Gandhi makes clear elsewhere, is based on an integrated awareness of his connection and identity with the Whole. The optimist humbly

⁶⁴ Ibid., 118.

⁶⁵ *CWMG* 24:457-59, *Navajivan*, 10-23-21.

recognizes that his best insights ultimately come not from the temporal self but from the universal *atman* in which his soul shares.

This account does not amount to an endorsement of wishful thinking. While Gandhi considered optimism essential for wisdom and well-being, he also insisted on buttressing positive thinking with reason and rigorous self-observation. The *satyagrahi*'s path is not one of blind faith. The votary of truth "will not be satisfied with having things scientific just on faith. He will insist on finding a basis in reason."⁶⁶ On the Gandhian view, every part of life has a respective science that one must actively investigate to develop an adequate grasp of reality. He felt that blind faith, on the other hand, was at the root of what he believed to be India's general inertia and complacency. If Truth manifests in infinite ways, it exhibits distinctive patterns, and acts through discernable and immutable mechanisms. Reason and science, he insisted, were needed to discover new things and to deepen one's understanding of both the natural and spiritual planes of reality.

Gandhi held that, just as in the natural sciences, we must *actively* experiment with the moral and spiritual law if we are to discover its nature and underlying mechanisms. This notion supplied the subtitle to his autobiography: "My Experiments with Truth." Certain essential conditions must also be followed to examine Truth with seriousness and depth. Among these are the experimenter's cultivation of love, purity, fearlessness,

⁶⁶ CWMG 89:189, *Harijan*, 3-31-46. Cf. CWMG 91:289, "A Thought for the Day," 6-25-46: "Intuition is lame if it is not supported by reason."

and the other attributes of spiritual discipline, as well as humility and reason.⁶⁷ The inner voice acts as a key instrument of the “experimental course,” providing insight into how the different facets of Truth map onto each individual’s personal experience. With increasing experimentation comes greater versatility and better insight into the virtually infinite ways that Truth can be imitated and expressed. The practical nature of the science also safeguards against the pitfalls of armchair philosophy: by continually subjecting one’s views to the trials of everyday experience, one becomes less susceptible to aloofness, over-abstraction, and other sources of error and deception.

What are some concrete examples of how the voice can be used to pursue Truth? We have already seen two large-scale illustrations with the Salt March of 1930 and the twenty-one day fast of 1933. But Gandhi believes the inner voice can also be followed in more mundane ways. As mentioned in the previous section, he relied upon its guidance not only when faced with significant social, economic, and political decisions, but also in smaller affairs such as daily diet and travel plans. One might, for instance, attempt to use the voice as a source of insight when constructing a reading agenda. Reasoning and empirical observation alone do not always provide sufficient or conclusive answers about how much to read, when to read, or what to read. Operating in concert with reasoning and empirical observation, the voice can indicate a particular direction of study, or perhaps communicate that a certain moment in life calls for little or no study at all.

⁶⁷ Bhikhu Parekh (“Gandhi and Interreligious Dialogue,” in Allen, *Gandhi for the Twenty-First Century*, 3) also writes of what he calls Gandhi’s conception of rational faith, which goes beyond reason and empirical experience in areas they cannot reach, but continues to be guided by these sources of knowledge.

In these and similar examples the *satyagrahi* experiments by following the voice and observing the results. Experimentation helps him break from old patterns of behavior—by listening to the voice he makes adjustments so as to realize a greater sense of fulfillment, virtue, and harmony with others and God. This, in turn, is what it means for Gandhi to pursue the eternal. Using the voice, the *satyagrahi*'s experiments help him to deepen his understanding of the unchanging spiritual laws governing the world. And his progressive understanding of these laws—how they manifest in different ways in different times, contexts, etc.—help him to live a more truthful and virtuous life. The two processes are distinct in that one sheds light on eternal reality while the other involves his interaction with the mutable world. But to the outside observer they may appear indistinguishable. For while the *satyagrahi* is following the voice while engaged in, say, a nonviolent march to the sea, his thoughts could very well be directed toward contemplating Truth *or* improving the way he relates to the world. His external behavior in either case may appear identical, and indeed if the inner *atman* has begun to deeply express itself in his life, he could be attending to both aims simultaneously as he becomes more aware of the divine's increasing presence in the actions he pursues.

Gandhi formulates the inner voice as a “living force,” not an abstract moral code or principle. By listening to it one listens to the divine presence within.⁶⁸ He describes a particular kind of energy that comes with actively surrendering oneself to the voice. Like an electric current, which “can only be produced by following certain laws,” the “living

⁶⁸ *CWMG* 65:461.

force which we call God can similarly be followed if we know and follow his law leading to the discovery of him in us.”⁶⁹ In contrast to the limited, temporal nature of political and religious institutions, the soul shares in God’s essence and has inestimable potential. Harnessing its power means developing a practical awareness of how it operates in relation to different natural, moral, and spiritual laws, and how it can best express Truth in different situations.

Because of the dynamic between the inner voice and practical moral conduct, Gandhi insists, one must pursue a well-regulated life and actively follow these laws if the *atman* is to remain a substantial and reliable source of wisdom. Our best insights arrive when conduct follows the rhythm of an ever-moving world: “Nothing in this world is static, everything is kinetic,” he writes; “if there is no progression, there is inevitable retrogression.”⁷⁰ The universe, on this account, remains in constant motion, with a particular direction. The *satyagrahi* does not merely refrain from harming others but labors to discern and follow the universe’s direction, which in turn requires practical familiarity with the mechanisms undergirding it.⁷¹ Idleness and neglect of this eternal structure, by contrast, bring *himsa* and general unhappiness. By standing still, remaining

⁶⁹ CWMG 95:274-75, *Harijan*, 6-22-47.

⁷⁰ CWMG 65:82, *Harijan*, 8-11-40.

⁷¹ How, according to Gandhi, does one discern and follow the universe’s direction? Part of what seems to be involved is the ongoing effort to deepen one’s understanding of the natural, moral, and spiritual laws that hold the universe together. Similar to the program outlined in the approach to the Salt March, one conducts ongoing experiments with the world using not only empirical observation and inferential reasoning, but also a direct kind of insight that transcends reason.

ignorant, or avoiding life's challenges, one inevitably becomes a point of cosmic resistance.

Gandhi's account of the inner voice coheres with his emphasis on *karmayoga*. The term "inner voice" carries a connotation of ethical duty and action: it is the sense within that calls upon us to *do* right. Gandhi calls himself a practical idealist. Almost every reference he makes to the inner voice has to do with its relation to action and how best to conduct oneself in the world. With "constant and patient striving and waiting on God," he says, one slowly develops the ability to listen to the inner voice. Ideally it matures into an effortless process, one that "coincides with the process of living."⁷² The practice ultimately has to become "as natural as breathing or the blinking of the eyes, which processes happen without our knowing them."⁷³ The goal is seamless integration into every aspect of life.

Critical of Hinduism's generally passive conception of *ahimsa*, Gandhi endorses instead a program of active work in the service of others.⁷⁴ Based on the aforementioned notion that all of life is interconnected and in some sense akin, this program becomes the primary means of striving after Truth. Selfless service, he says, is "service unto God;" it captures the positive side of *ahimsa*, which is love. Service is also a key testing ground of the inner voice, and can take on any number of forms from nonviolent "raids" on

⁷² *CWMG* 76:349, *Harijan*, 10-7-39.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ See e.g. *CWMG* 65:463.

colonial salt factories, to spinning cloth, to improving one's relationships with friends and family. By listening to the voice, he maintains, we develop an inner moral strength that allows us to place ourselves in the face of danger, pursue humble tasks when egoistic attachments pull us in other directions, and serve and relate to others in emotionally intelligent ways. With time, we are brought both consciously and unconsciously to a more disinterested approach to love and service, as well as an increasing degree of self-transcendence and a better grasp of the eternal.

OBJECTIONS AND CONCERNS

Common criticisms of Gandhi's views on Truth and the inner voice follow two dominant strands of thought. The first questions whether he presents a totalizing, essentialist perspective that is incompatible with contemporary sensibilities. Related to this concern are worries surrounding the issue of cultural relativism: if the inner voice acts as a window into truth, critics ask, why are there so many divergent accounts of truth and how do we distinguish among them? Do not the deep-seated differences in moral and metaphysical perspectives between different cultures cast doubt on the idea that one could have an inner voice that accesses an objective "Truth?"

The second criticism centers on the key role Gandhi assigns to the inner voice in moral conduct. As we have seen, he claims that the inner voice—the "voice of God"—is the final arbiter of his decisions, and that it "lights the way" when he finds himself

conflicted. This view, the objection goes, collides with our modern emphasis on secular, empirical justification, and rational decision-making processes.

With respect to the first criticism, we should note that Gandhi was aware of the objections of cultural relativists. He offered a classical Indian philosophical response: even as Truth itself is eternal and unitary, human understanding is perspectival and fragmentary. He drew upon the Jain parable of the elephant and seven blind men in this regard.⁷⁵ According to this story, each man was able to touch a different part of the animal—tusk, tail, legs, etc.—and, as a result, each gave a unique description. Every man’s account of the elephant was accurate from his own perspective, but each one’s view also appeared false to the others. Gandhi argued that, like these men, our accounts of Truth are only partial, for we lack access to the whole of Reality. Likewise, he believes that no religion or philosophy can capture Truth in its entirety, though inspired sages throughout history have offered invaluable insights into its multifaceted nature. Truth cannot be arranged and pinned down to a rigid set of beliefs and dogma; but religions provide us with different glimpses into fundamental aspects and principles of Truth as they emerge in different societies and epochs.⁷⁶

For these reasons, Gandhi advocated respect for all traditions and worldviews—a position reinforced by India’s heterogeneous character. He predicted that any attempt to homogenize the country’s wide array of religious and social communities was bound to

⁷⁵ See e.g. *CWMG* 36:13-14. “Letter to Mrs. R. Armstrong and Mrs. P. R. Howard,” 7-9-26.

⁷⁶ See Parekh, “Interreligious Dialogue,” 3-13, for an excellent account of Gandhi’s inclusive view in this regard.

fail. Gandhi criticized the deculturating tendencies of nationalism, opposed the idea of creating nation-states based on religion, and endorsed a social structure founded on inclusiveness and tolerance.⁷⁷ He also considered mutual toleration an essential component of individual conscience. Truth's unity, he observed, does not imply uniformity among its seekers. Individuals must be left free to determine how Truth manifests in the unique situations posed by their own experiences. If conscience is the supreme guide of individual conduct, the freedom of others to act according to their own lights requires that other views not be forced upon them.⁷⁸

Gandhi's premise that one must ultimately rely on one's own inner voice suggests a radical kind of individualism that stands in stark opposition to oppressive, totalizing frameworks. And his emphasis on the moral importance of the particulars of situations strongly contrasts with ethical theories based on general and universalizable rules and principles, further safeguarding against the imposition of monolithic systems of thought.⁷⁹ Still, one might worry that there is a totalizing streak in Gandhi's understanding of the individual's relationships with greater wholes, and particularly his or her relationship with absolute truth or ultimate reality.

⁷⁷ See e.g. Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), x-xi, 1-2; Bidyut Chakrabarty, *The Social and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Routledge, 2006), 94-96.

⁷⁸ *CWMG* 36:344, *Young India*, 9-23-26.

⁷⁹ This is not to say that Gandhi's emphasis on individual conscience, religious tolerance, moral particularism, or any other single feature of his worldview can adequately refute the charge that his view presents a totalizing essentialism. The point is rather that the combination of all these characteristics, along with others that will be discussed presently, offer a sufficient response to this worry.

Gandhi no doubt believes that the divine touches every sphere of life. He regards humans as fundamentally spiritual beings who draw their existence from a living Force that exceeds phenomenal reality. But his perspective is more metaphysical than normative on this count: he observes that like the ocean drop's relation to the ocean, our relation to the Whole is an unavoidable and brute fact of existence. His belief that we should act in harmony with the universe certainly is normative, but he asserts that people should discover the truth of this principle for themselves, as opposed to it being enforced by religious, philosophical, or secular authorities.

Following a similar line of thought, Nicholas Gier interprets Gandhi's ocean-drop analogy as one of organic holism, rather than absolute monism. The analogy, Gier suggests, maintains "the reality of the individual (on the analogue of the integral living cell) while at the same time making collective responsibility intelligible as well."⁸⁰ If Gandhi emphasizes the absolute oneness of all things, declaring that "God alone is and nothing else is,"⁸¹ he also opposes an Advaitic framework that, insisting upon the pure identity between *Atman* and *Brahman*, denies the genuine existence of individuals.⁸² Using the ocean-drop analogy, Gandhi explains his perspective: "Individuality is and is not even as each drop in the ocean is an individual and is not. It is not because apart from

⁸⁰ Gier, *The Virtue of Nonviolence*, 41. We should, however, stress that for Gandhi the analogy conveys more than just a close relationship between the drops and the ocean. For in an important, though not exhaustive sense, to him the drops *are* the ocean and share in its divine nature. But even this distinction does not fully capture the dynamic Gandhi envisions between the soul and *Brahman*, for he also believes that the Whole exists within each individual soul.

⁸¹ *CWMG* 54:269, *Young India*, 12-8-31.

⁸² See also n. 16.

the ocean it has no existence. It is because the ocean has no existence if the drop has not, i.e., has no individuality. They are beautifully interdependent.”⁸³ For Gandhi, to neglect the individual is to compromise the nature of the Whole, for the Whole is what it is partly in virtue of what its constituents contribute *as individuals*. Comparing Gandhi’s ocean drop to the integral living cell underlines both Gandhi’s emphasis on individual autonomy and each person’s intimate connection to other people and Truth as a whole. From this perspective, individual consciousness and freedom are regarded as real and sacred, and the interpretation also coheres with the rock-bottom equality Gandhi attributes to individual souls.⁸⁴

Gandhi observes that even as individuals flourish when given the freedom to act according to their own lights, to realize their full potential they must recognize their responsibilities to the greater organisms of which they are part (family, village, country, world). Rejecting a pyramidal structure, he envisions a society of villages with “ever-widening, never-ascending circles” that share “the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.” The “outermost circumference,” he predicts, “will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own

⁸³ *CWMG* 50:38, “Letter to P. G. Mathew,” 9-8-30.

⁸⁴ The reading also comports well with our abovementioned account of Gandhi’s conception of the holographic nature of the *atman*—that is to say, the sense in which the whole of reality is present within each individual soul. Indeed we can even perhaps take the cell/soul analogy another step by comparing the soul’s holographic nature to a cell’s DNA, which acts as a kind of map of the larger organism of which it is part.

strength from it.”⁸⁵ Gandhi can find no reasonable alternative to this model, since for him the individual and society are, by nature, mutually dependent.

This leads us to the second group of objections, which center on the concern that the inner voice is susceptible to exploitation and at odds with reason. Recognizing that many people consider the inner voice a delusion, Gandhi admits that sometimes we merely follow the projections of our ego.⁸⁶ He also points out that good character and God-mindedness do not guarantee accuracy, as can be seen in situations where the intuitions of virtuous people conflict.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, he possessed an unshakable belief in the existence and authority of the voice, based largely on what he considered to be repeated first-hand experience of it. His position also derived from rational analysis: he cites, for instance, the precedence of admirable figures throughout history who have claimed to have undergone intense personal transformations catalyzed by an inner voice. The list of examples, he notes, is quite long, and contains key personages from almost every cultural and religious tradition.⁸⁸

Inviting skeptics to test the waters for themselves, Gandhi suggests that the voice’s existence and virtue are to be proved not so much by argument as by close, first-

⁸⁵ *CWMG* 91:326, *Harijan*, 7-28-46.

⁸⁶ *CWMG* 76:348, *Harijan*, 10-7-39.

⁸⁷ Gandhi mentions, for example, that on the occasion of the twenty-one day fast one of his close associates—a man who considered himself “God-guided” and who Gandhi believes to be “unsurpassed in godliness”—was thoroughly convinced that Gandhi would not survive the ordeal and journeyed all the way from Madras to try to change his mind. See *CWMG* 76:348-9.

⁸⁸ It is worth noting that two of the other most influential figures of the twentieth-century—Albert Einstein and Martin Luther King, Jr.—also identified an “inner voice” as the primary source of their creativity and insight.

hand observation and investigation. Only by personally experimenting with the inner voice, he maintains, can one become sufficiently capable of evaluating it. Those who would experiment, however, must have patience and discipline, for following the voice involves a slow but radical transformation in priorities and worldview.

Gandhi recognizes that even minor attempts to listen to and act on the voice will inevitably impact others, and that acts performed with the best of intentions can have unforeseen negative consequences.⁸⁹ One must rely on limited data, proceeding with humility and an overarching awareness that an unanticipated turn of events can always prompt a change in course.⁹⁰ Even when confident of an intuition's authenticity, one cannot be sure its implementation will be flawless, or that external factors will guarantee a favorable outcome.⁹¹ One must be willing to "walk on the razor's edge," without

⁸⁹ Despite its basis in nonviolence and self-suffering (*tapas*), Gandhi recognized that *satyagraha* can sometimes create its own damage. He famously refers, for example, to his "Himalayan miscalculation" in 1919 of organizing a mass civil disobedience campaign before its participants were sufficiently educated and disciplined to proceed peacefully. Upon learning of the extent of the resulting arrests and rioting, he was obliged to suspend the movement. See Gandhi, *Experiments with Truth*, 466-71.

⁹⁰ According to Gandhi, sometimes we may not hear the voice with full clarity, or it may not communicate all the specifics associated with a particular course of action. In his own experience he relates that the voice sometimes indicated only a general direction—e.g. that he should initiate a nonviolent campaign in Rajkot—without providing details such as the exact time or nature of the course he was to pursue. Because it is difficult to know all of a situation's parameters, there is always the gamble that one will not perfectly succeed in implementing the voice's directives.

Other factors can also prevent success. In the case of the Salt March, Gandhi admitted that following the voice's promptings was a roll of the dice. He had a clear intuition that mass nonviolent civil disobedience was the best way to raise public awareness and stem the rising tide of bitterness and violence in the country, but he could not be sure of its consequences. Success would depend both on the public's and colonial administration's response, and was ultimately left to the free will of everyone involved. When asked about future political strategies, Gandhi would often say that his choices would depend on what his co-workers and adversaries decided to do in the meantime. He had no qualms with changing strategy at the last minute, and on occasion, his inner voice indicated a course of action quite different than the one originally planned. See e.g. *CWVG* 40:39-40, *The Hindu*, 9-10-27; *CWVG* 94:287-88, "Speech at Prayer Meeting," 4-11-47.

⁹¹ See previous note. According to Gandhi, the voice is never itself wrong, but we can fail to successfully carry out its directives due to errors in reasoning, limited knowledge about how best to apply what we hear, and

instructions or guarantees; following one's *svadharma* "is not such a safe thing. It is a gem that lies buried in the mine of experience. Only a few among millions of seekers succeed in digging it out."⁹²

But despite our imperfections, Gandhi thinks we simply have no other option but to experiment if we are to develop as moral beings. Cultivation of the inner sense is a key element of self-actualization and an essential part of what it means to be human. Even the most virtuous conduct is liable to poor imitation; suppressing the voice for fear of abuse only leads to individual and social paralysis. There is "no such thing in human affairs as insurance against all danger," he writes, the right thing "has got to be, and has always been, done, in spite of risk of misinterpretation and misapplication."⁹³

Gandhi stresses that one's approach to moral development must be reasonable and practicable. Perfectionism goes hand in hand with self-absorption, a loss of sensitivity to others, and an overestimation of the significance of one's position in the larger scheme of things. If the desire to be irreproachable leads to inertia and moral stagnancy, intuitive risk-taking is part of the process of self-surrender that leads to increased identification with Truth and decreased occupation with fears and selfish

insufficient data about the situations in which the directives are to be implemented. As just mentioned, human free will also figures significantly into Gandhi's understanding in this regard. The inner voice can accurately gauge a favorable course of action, but whether or not it succeeds will largely depend on how others respond. Moreover in some cases one must work with a batch of less-than-optimal choices, sometimes interacting with individuals who are unlikely to respond favorably to any approach.

⁹² *CWMG* 43:188-89, *Navajivan*, 11-4-28.

⁹³ *CWMG* 60:76, *Harijan*, 3-18-33.

concerns. When motivated by love and self-sacrifice, even our mistakes can “take us a step forward.”⁹⁴

Gandhi grants that claims of conscience are not only susceptible to error but also intentional abuse. He points out, however, that following the inner voice is no different from other virtues in this respect. Actions performed in the name of justice are oftentimes anything but just, but we are not led for this reason to deny the existence of justice or call for its suppression. Likewise, abuses committed under the cover of conscience do not necessarily impugn its moral value or imply that it is an illusion.⁹⁵ There is, according to Gandhi, a natural discordance between false appeals to conscience and people’s basic intuitions about goodness, justice, and truth. In the long run, counterfeit claims tend to be unmasked.

Still, we may worry about the dangers of abuse in the short run. For what about the problem posed by ill-intentioned charismatic leaders who claim the voice of God for their own? Does not the mass public harm they commit suggest that we should abandon appeals to the inner voice, at least in public affairs?

Gandhi deals with this complaint by repeating the fact that any valuable human attribute—love, courage, justice, our sense of connection with others and nature—can be manipulated for negative ends. From his point of view, the role the inner voice plays in encouraging people to act virtuously (e.g. struggling for human rights) is something that

⁹⁴ Ibid., 190.

⁹⁵ CWMG 29:25-26, *Young India*, 8-21-24.

should not be abandoned at any cost. But he adds further that one must always proceed *nonviolently* with any experimentation.⁹⁶ This specification is vital because it *radically limits* the playing field of historical and hypothetical scenarios that one might call upon as examples of exploitation of the voice. Unlike many of the atrocities that have been committed under the guise of conscience, the self-suffering nature of nonviolent resistance safeguards against its own abuse, for the *satyagrahi*'s method assures that he bears the brunt of his mistakes. And even if power seekers and exhibitionists attempt to use Gandhian principles for ill gain, all else being equal they will likely do less harm misapplying nonviolent *satyagraha* than if their energies were directed toward more overtly violent ends.⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

We have seen that Gandhi views Truth as the governing principle of life and the ultimate measure of human actions. Truth, on his view, is not separate from the cosmos

⁹⁶ Gandhi bases his conclusion about the universal necessity of *ahimsa* on what he refers to as his lifelong experimentation with Truth. For him, such experimentation involves the combination of empirical observation, reasoning, and the inner voice. Through it he has discovered what he calls the “law of *ahimsa*,” which can be most easily seen by observing the detrimental consequences of this law’s neglect, which arise through exploitation, jealousy, inordinate ambition, deception, crime, and other forms of violence.

⁹⁷ This is not to say that Gandhi endorses nonviolent experimentation with the voice merely as a cautionary, practical measure. *Ahimsa* is for him an absolute principle, not a pragmatic one. Nevertheless, he does not think this commits him to favoring even cowardly pacifism over physical violence. To the contrary, Gandhi distinguishes between “nonviolence of the weak” and “nonviolence of the strong,” maintaining that there is more *himsa* in fearful flight from an oppressor than self-defense through physical force. Accordingly, he says he would advise a country to take up arms against oppression rather than to passively accept it out of fear. Still, he believes that the practice of principled nonviolence remains vastly superior to either of these alternatives. *Ahimsa* remains an ideal that can only be approximated, for this life unavoidably carries with it a degree of violence. But the practice of principled nonviolence allows one to come close to this ideal, while cowardice leads one away from it.

but a living force that informs and guides even the smallest of its constituents. The path to Truth is largely one of self-discovery through both internal and external ethical transformation. According to Gandhi, one of the primary ways we come to know this unchanging reality is by engaging ethically in the practical world. We see God by serving others, practicing nonviolence, and seeking to become increasingly stronger expressions of the divine. In turn, Gandhi thinks that to behave ethically in the practical world we must also set aside time for contemplative practices, such as prayer, which can give us inward calmness and a better sense of communion with the eternal. Not surprisingly, prayer for Gandhi takes on an especially moral character—one uses it to cultivate humility, reflect on one’s daily shortcomings, and awaken the *Brahman* within so as to be able to engage the world with greater clarity and insight.

In Gandhi’s treatment of the inner voice we find an outstanding example of how his philosophy unites the active and contemplative lives into a unified whole. He believes the inner voice sheds light on our practical moral conduct, offering insight that extends beyond reason while remaining in harmony with it. The inner voice also illuminates the deeply interconnected nature of reality, highlighting the importance of nonviolent *satyagraha* and selfless service. In particular, it clarifies the place of the immediate self, enabling one to overcome selfish, inordinate desires and to identify with humanity and the whole of Reality. The inner voice also provides insight into one’s *svadharma*, indicating which courses of action best meet the concerns and responsibilities attendant upon one’s own particular existence.

Gandhi takes great care to distinguish his conception of following the inner voice from blind faith: after receiving an insight, he believes one should look for supporting reasons, and that experimentation with the voice must be undertaken by engaging the practical world with a scientific mindset. He also strongly warns against the idea that listening to it comes easily, instead emphasizing the importance of moral development through the cultivation of humility, inner purification, and self-discipline. Ultimately, his program can be summed up as one of “contemplation in action:” a process whereby we achieve closer epistemological and existential approximations to Truth by actively experimenting in everyday life, our ears attuned to the voice within.

Conclusion

We have covered a lot of ground in this study, and in the final chapter I would like to recapitulate and summarize what we have learned while offering a few brief comparisons between Plato, Augustine, and Gandhi on the subjects we have discussed.

THE PLATONIC MODEL

In chapter two we saw that Plato does not consider directed question-and-answer the only viable means for pursuing truth and genuine knowledge. Philosophical disputation unquestionably stands as one of the preeminent methods of reaching truth, and dialectic itself takes on many forms in the dialogues—the *elenchus*, hypothesis, collection and division, and different forms of internal question-and-answer. The distinguishing feature of all these variations, and the criterion we should apply in evaluating other methods, is whether or not they succeed in bringing one to a clearer and deeper understanding of objective reality. To repeat the *Philebus*' characterization,

dialectic is concerned with “the eternal and selfsame,” while other *technai* are occupied with “what comes to be and perishes” (61e). Plato associates *epistêmê* with Forms, and *doxa* with sensible particulars. *Doxa* cognizes objects that are intermediate between “what is” and “what is not,” while *epistêmê* apprehends reality in itself. In the *Republic*, *epistêmê* is closely linked with dialectic and *noêsis*. Through *noêsis* the philosopher apprehends Forms, while the other three mental states—*dianoia*, *pistis*, and *eikasía*—provide less clarity and have objects with progressively smaller shares in truth. The litmus test for dialectical knowledge, we are told, is the ability to give and receive a *logos*. This has led several commentators to suppose that dialectical knowledge can be viewed primarily as justified true belief: we know things if we believe true propositions about them, and are able to justify our position. Such a view obviously has strong affinities with models that locate question-and-answer as the preeminent or exclusive means of pursuing truth; but as has been shown, there are important reasons to be suspicious of it. The first among these is that, in the *Republic*, *Philebus*, and elsewhere, dialectic’s primary concern is not with the truth of propositions but the knowledge of *objects*—and specifically with the knowledge of Forms. Dialecticians are able to give adequate *logoi* of what Justice, Beauty, and so forth actually *are*, and they do this because they are in a position to directly perceive these realities with the mind’s eye. This is not to say that propositional inquiry does not play a central role in one’s ability to present and defend one’s *logoi* of reality, as well as to separate those with false knowledge from those with genuine insight. Plato also considers question-and-answer a critical environment for engendering *noêsis* and sharpening one’s

mental and verbal accounts of reality. But these *logoi* are distinct from the Forms themselves, and it is the Forms that the philosopher ultimately seeks to know.

This distinction is brought into full relief by the *Republic's* subordination of *logoi*. *Logoi*, it emerges, are the objects of *dianoia*: they are the images through which we conceive of intelligible objects before we are able to perceive them noetically. *Logoi* are not, however, only the images of logical and mathematical realities, but of moral and political Forms as well, such as the verbal picture Socrates presents of the Kallipolis. They correspond to the representations in water that prisoners first see after emerging from the Cave, and also align with portrayals of image-like thinking found in other dialogues. Plato treats representational thought and learning as a second-best, for he indicates in several places that it is better to learn the natures of things through the things themselves. The dialectician's *logoi* are among the images used by dianoetic thinking. These images, no doubt, provide for superior approximations to truth in verbal and written form; they remain, however, representational in nature, even when delivered by a true dialectician, for at best they serve as the products of *noêsis*, and never serve as its objects.

The above analysis should not be taken as a criticism of the value of question-and-answer in Plato's overarching epistemological program, for he is quite explicit about its essential role in leading us to clearer and deeper insights into truth. This analysis should, however, alert us to the importance of reevaluating the function of practical experience in the philosophical quest, as its upshot is that truth is not ultimately found in philosophical *logoi*, but in the realities behind these accounts. According to the *Republic*, it

is not sufficient to hear what may even turn out to be the *logoi* of genuine dialecticians on the nature of Beauty, Truth, the Good, and other Forms. To know these realities one must have personal, non-representational experience of them. We saw briefly that in Book 9 proper judgment is only the privilege of those who possess not only reason (*logôî*) and intelligence (*phronêsei*), but experience (*empeiriai*) as well. The best judge of the comparative value of the lives of wisdom, honor, and material gain is the person with the widest range of experience. Likewise, in Book 10, only the “user” of various things can know their essences, as compared to the “maker” and “imitator,” who are one and two removes away from dialectical knowledge.

Perhaps the strongest case for a model of “active dialectic” in the *Republic* is Book 7’s account of student-philosophers. We learn not only that the longest segment of their training is dedicated to social and political affairs, but that this period comes *after* their five-year training in philosophical disputation and *before* they can apprehend the Good itself: this presumably implies that systematic question-and-answer alone will not lead to a proper grasp of the Good; theoretical endeavors are to be complemented by a much longer period of practical integration before the students’ formal education is complete. Prior to this, their awareness remains primarily dianoetic. Among other things, we are told that student-philosophers must strive for internal equilibrium and self-mastery during their practical training. And the view they finally achieve of the Good is only a certain milestone on a much longer path, for after they have perceived it, they are faced with the challenge of integrating this newfound awareness into the city and their lives.

Because of their extended re-integration into public life, philosopher-rulers act with greater wisdom than their student counterparts, for they “know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image.” Their wisdom includes “good judgment” (*euboulia*), which discerns how to manage the internal and external relations of the Kallipolis in such a way as to harmonize with nature. If *euboulia* contains practical elements, it also remains a form of dialectical knowledge, for *euboulia* is only possessed by philosopher-rulers and presupposes frequent access to the Forms themselves.

Philosopher-rulers work as painters, combining and arranging the colors on their canvas in such a way as to best reflect the divine. Their practice is by nature experimental, integrating trial-and-error practices with direct apprehensions of eternal reality in order to find the best instantiations of the Good, Justice, and other Forms in day-to-day life.

We also observed that the philosopher-rulers’ management of the Kallipolis seemed to integrate several of the Line analogy’s mental states. *Pistis* is certainly involved in their everyday interactions with phenomenal reality, and Socrates stresses that their enlightened rule also hinges upon direct, noetic access to Forms. It seems, moreover, that these mental states operate in conjunction with one another, such as when mathematicians rely on visual diagrams while studying mathematical objects. This point is also underlined by Book 5’s insistence that, contrary to sight-lovers, philosophers are aware of both the Form of Beauty and the beautiful objects participating in it. And we are led to believe that this dynamic holds for their understanding of other Forms and particulars as well. Pistic and noetic mental processes overlap in their ability to grasp sensible objects *as* participants in different Forms. Accordingly, while philosopher-rulers

devote a great deal of attention to temporal concerns while governing, they proceed with an outlook and general state of awareness grounded in Forms. They act not merely on their representational memories of past noetic experiences, but through their continued access to Forms as they navigate daily affairs. Philosopher-rulers are *users* of objects, as opposed to makers or imitators. They come to a greater understanding of intelligible reality by seeking out different Forms while actively engaged in the affairs of the city. Philosophers of course frequently experience pistic and dianoetic states as they undertake their duties in the workaday world, but *noēsis* remains the guiding element of their thoughts and actions.

Dialecticians can be compared with Book 3's account of true "musicians," who seek out the virtues and other Forms in every domain, and who labor to express the eternal in their works and lives. Dialecticians cannot afford to have their heads in the clouds, for they must recognize the participants of different Forms wherever they are found, and integrate this awareness into their judgments and behavior. Growth in understanding works the other way round as well: we learn that for the dialectician to deepen his understanding of Forms he must know the different kinds of "images" in which they are instantiated. Clearly again dialectic knowledge demands more than well-rounded exposure to the different forms of question-and-answer.

True dialectic, in fact, seems to be a much more far-reaching endeavor, for it involves the existential pursuit of unifying every aspect of one's life with the Forms through a long and arduous process of inner transformation. The Forms are described as entities that satisfy and nurture the soul. *Erōs* and reason are integral to the process of

imitating them, and, to a large extent, a thoroughgoing noetic grasp of Forms involves experiencing just what it means to embody them in one's life. We come to know Justice, Courage, and the Good by seeking to *be* just, courageous, and good. Dialectic is then as much an ethical and experiential enterprise as it is a theoretical one: through it one works to overcome psychological imbalances and worldly preoccupations; the dialectician must harmonize the soul's rational, spirited, and appetitive aspects so as to allow all three to move toward greater union with the Forms. Dialectic is thus a holistic discipline that consists largely in increasing knowledge of the Forms through a mental vision purified by self-mastery and the continual search for ultimate reality both in theoretical and practical endeavors.

The *Philebus* provides us with further dimensions of Plato's wide-ranging conception of dialectic. In this dialogue one finds what is arguably his most developed account of collection and division, which we are told humanity has received as a divine gift. Its reach and significance are virtually unqualified, for as we have seen, Socrates specifies that the dialectical method is the means by which all discoveries in the arts and sciences have come to light. The Promethean method aims to grasp the unitary, plural, and unlimited nature of intelligible realities. Of particular focus in the *Philebus* is the nature and number of intermediates lying between the single and unlimited aspects of different Forms. Socrates says that the dialectician's challenge is to apprehend each of these realities; understanding knowledge, for example, means being acquainted with each of its intermediates, their relations to each other, and to the whole of the genus.

The dialectical descent from a Form's single nature to its subunities and to its

particular instantiations, as well as the ascent back upwards, require great familiarity with the phenomenal world—acquaintance with the *apeiron* is the first and last step of these movements. Dialectic involves locating and discerning the divine as it manifests in the realm of becoming, and the seasoned dialectician is not ignorant of the ever-changing world around him. Because the intelligible and phenomenal structure of the cosmos consists in a vast and complex array of relationships between unities, subunities, and their instantiations, dialectical understanding demands extensive and wide-ranging experience in the overlapping domains of theory and practice. The true dialectician can identify the different Forms and intermediates undergirding the fields of metaphysics, ethics, politics, and so forth, and he can perceive them as they emerge in particular situations, which allows him to live wisely and happily.

The wide-ranging scope of the Promethean method coheres with the general account Socrates gives of dialectic, the discipline that is “concerned with being and with what is really and forever in every way eternally self-same” (58a). At first glance, it may seem that this definition reinforces the strictly theoretical and thoroughly unpractical nature of dialectic. Indeed, Socrates appears to concede as much by suggesting that dialectic’s merit be judged not by its accompanying utility or prestige, but by the clarity, precision, and truth of its subject matter. Upon further analysis, however, we observed that Socrates’ dismissal of benefit and prestige is better understood in two ways: as a hypothetical exercise intended to build dialectic’s contrast with rhetoric and as a way of zeroing in on the proper criteria for determining which knowledge is the purest and most reliable. His aim is to show why dialectic should be pursued *even if* it turned out to

be inferior in utility and nobility. But in the final assessment, there is to be no question that dialectic surpasses every discipline in these domains as well, as it is agreed that it is the means through which all other *technai* are discovered, and the practice most closely allied with the governing nature of cosmic *Nous*.

That dialectic extends beyond systematic question-and-answer is driven home by Socrates' description of it as "a capacity in our soul to love the truth *and do everything for its sake*" (58d). Because dialectic includes the concerted effort to coordinate all of one's *actions* in pursuit of truth, it is only by seeking after the eternal in everything that the dialectician does that he can hope to develop an adequate understanding of its different attributes and relations; thus, his unflagging pursuit of Beauty, Proportion, and Truth—the tri-fold nature of the Good—demands close attention to practical affairs. If dialecticians focus only on theoretical concerns, we are told, they will find themselves in a ridiculous position and deficient in *epistêmê*. The proper mixture of the good life—that is to say, the best approach for coming to know the Good—consists not only in philosophical speculation but also the measured integration of different forms of practical intelligence so as to best participate in the divine in every way.

THE AUGUSTINIAN MODEL

We have seen that, like Plato, Augustine draws a distinction between sensible particulars and intelligible realities, and that his epistemology is largely focused on understanding the soul's relationships with both of these spheres. The soul, he says, was

created to love the eternal in such a way that it would remain its preeminent focus and priority. But due to the Fall, it has become lost in worldly preoccupations that have derailed its relationship with the divine. Still, the soul retains its unique position as the crossroads or access point to the eternal ideas, and, like Plato, Augustine emphasizes that through this connection one can actively participate in the Forms so as to know and love them better.

As Plato identifies the unchanging Good as the ultimate source of all things and the *archê* of true understanding, so Augustine sees God as the ground and source of all that exists. The being and goodness of different particulars are a direct function of their share in the divine ideas—things exist and are good to the extent that they partake in the eternal. While for Augustine everything that exists can be said to share in God to a greater or lesser degree, as in the *Republic*, higher order participation consists of a much more involved enterprise that goes hand in hand with the conscious imitation of eternal realities and with the concerted effort to free oneself from baser appetites and passions.

Particular to Augustine's view is an emphasis on the human mind as the image of God. Participation in the divine ideas, he says, hinges on one's conscious discovery of such immanence. For the mind to be reformed, it must discover what it was intended to be—and what in a certain sense it already is. Despite distortions, the divine image endures, and by directing its gaze inward the mind can reform and properly express its true essence. Happiness and understanding are the boon of those who allow Justice, Love, and other eternal ideas to re-emerge as the dominant features of their general conduct and outlook.

At first glance, given that for Augustine the divine ideas transcend time and space and are closely associated with the life of the mind, one might assume that he limits our search for them to contexts of solitude and private meditation—contexts where the mind, less susceptible to worldly distractions, can properly receive the intelligible knowledge it seeks. We found however, that Augustine thinks that divine knowledge can also be pursued in the practical world, and that in fact one must engage ethically in everyday affairs in order to develop a substantive understanding of eternal reality. We also saw, however, that for Augustine contemplative exercises play a key role in enabling us to engage ethically in the practical world. Contemplation helps us to purify the mind and sheds light on the nature of the virtues we are to pursue in our interactions with others. We saw, moreover, that Augustine endorsed these views through his own actions, devoting himself to serving his community while retaining a monastic lifestyle.

The third chapter also discussed how Augustine's cognitive theory accommodates the possibility of pursuing wisdom while engaged in everyday affairs. Several features of his epistemology give us the impression that this is true. First and foremost, similar to the overlap between Platonic *noêsis*, *dianoia*, *pistis*, and *eikasía*, Augustine indicates that multiple functions of the soul can operate simultaneously. *De animae quantitate* outlines seven such powers, which fall into three basic camps: the soul's relation to the material world, its relation to itself, and its relation to God. Augustine goes so far as to say that the soul has the potential to perform *all* of these activities simultaneously, even though it may seem to it that it is only engaging in the one to which it is devoting the most attention. Augustine thus provides us with a theory of mind that pays explicit heed to the

significance of unconscious cognitive processes. Especially noteworthy is his specification that unconscious operations are not limited to lower functions, like sense perception and the soul's nutritive powers. Once they are consistently integrated into one's life, the higher contemplative functions can also operate under the threshold of conscious awareness. This rather radical principle is central to my thesis about the compatibility of action and contemplation in Augustine's epistemology. Augustine also insists that there is beauty to be found in all seven of the soul's powers and that its magnitude and greatness increases as its excellence becomes perfected at each level. A similar principle emerges in later works as well, perhaps most prominently in Book 12 of *De genesi ad litteram*, which presents intellectual vision as something that can operate at the same time that we perceive objects with the physical senses (corporeal vision) and recall or construct images or concepts drawn from memories of past experiences (spiritual vision). The faculty once again finds an analogue in Platonic *noēsis*, which, as we have seen, also operates alongside other mental functions.

The *De Trinitate* offers further clues as to how Augustine might envision a theory of "active contemplation." Of particular relevance to our examination was the observation that the intellect must already be at work in situations where we apply our basic knowledge of eternal principles to practical activities, such as when an architect uses mathematics to build a house. Augustine observes that the logical and mathematical principles employed in crafts and other disciplines are available to the virtuous and unvirtuous alike, and that these practices require only a minimal degree of intellection. A fairly clear delineation can thus be made between such examples and instances where,

say, the mind fully turns toward the divine ideas to contemplate them for their own sake. But the distinction becomes less clear in the mental life of those who have undergone a great deal of inner transformation, and who have deeply instantiated the divine ideas in their daily life. These people, it seems, can engage in practical activities (or even more rudimentary activities) with a highly active intellect—one that at the same time both consciously and unconsciously keeps them in close epistemic contact with Forms. Augustine's theory of cognition thus seems to mesh quite well with the notion that such individuals can engage in high-level intellection while, say, enjoying an apple or driving a car.

Likewise, his epistemology does not seem to preclude the fostering of *sapientia* during engagement in social affairs. Indeed, such a reading coheres with his appraisal of anchoritic, cenobitic, and more socially engaged lifestyles as equally legitimate paths to divine knowledge. According to Augustine, Justice, Love, Understanding, and other Forms remain with the mind even when it is not thinking about them. The more the divine ideas become expressed in one's life, the more they transform the backdrop of conscious experience. While wisdom is measured by the extent to which the mind knows the divine ideas manifest within it, the ideas need not be the perpetual subject of one's conscious thought for one to remain wise.

Like Plato, knowledge for Augustine does not consist in the acquisition or justification of a certain set of propositional beliefs. Knowledge is of objects, of eternal realities, and Augustine sees its pursuit as one in which the mind and the divine ideas become increasingly present to one another. Indeed we may understand both authors as

setting forth a model of “knowledge by participation.” Augustine mirrors the Platonic notion that we come to live in greater harmony with eternal realities by increasingly expressing them in our lives: one comes closer to God not through geographical proximity, but by becoming like the eternal, which means imitating and increasingly participating in the divine attributes. And like the depiction of purified *erôs* in the *Republic*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*, Augustine locates *caritas* as the engine of the soul’s upward ascent. One loves properly by loving the Good, Beauty, and other aspects of the eternal in themselves and as they are reflected in the world. We can also observe in both authors a synergistic dynamic between eternal realities and their lovers such that increased participation and divine assimilation leads to greater intuitive insight, which in turn leads to increased participation and assimilation. For Augustine, this dynamic grounds his conception of the mind’s formation back into the proper image of God, a reformation that allows, I am suggesting, the wise person to remain in harmony with the eternal while occupied with everyday affairs.

THE GANDHIAN MODEL

Chapter four provided us with a window into another perspective on ethical action and divine insight. Like Plato and Augustine, Gandhi speaks of an unchanging reality that underlies and gives meaning to all things. He sees phenomenal objects as existing only to the extent that they share or participate in eternal Truth, and believes that the fundamental aim of life is to come to know this reality and live in harmony with

it. Truth, Gandhi says, is beyond the senses and ultimately beyond human comprehension. With effort, though, the *satyagrahi* can glimpse its nature, progressively grasping it with greater depth and clarity. The *satyagrahi* clings to the eternal and continually strives toward the ever-elusive goal—the moment when he will see God “face to face,” to repeat the Pauline expression favored by both Gandhi and Augustine.

Gandhi believes that to cultivate knowledge of ultimate reality one must engage ethically in the practical world. We discover the divine, he says, by practicing nonviolence and by loving others, taking up their burdens, and becoming sensitive to their needs and concerns. *Satyagraha* is to be pursued in thought, speech, and action. Gandhi insisted in his own case that this meant that he could not avoid any domain of public life—social, political, economic, etc. For him, “the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service to all.” Gandhi bases his perspective on what he believes is the interconnectedness of all things. According to him, everyday ethical behavior purifies the soul, bringing one closer to the greater Whole of which one is part, and helping one to enjoy increasing union with that Whole. Through love and selfless service, the inner *Brahman* becomes increasingly manifest, giving one a more truth-centered—and less self-centered—orientation, all of which ultimately enables one to apprehend ultimate reality with greater depth and clarity.

But Gandhi also believes that to engage ethically in the practical world one must seek to understand ultimate reality through private contemplation. On his view, contemplative practices help us to refine our understanding of Truth and the place of human affairs in relation to ultimate reality. In periods of rest and calmness we can

sometimes more accurately evaluate problems in our everyday moral behavior and see better how to overcome them. For Gandhi, such reflection takes place especially in the form of prayer, which for him is a means by which we bring “orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts.” Through prayer we can realize greater union with the divine. Gandhi recognizes that prayer can take on a number of different forms from more meditative endeavors that seek to reduce the mind’s chatter, to petitionary practices in which one asks God for strength and guidance. In his own life Gandhi set aside time during the day for prayer, reading scripture, and other contemplative practices, insisting that they improved his social and political endeavors. In line with his program of seeing God by serving others, moreover, prayer for Gandhi takes on a decidedly ethical orientation. It is for him above all else a means by which we seek divine assistance so as to become more just and loving in our daily lives.

Gandhi’s account of following the inner voice serves as an important example of how he unites the active and contemplative lives together. Listening to the voice is, for him, one of the ways by which we gain intuitive insight and harmonize our everyday moral conduct with the divine. Gandhi identifies the inner voice as the primary faculty by which we have epistemic contact with the eternal. It is for him equivalent to the voice of God, Truth, or Conscience. Like wisdom itself, he says, the ability to listen to the inner voice develops gradually and almost imperceptibly. It rarely appears in a dramatic and unexpected fashion, but rather slowly emerges as a subtle source of understanding. Intimately connected to the *atman*, the voice is the spiritual expression of the soul and a fundamental source of moral guidance. Gandhi subscribes to the Upanisadic principle

that the *atman* is in fact the microcosmic reflection of the whole of reality, and that by acting according to its lights we move in greater unison with the universe. Indeed, we have seen that he believes that for those who listen, the inner voice provides insight into one's *svadharma*, keeping the ego in check and indicating which paths should be taken out of genuine concern for the good of the larger family, village, country, and global community.

Gandhi insisted that the inner voice was the central guiding force behind his political and moral decisions. One follows it, he said, by combining discursive reasoning with the voice's more direct intimations. The Dandi Salt March gave us a concrete and vivid example of this approach in historical context. We saw that in the weeks leading up to it, Gandhi was engaged in a process of deep reflection. He knew that his decision would have strong repercussions, and that he had to arrive at a strategy that would rouse the country's and the world's better sentiments, while minimizing the risk of violence. He conferred with a great number of people, investigated various options, weighed different outcomes, and engaged in the type of discursive reasoning we would generally expect of a political strategist. But the idea for the march itself came in a flash of insight, its rationale and genius only becoming fully apparent after the march had begun.

There is, on Gandhi's view, no uniform recipe for following the voice and no single form in which it emerges. With its guidance, the right action sometimes becomes clear without one's having to know all of a situation's parameters. Other times, awareness of all such elements is needed before the voice shows the way. Some intuitions come suddenly, others only after a great deal of meditation and reflection.

What is clear for Gandhi is that, while they often work in tandem, reason and the inner voice represent two different cognitive powers. Reason, he affirmed, should be subordinate to the inner voice, and in his own life, Gandhi says that he always gave the latter final decision over the course of his actions.

While Gandhi maintains that genuine intuitive insights do not have their basis in inferential reasoning, he also believes that they are ultimately always found to be in harmony with reason. This principle, he says, should be taken to heart when seeking to distinguish genuine intuitions from false ones, for while their full rationale and choiceworthiness may only become clear in hindsight, genuine intuitions very rarely appear unintelligible or absurd, even at first glance. He cites as examples his own experiments in *satyagraha*—marches, fasts, boycotts, etc.—which he admits may not always have been genuinely inspired by the voice, but which he could always at least partially explain even before they were undertaken.

According to Gandhi, the voice frequently lies dormant, and can often be confused with imagination or surreptitious emotional drives. He is adamant that one can only gain reliable access to the inner voice—and thus to eternal reality—by undergoing an ethical transformation. In this regard, his position again strongly parallels Plato's and Augustine's. To be guided by the intelligible light of the *Republic's* Sun, Plato's philosopher must turn his whole soul around, which involves, among other things, bringing the soul's appetitive, desiring, and rational parts into harmony. Likewise, Augustine does not think that substantive apprehension of eternal realities is possible without the mind's radical reformation back into the image of God—an endeavor that

requires a great deal of self-observation and the sublimation of one's desires. On the Gandhian view, in addition to developing self-mastery through vows, observances, etc., to listen to the voice one must also cultivate humility and pure intentions. These attributes, he believes, progressively emerge as one becomes aware of one's small but dignified role in a divine and interconnected universe, and as one begins to identify more with the whole of Reality.

Reliable access to the eternal through the inner voice requires progressive inner purification and improved ethical conduct. The voice's insights, in turn, enable further development in these domains. For Gandhi, the more one becomes aware of ultimate Reality, the easier it becomes to see in practical life where behaviors miss the mark and are driven by fears and base motivations. By ironing out ethical contradictions and discovering one's intimate relation with *Brahman*, the mind become less agitated and more adept at listening to the voice. By contrast, an outlook of separateness from *Brahman* leads to pessimism, fear, worldly attachments, and an inflated ego. These inner weights, in turn, hinder one's ability to listen to the inner voice with any consistency.

Gandhi's emphasis on approaching life with an outlook of unity and optimism should not, however, be taken as a simplistic pitch for the efficacy of positive thinking. *Satyagraha*, he insists, must be based on calm, attentive observation and rigorous experimentation in the different avenues of public and private life. Someone who is ignorant of the moral and spiritual law will inevitably become a source of disharmony and *himsa*, even if teeming with optimism. The *satyagrahi* comes to know and live in accordance with the eternal through continual and painstaking experimental trials. The

inner voice sheds light on Truth as it emerges in particular situations, indicating how best to act in order to know and live with Truth.

Gandhi conceives of *satyagraha* both as a this-worldly and otherworldly enterprise: one acts in the world but with an overarching awareness of ultimate Reality, and an underlying intention to direct all of one's efforts toward it. Of the three figures examined in this study, he undoubtedly places the least weight on theory and speculation, and the greatest emphasis on practical endeavors as a vehicle to substantive knowledge of the divine. To know Truth, the *satyagrahi* must actively pursue it in every sphere of life, discovering and testing the laws underpinning its various facets. He must also ethically engage the world in such a way as to *move* in accordance with love, nonviolence, and other “laws” that are constructed in such a way as to give the universe meaning, purpose, and direction. An idle life—that is to say, a life without love and selfless service—by contrast, violates these laws.

Research in the laboratory of life also requires following certain experimental conditions: the investigator must cultivate love, courage, self-restraint, and other virtues if he is to develop a strong awareness of the eternal. His primary instrument is the inner voice and facility with this tool is developed through practical integration, which results in greater expression of the eternal in worldly affairs. In this regard, Gandhi's perspective mirrors Plato's and Augustine's: he believes that imitating Truth in daily affairs leads to increased participation in the eternal. The inner voice is for him the indwelling *atman*: by following it one amplifies the expression of the Supreme Atman or *Brahman* within. And with increasing amplification comes greater insight into the different attributes of the

eternal, both as they are in themselves and as they emerge in the world; by following the inner voice one progressively embodies Love, Courage, Goodness, and other divine attributes, and comes to know them better.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Plato

- Adam, James. *The Republic of Plato*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902.
- Annas, Julia. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- . *Platonic Ethics, Old and New*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Armstrong, John M. "After the Ascent: Plato on Becoming Like God." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2004): 171-183.
- Benson, Hugh. "Plato's Method of Dialectic." In *A Companion to Plato*, edited by Hugh Benson, 85-100. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
- . *Socratic Wisdom: The Model of Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Burnet, John, ed. *Platonis Opera*. 5 vols, *Oxford Classical Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1900-1907.
- Burnyeat, Myles. *The Theaetetus of Plato*. Translated by M.J. Levett. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990.
- Carone, Gabriela Roxana. *Plato's Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Cherniss, Harold. "Some War-Time Publications Concerning Plato." In *Harold Cherniss: Selected Papers*, edited by L. Taran, 142-216. Leiden: Brill, 1977.
- Cooper, John M., ed. *Complete Works of Plato*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.
- Cooper, Neil. "Between Knowledge and Ignorance." *Phronesis* 31 (1986): 229-242.
- Davidson, Donald. "Plato's Philosopher." *Apeiron* 26 (1993): 179-194.
- Delcomminette, Sylvain. "The One-and-Many Problems at *Philebus* 15b." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002): 21-42.

- De Vogel, C. J. *Rethinking Plato and Platonism*. Leiden: Brill, 1986.
- Dorter, Kenneth. *The Transformation of Plato's Republic*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2006.
- Fine, Gail. "Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* V-VII." In *Cambridge Companions to Ancient Thought, i: Epistemology*, edited by Stephen Everson, 85-115. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- . "Knowledge and *Logos* in the *Theaetetus*." *Philosophical Review* 88 (1979): 366-397.
- . "Knowledge and True Belief in the *Meno*." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 27 (2004): 41-81.
- . *Plato on Knowledge and Forms: Selected Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Frede, Dorothea. *Plato: Philebus*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993.
- Gallop, David. "Image and Reality in Plato's *Republic*." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 47 (1965): 113-31.
- . "Plato and the Alphabet." *Philosophical Review* (1963): 364-376.
- Gerson, Lloyd P. *Knowing Persons: A Study in Plato*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Gill, Christopher. "Dogmatic Dialogue in *Phaedrus* 276-7?" In *Understanding the Phaedrus, Proceedings of the II Symposium Platonicum*, edited by Livio Rossetti, 156-172. Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1992.
- Gonzalez, Francisco. "Propositions or Objects?: A Critique of Gail Fine on Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* V." *Phronesis* 41 (1996): 245-75.
- Gosling, J. C. B. *Plato: Philebus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- Grube, G. M. A. *Plato: Republic*. Revised by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.
- Gulley, Norman. *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*. London: Methuen, 1962.
- Guthrie, W. K. C. *A History of Greek Philosophy 5: The Later Plato and the Academy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Hackforth, R. "Plato's Divided Line and Dialectic." *Classical Quarterly* 36 (1942): 1-9.

- . *Plato's Examination of Pleasure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955.
- . *Plato: Phaedo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955.
- Hampton, Cynthia. *Pleasure, Knowledge, and Being*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.
- Hare, R. M. "Plato and the Mathematicians," In *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, edited by Renford Bambrough, 21-38. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.
- Hicken, Winifred F. "Knowledge and Forms in Plato's *Theaetetus*." In *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, edited by R. E. Allen, 185-198. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.
- Irwin, Terence. *Plato's Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- . *Plato's Moral Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Kahn, Charles. *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Meinwald, C. C. "One/Many Problems: *Philebus* 14c1-15c3." *Phronesis* 41 (1996): 95-103.
- Moravcsik, J. M. E. "Forms, Nature, and the Good in the *Philebus*." *Phronesis* 24 (1979): 81-104.
- . *Plato and Platonism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.
- . "Reason and Eros in the 'Ascent'-Passage of the *Symposium*." In *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, edited by J. P. Anton and G. L. Kustas, 285-302. Albany: State University Press of New York, 1971.
- Murdoch, Iris. *The Fire and the Sun*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Nehamas, Alexander. "Plato on Imitation and Poetry in *Republic* X." In *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates*, 251-278. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Nehamas, Alexander, and Paul Woodruff. *Plato: Phaedrus*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995.
- Penner, Terry. "The Forms in the *Republic*." In *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic*, edited by Gerasimos Santas, 234-262. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.

- Reeve, C. D. C. *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Reshotko, Naomi. "Socrates and Plato on Sophia, Eudaimonia, and Their Facsimiles." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 26 (2009): 1-20.
- Robinson, Richard. *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1941.
- Rowe, Christopher. "The Place of the *Republic* in Plato's Political Thought." In *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, edited by G. R. F. Ferrari, 27-54. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Russell, Daniel C. "Virtue as 'Likeness to God' in Plato and Seneca." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42 (2004): 241-60.
- Ryle, Gilbert. "Letters and Syllables in Plato." *Philosophical Review* 69 (1960): 431-451.
- Schofield, Malcolm. *Plato's Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Sedley, David. "'Becoming like God' in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle." In *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias: Proceedings of the IV Symposium Platonicum*, edited by Tomás Calvo and Luc Brisson, 327-339. Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1997.
- . "The Ideal of Godlikeness." In *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Plato*, edited by Gail Fine, 309-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . *Plato's Cratylus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- . *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Shorey, Paul. *Plato: Republic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Silverman, Allan. "Philebean Metaphysics." In *Plato's Forms*, edited by William A. Welton, 193-220. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2003.
- Smith, Nicholas D. "Plato's Divided Line." *Ancient Philosophy* 16 (1996): 25-46.
- Stokes, Michael. "Plato and the Sightlovers of the *Republic*." *Apeiron* 25 (1992): 103-32.
- Trevaskis, J. R. "Classification in the *Philebus*." *Phronesis* 5 (1960): 39-44.

- . “Division and its Relation to Dialectic and Ontology in Plato.” *Phronesis* 12 (1967): 118-129.
- Vlastos, Gregory. “A Metaphysical Paradox.” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 39 (1966): 5-19. Repr. in *Platonic Studies*, 2nd ed., 43-57. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- . “Socrates’ Disavowal of Knowledge.” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 35 (1985): 1-31.
- . “The Socratic Elenchus.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983): 27-58.
- Waterfield, Robin. *Plato: Philebus*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982.
- . *Plato: Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- White, Nicholas P. *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976.

Augustine

- Agaësse, P., and A. Solignac. *La genèse au sens littéral: 1-7 and 8-12: Bibliothèque Augustinienne: Oeuvres de saint Augustin en douze livres*. 2 vols. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1972.
- Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Bubacz, Bruce. *St. Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge: A Contemporary Analysis*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1981.
- Burnaby, John. *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938.
- Burnell, Peter. *The Augustinian Person*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005.
- Burnyeat, Myles F. “Wittgenstein and Augustine *De magistro*.” In *The Augustinian Tradition*, edited by Gareth B. Matthews, 286-303. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Butler, Edward Cuthbert. *Western Mysticism: Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*. London: E. P. Dutton, 1926.

- Cary, Phillip. *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Chadwick, Henry, trans. and ed. *Augustine: Confessions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Colleran, Joseph M., trans. and ed. *Augustine: The Greatness of the Soul and the Teacher*. New York: Newman Press, 1978.
- Constable, Giles. *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy, vol. 2*. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1950.
- Dombart, B., and A. Kalb, eds. *De Civitate Dei*. Vol. 47 and 48, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*. Turnholt: Brepols, 1955.
- Dyson, R. W., trans. and ed. *Augustine: The City of God against the Pagans*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Fitzgerald, Allan D., ed. *Augustine through the Ages*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Gilson, Etienne. *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*. Translated by L. E. M. Lynch. New York: Random House, 1960.
- . *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. New York: Random House, 1955.
- Green, W. M., and K. D. Daur, eds. *De Beata Vita*. Vol. 29, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*. Turnholt: Brepols, 1970.
- , eds. *De Libero Arbitrio*. Vol. 29, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*. Turnholt: Brepols, 1970.
- , eds. *De Magistro*. Vol. 29, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*. Turnholt: Brepols, 1970.
- Gregory, Eric. *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Leadership*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Hanby, Michael. *Augustine and Modernity*. London: Routledge, 2003.

- Harrison, Carol. *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- . *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Henry, Paul. *Saint Augustine on Personality*. New York: Macmillan, 1960.
- Hill, Edmund, trans. and ed. *Augustine: The Trinity*. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991.
- Hoitenga, Dewey. *Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Kenney, John Peter. *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading the Confessions*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- King, Peter, trans. and ed. *Augustine: Against the Academicians and the Teacher*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995.
- La Bonnardière, A. M. “Les deux vies. Marthe et Marie (Luc 10, 38-42).” In *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, edited by A. M. la Bonnardière, 411-425. Paris: Beauchesne, 1986.
- Mason, Mary Elizabeth. *Active Life and Contemplative Life*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961.
- Matthews, Gareth B., ed. *Augustine: On the Trinity: Books 8-15*. Translated by Stephen McKenna. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- , ed. *The Augustinian Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. .
- . “Knowledge and Illumination.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, edited by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, 171-185. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- McGinn, Bernard. *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*. New York: Crossroad, 1991.
- Mendelson, Michael. “‘By the Things Themselves’: Eudaimonism, Direct Acquaintance, and Illumination in Augustine’s *De Magistro*.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39 (2001): 467-89.

- Miles, Margaret R. *Rereading Historical Theology: Before, During, and After Augustine*. Eugene: Cascade, 2008.
- Mosher, David L., trans. and ed. *Augustine: Eighty-Three Different Questions*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982.
- Mountain, W. J., ed. *De Trinitate*. Vol. 50 and 50A, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*. Turnholt: Brepols, 1968.
- Nash, Ronald H. *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1969.
- O'Connell, R. J. "Action and Contemplation." In *A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by R. A. Markus, 38-58. New York: Doubleday, 1972.
- O'Daly, Gerard. *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Rettig, John, trans. *Augustine: Tractates on the Gospel of John 112-24 and Tractates on the First Epistle of John*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995.
- Rist, John M. *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Rotelle, John E., ed. *Augustine: Letters 1-99*. Translated by Roland Teske. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001.
- Schaff, Philip, ed. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1888.
- Schopp, Ludwig. "The Immortality of the Soul." In *Writings of Saint Augustine*, vol. 2, edited by Ludwig Schopp, 3-47. New York: CIMA Publishing, 1947.
- Taylor, John Hammond, trans. and ed. *Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. 2 vols. New York: Newman Press, 1982.
- Teske, Roland, trans. and ed. *Augustine: Letters 100-155*. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003.
- Torchia, N. Joseph. "Contemplation and Action." In *Augustine Through the Ages*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, 233-235. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

- Wetzel, James. *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Williams, A. N. *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Williams, Thomas, trans. and ed. *Augustine: On Free Choice of the Will*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993.
- Zumkeller, Adolar. *Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life*. Translated by Edmund Colledge. New York: Fordham University Press, 1986.

Gandhi

- Alexander, Horace. *Gandhi Through Western Eyes*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1969.
- Allen, Douglas. "Gandhi's Philosophy: The Struggle over Many Contradictory Philosophies." *Social Theory and Practice* 19 (1993): 289-313.
- . "Philosophical Foundations of Gandhi's Legacy, Utopian Experiments, and Peace Struggles." *Gandhi Marg* 16 (1994): 133-60.
- Chakrabarty, Bidyut. *The Social and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Chatterjee, Margaret. *Gandhi's Religious Thought*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.
- Datta, Dharendra Mohan. *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1953.
- Dallmayr, Fred. "Gandhi and Islam: A Heart-and-Mind Unity?" In *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Douglas Allen, 143-162. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2008.
- Desai, Mahadev. *The Diary of Mahadev Desai*. Edited by Valji Govindji Desai. 2 vols. Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1953.
- Drevet, Camille. *Gandhi, Sa vie, son oeuvre, avec un exposé de sa philosophie*. Paris: P. U. F., 1967.

- Fischer, Louis. *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World*. New York: Mentor, 1954.
- Gandhi, M. K. *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1957.
- . *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. 100 vols., rev. 6th ed. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 2000-2001.
- . *Gandhi's Letters to a Disciple*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950.
- . *Vows and Observances*. Edited by John Strohmeier. Berkeley: Berkeley Hills, 1999.
- Gier, Nicholas F. "Confucius, Gandhi and the Aesthetics of Virtue." *Asian Philosophy* 11 (2001): 41-54.
- . *The Virtue of Nonviolence: From Gautama to Gandhi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.
- Hart, James G. "Recent Works in Gandhi Studies." *Philosophy East and West* 44 (1994): 149-67.
- Herman, A. L. "Satyagraha: A New Indian Word for Some Old Ways of Western Thinking." *Philosophy East and West* 19 (1969): 123-42.
- Hick, John, and Lamont C. Hempel, eds. *Gandhi's Significance for Today*. London: Macmillan, 1989.
- Hick, John. "Gandhi: The Fusion of Religion and Politics." In *Religion, Politics, and Peace*, edited by Leroy S. Rouner, 145-164. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999.
- Iyer, Raghavan N., ed. *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- . *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- , ed. *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.
- Johnston, William. *The Inner Eye of Love*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1997.

- Lal, Sanjay. "The Tension and Coherence of Love, Identification, and Detachment in Gandhi's Thought" PhD diss, University of Tennessee, 2006.
- Mehta, Ved. *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles*. New York: Viking Press, 1976.
- Murti, V. V. Ramana. "Influence of the Western Tradition on Gandhian Doctrine." *Philosophy East and West* 18 (1968): 55-66.
- Nandy, Ashis. *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Nikam, N. A. "The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi." *Review of Metaphysics* 7 (1954): 668-78.
- Parekh, Bhikhu. "Gandhi and Interreligious Dialogue." In *Gandhi for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Douglas Allen, 1-17. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2008.
- Parel, Anthony J. "Gandhian Freedoms and Self-Rule." In *Gandhi, Freedom, and Self-Rule*, edited by Anthony J. Parel, 1-23. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2000.
- . *Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Pattabhisitaramayya, B. "Gandhi in His Many Aspects." In *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, 218-221. Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1957.
- Polak, H. S. L., H. N. Brailsford, and Lord Pethick-Lawrence. *Mahatma Gandhi: The Father of Modern India*. Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1986.
- Prabhu, R. K., and U. R. Rao, eds. *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1967.
- Richards, Glyn. "Gandhi's Concept of Truth and the *Advaita* Tradition." *Religious Studies* 22 (1986): 1-14.
- . *The Philosophy of Gandhi: A Study of His Basic Ideas*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1991.
- Roy, Ramashray. *Self and Society: A Study in Gandhian Thought*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1984.
- Sonnleitner, Michael W. *Gandhian Nonviolence: Levels of Satyagraha*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985.

Starosta, William J., and Anju G. Chaudhary. "‘I Can Wait 40 or 400 Years’: Gandhian *Satyagraha* West and East." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (1993): 163-72.

Tendulkar, D. G. *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*. 8 vols. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960-63.

Terchek, Ronald J. *Struggling for Autonomy*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.

Thakur, Shivesh C. "Gandhi's God." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 11 (1971): 485-95.

Thottakara, Augustine. "Rta through *Ahimsa*: A Gandhian Interpretation." *Journal of Dharma* 27 (2002): 327-48.

Wolpert, Stanley. *Gandhi's Passion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.