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Re-examining Tertullian and Augustine's Relationship for the Theology Science Dialogue

When the development of the relationship between Theology and Science is discussed, Tertullian and Augustine are typically used to represent diametrically opposed methodologies. One such recent example is Lindberg's well-argued review of how scientific knowledge was addressed in the patristic period, which contrasts viewing science with suspicion (Tertullian) with the approach which sees it as a servant to theology (Augustine). This paper explores a largely unnoticed and unexamined dependency of Augustine in de Genesi ad Litteram *on Tertullian's* de Anima. *Augustine's argument closely follows that of Tertullian, departing from the text of Genesis at the same places for the same topics as Tertullian. Noteworthy is that Augustine follows Tertullian at one point where Tertullian reverses his normal rhetoric to base his understanding of anthropology and in particular of the origin and nature of the soul upon contemporary scientia rather than his usual practice of beginning with Scripture. Rather than Tertullian and Augustine being exemplars of different approaches to the relationship of theology and science this examination of the close dependence of one theologian on the other and on then contemporary best scientific knowledge further demonstrates that the relationship is far more complicated and interdependent than often acknowledged.*

Keywords: Tertullian, Augustine, Newton, divine agency, soul.

When the development of the relationship between Theology and Science is discussed, Tertullian and Augustine are typically used to represent diametrically opposed methodologies. Lindberg's recent well-argued review of how scientific knowledge was addressed in the patristic period contrasts their approaches, with Tertullian viewing science with suspicion while Augustine sees it as a servant to theology.[1] Lindberg's summary comment on Tertullian and Augustine typifies the example: 'It was Augustine's handmaiden formula, rather than Tertullian's rant, that shaped the relationship between Christianity and the natural sciences throughout the Middle Ages and beyond.'[2] Whilst this kind of statement has a strong ring of truth, Tertullian certainly was polemic and Augustine's influence

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1 Lindberg, D. C. 'The fate of science in patristic and medieval Christendom', in Harrison, P. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2010), pp. 21-25.
2 Lindberg *op. cit.*, (1), p. 25.

is unquestionable, the statement oversimplifies and obscures their very close relationship. What Augustine and Tertullian held closely in common related to their development of an understanding of the natural order and anthropology. Seventeenth-century deist natural philosophers reappropriated these notions in relation to a generic omnipotent omniscient good God.

Lindberg uses a quotation from Augustine's literal commentary on Genesis, *de Genesi ad Litteram*, to conclude his demonstration of the difference between Augustine and Tertullian. This is ironic as this paper explores a largely unnoticed and unexamined dependency of Augustine in *de Genesi ad Litteram* on Tertullian's *de Anima*. This dependency is unexpected as in *de Genesi ad Litteram* Augustine sharply criticises Tertullian when he deigns to mention him by name. However, closer inspection reveals that they differ along philosophical rather than theological lines. What is surprising is that Augustine's argument throughout *de Genesi ad Litteram* closely follows that of Tertullian in *de Anima*, including departing from the text of Genesis at the same places for the same topics as Tertullian. In particular, with regard to anthropology and the nature of divine agency on the soul, Augustine follows Tertullian at one point where Tertullian reverses his normal rhetoric to base his understanding of anthropology and specifically of the origin and nature of the soul upon contemporary *scientia* rather than his usual practice of beginning with Scripture.

It is this point which is important in the seventeenth-century reframing of divine agency in terms of a generic rather than a Trinitarian divine being. In *de Genesi* Augustine's anthropology of the soul, while consistent with his other work, is not as explicitly Trinitarian as usual and can be reinterpreted in generic and impersonal terms. This is what Isaac Newton does in his anti-Cartesian essay *de Gravitatione* in which he extensively paraphrases Augustine sanitised of any Trinitarian reference.[3] Newton was one of many during early modernity who expressed a renewed interest in the works of Augustine in conjunction with the development of Natural Philosophy. Historians have expressed some surprise about the strange widespread absence of personal relational reflection in this period's theological debate regarding Natural Philosophy. Buckley noted surprise at the minimal response to Newton's protégé Clarke's defence of true religion without mention of 'Christology or religious experience'. This absence surprisingly 'stirs nary a tremor'.

That divine agency could be discussed generically was attractive in an era when a significant number of leading natural philosophers like Clarke had adopted heterodox theologies. Doing so avoided Trinitarian controver-

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3 Newton, I. *de Gravitatione*, in Janiak, A. (ed.) *Isaac Newton: Philosophical Writings*, 12-39, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2004). In sections 25, 26, 30, 31 & 34 Newton extensively paraphrases Augustine's *Gen Lit* 8.23.44. 8.25.46 & 8.26.48.

sies.[4] The Western doctrine of inspiration which developed in this period is an example which works independently of who or what the generic good god or Providence might be. Sasse, without any elucidation, described this doctrine as inadequate, referring to it as 'pagan'.[5] Sasse's assertion is probably overstated but, nonetheless, similar descriptions of inspiration have been used with respect to the Koran and the Book of Mormon.

The question then is how Augustine depends on Tertullian in *de Genesi*. How does his reworking of the soul and divine agency enable its seventeenth-century generic reappropriation?

De Genesi ad Litteram and *de Anima*

De Genesi ad Litteram contains Augustine's longest and most detailed analysis of the soul interwoven into his commentary on Genesis.[6] Tertullian's *de Anima* also contains a detailed description of the soul and its relationship to God and of the means by which the agency of God works through humans. What has been overlooked, and is argued here, is that Augustine revises Tertullian. This is particularly the case in relation to anthropological understanding of the soul and divine agency in humans. Augustine's revision is patient of generic reinterpretation, emptying personal divine interaction of any reference to who God may be. Augustine's linking of divine agency, inspiration and scriptural perfection dovetails neatly with seventeenth-century developments in understanding the natural order and divine agency.

Initial observation suggests that Augustine was not favourably disposed towards Tertullian. Augustine's comment, 'the ravings of Tertullian'[7] is well known. Augustine elsewhere explicitly criticises Tertullian's humour[8] and biblical interpretation.[9] Nonetheless, rather than simply disagree-

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4 By the early nineteenth century this kind of generic description had become widely used as they are used in the deist William Paley's texts which were set texts at Cambridge; Paley, W. *A View of the Evidences of Christianity*, Birks, T. R. (ed.), London: London Tract Society (18--); Paley, W. *Natural Theology; or the Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*, 12th edn., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan (1809); Desmond, A. & Moore, J. *Darwin*, London: Michael Joseph (1991), p. 64.

5 Sasse, H. 'The rise of the dogma of Holy Scripture', *The Reformed Theological Review* Australia (1959) 18 no. 2, 44-54.

6 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, Ancient Christian Writers (vols 41 & 42), New York: Paulist Press (1982); *de Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim* (Literal Meaning of Genesis in Twelve Books) should not to be confused with *de Genesi ad Litteram imperfectus liber duodecim* (The Literal Meaning of Genesis: an unfinished book).

7 Augustine, *de Genesi ad Litteram* 2.9.

8 'I do not say what Tertullian said, perhaps more wittily than truly, "If gods are selected like onions, certainly the rest are rejected as bad."' Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, in Schaff, P. (ed.), Post Nicene Fathers Series 1 Vol. 2; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, (1996), 7.1.

9 Commenting on Tertullian's interpretation of Paul on marriage: 'Tertullian also, inflated with cheeks full of sound not of wisdom, whilst with railing tooth he attacks second mar-

ing with Tertullian, Augustine in *de Genesi ad Litteram* follows a similar structure of argument to Tertullian's *de Anima*, referring to Tertullian by name when he disagrees with him, while using similar or updated medical examples, biblical references and changes in subject, paralleling the structure of Tertullian's argument.

De Genesi ad Litteram is Augustine's exhaustive literal commentary on the creation narrative in Genesis 1-3.[10] In this work, Augustine engaged with the best of contemporary philosophy regarding nature and medicine. *De Genesi ad Litteram* consequently contains a detailed description of how God interacts with the human person, in particular the mechanism for the Holy Spirit's action in the human soul. Augustine, like Tertullian, utilises and trusts references to contemporary medical terminology, albeit with further centuries of scholarship behind him. Taylor has noted references to, and unnamed quotations from, medical writers: Celsus, Scribonius Longus, Pliny Priscianus, Vindicianus, Caelius Aurelianus and Galen.[11] An example of Augustine's medical refinement is that he describes the brain as the seat of the soul[12] differing from Tertullian who places the soul around the heart. This could reflect both medical developments in the intervening centuries and Augustine's ease with Plato. Tertullian had specifically rejected Plato's suggestion that the head is the seat of the

riages, as though unlawful, which the Apostle with sober mind allows to be altogether lawful.' Augustine, *de Bono Viduitatis*, 6; Augustine accepts the testimony of the apostle as authoritative and reliable. Tertullian reads the text's professed hesitancy as true uncertainty requiring resolution. Tertullian's resolution was a rigorous stance in opposition to Paul's caution. Augustine however argues that as the text is inspired, it is totally reliable as written, and there can be no disputing Paul's meaning – caution means caution.

10 His earlier attempts, *de Genesi ad Litteram imperfecta* and the end of his *Confessions* develop allegory and prophetic or figurative meanings which often seem odd to post renaissance readers. In this literal commentary he asserts that an omnipotent God could create the world in an instant, but that creation is unfolded in six days for our benefit. His concern is to learn why God chooses to act in this way. An answer requires that Christians need to know what they are talking about in relation to the heavens, earth and nature. Augustine, *de Genesi Ad Litteram*, 1.6.39. Interest in this work *de Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim* has grown recently within the ongoing debate between theology and science. Contemporary interest of theologians and historians has been tracing the development of the interpretation of Genesis. One of the persistent foundational myths for the conflict metaphor describing that relationship between theology and science has been that the Church held that world was flat. Augustine infers that the world is round in a work written over a millennium before Columbus; Augustine*, de Genesi ad Litteram,* 1.10.21. Augustine's assertion that God created the world in an instant and created time along with space has parallels with contemporary cosmology. Augustine*, de Genesi ad Litteram*, 4.33.51-4.34.55, 5.5.12; Davies, P. *The Mind of God*, London: Penguin (1992), pp. 39-50.

11 Taylor, G.A., in Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 247n32, 295n93.

12 'There are three ventricles in the brain. One of these, which is in the front near the face, is the one from which all sensation comes; the second, which is in the back of the brain near the neck, is the one from which all motion comes; the third, which is between the first two, is where the medical writers place the seat of memory.' Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 7.18.24. While knowledge of the brain had become more medically advanced than in Tertullian's time this understanding is also long obsolete.

soul.[13] Augustine describes the functions and interrelations of the soul to include sensation, motion and memory of motion in a manner similar to and expanding on Tertullian.[14]

Augustine uses the same parallels between visions and how the Holy Spirit works within the human person and other states of *ekstasis*. These include comparisons with the state of the disembodied spirit in death[15] and in sleep[16] with inspirational *ekstasis*.[17] Augustine's treatment of Tertullian in this work favours careful analysis and criticism over polemic. 'He (Tertullian) was intelligent, he sometimes saw the truth' is his rare, explicit, back-handed concession.[18] Tertullian's scriptural case studies in *de Anima* are also examined by Augustine. Augustine did not normally acknowledge positive citations of Tertullian explicitly. For example, according to Taylor *de Genesi's* book 7 reference to 'certain writers' is a veiled reference to Tertullian's *de Anima* 5.[19] Taylor and Waszink argue that Augustine's exposition of Adam's sleep in Genesis 2 parallels Tertullian but without reference.[20] What is unexpected is that the structure of the last six books of *de Genesi* show striking parallels with *de Anima*. Augustine's *de Genesi* is much longer and therefore more elaborate than Tertullian's *de Anima*. In book seven of *de Genesi* Augustine follows Tertullian's order in the following topics: that the soul is not part of God's substance;[21] that there is no transmigration of the soul;[22] and in the exposition of medical understanding of the soul.[23] Augustine's criticism of Tertullian's exposition of the rich man and Lazarus[24] is also present but out of order.

Augustine makes two strange departures for a commentary on Genesis. The first follows the discussion of the *ekstasis* of Adam when woman is created from his rib.[25] Having dealt with Adam's sleep, Augustine states, 'but it seems advisable to bring this book to an end at this point'.[26] He then

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13 Tertullian *de Anima*, 15.

14 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 7.18.24.

15 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 12.32.60, 68.

16 Augustine *de Anima et Eius Origine*, 4.27, 28; Augustine, *de Genesi ad Litteram,* 12.2.34.

17 Augustine *de Anima et Eius Origine*, 4.12.

18 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 10.25.41 – 26.45.

19 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 7.21.30.

20 Augustine *de Genesi Ad Litteram*, 9.19.34; Taylor, G.A., in Augustine, *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 275n95; Tertullian *de Anima*, 11.

21 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 7.3.4; Tertullian *de Anima*, 11.

22 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram,* 7.9.12-7.10.15; Tertullian *de Anima*, 32-33.

23 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 7.13.20-7.20.6; Tertullian *de Anima*, 37-38.

24 Augustine, *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 8.5.9; Tertullian *de Anima*, 7.1, 9; Luke 16:24.

25 Gen. 2. Where stupor or sleep is the usual translation, *ekstasis* is the word used in the Septuagint in Gen 2.21. While this is a textual oddity today, it becomes an interchangeable term in Augustine's usage: mentis alienationem in the Latin version of Genesis used by Augustine; Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 9.19.36.

26 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 9.19.36; this is the end of the ninth book; Taylor, fol-

strangely moves in the next book from a commentary on the text to an extended excursus on the origin and nature of the soul.[27] There is no compelling reason in the text of Genesis for Augustine to move tangentially at this point. It is worth noting that, between his two references to Adam's *ekstasis* in *de Anima* 11 and 21, Tertullian also discusses the origin of the soul. Further he deals with similar issues in the same order as discussed in Augustine's excursus – traducianism of the soul as the mechanism for the transmission of original sin, and the justification of infant baptism.[28] Augustine follows Tertullian at this point rather than Genesis. Augustine's second departure from the text of Genesis is at the beginning of the twelfth book when he moves from a discussion of Adam and original sin to the beginnings of his discussion of the nature of inspiration, visions, dreams and death. Tertullian also has the same transition as he discusses inspiration, visions, dreams and death.[29]

These similarities remain even when the structure of these parts receives closer examination.

Regarding the origin of the soul both *de Genesi* and *de Anima* deal with:

- affirming that soul and body being created together by God;
    de Genesi, 10.6.10; *de Anima,* 24
- affirming traducianism of the soul, Augustine arguing that this is noncorporeal to Tertullian's corporeality;
    de Genesi, 10.9.15, 14.23-24; *de Anima,* 24
- referring to children of Abraham in Romans 5;
    de Genesi, 10.11.18; *de Anima,* 21
    Taylor notes an additional direct parallel in *de Anima* 41
- countering heresy, Augustine against Mani and Tertullian the Gnostics;
    de Genesi, 10.13.20; *de Anima,* 23
- that traducianism does not apply in the case of Christ;
    de Genesi, 10.20.35; *de Anima,* 26
- Augustine however refutes at length Tertullian's arguments for the corporeality of the soul with direct quotations from *de Anima*;
    de Genesi, 10.24.40-10.26.45; *de Anima,* 28

Augustine then discusses the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, ending with a summary of the nature of original sin before opening his discussion of the nature of inspiration in the final book of *de Genesi,* 11.41.56-11.42.60. Tertullian's discussion of the nature of inspiration also followed discussion of the nature of original sin and Adam; *de Anima,* 41, 43.

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lowing Waszink, argues that Augustine's treatment of Adam's sleep as *ekstasis* parallels *de Anima* 11; Waszink, J. H. *Tertullian's de Anima*, Amsterdam: North-Holland (1947).

27 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 10.

28 Tertullian *de Anima,* 22 – 43.

29 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 12; Tertullian *de Anima*, 44-51.

Augustine began his discussion of the nature of inspiration, visions, dreams and death by exploring the nature of the third heaven vision reported by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:2. Tertullian however does not discuss this in *de Anima*.

Nonetheless, both *de Genesi* and *de Anima* both refer to:

- Nebuchadnezzar;   *de Genesi,* 12.8.20; *de Anima,* 47
- Daniel;   *de Genesi,* 12.11.22; *de Anima,* 47
- divination;   *de Genesi,* 12.13.27-28, 12.14.36; *de Anima,* 46
                              (*de Anima* 49 deals with visions among heretics and pagans)
- dreams;   *de Genesi,*12.15.31; *de Anima,*43, 45, 49
- how images appear in the soul;
                              de Genesi, 12.18.39; *de Anima,* 7;
                              Augustine's criticism of Tertullian in 10.25.41-43 specifically answered the argument in *de Anima* earlier in *de Genesi*
- lack of error in the inspired state;
                              de Genesi, 12.25.52; *de Anima,* 24
- both end with death as the ultimate *ekstasis;*
                              *de Genesi ,*12.32.60; *de Anima, 5*1

The similarity of structure between both works is remarkable, leading to the conclusion that Augustine specifically revised Tertullian. Augustine treats his predecessor with a degree of respect, while at times heartily disagreeing with him. The lasting significance of their philosophical differences about inspiration relates to the implications they draw regarding the nature of spirit and error in relation to divine agency and inspiration. These differences shape Augustine's revision of Tertullian.

Inspiration's highest expression resulting from perfect divine agency

A frequent theme fundamental to Augustine's metaphysics[30] is the three levels of reality: the divine or ideal, the spiritual and the corporeal. Augustine uses these as typical examples: God in every way unchangeable; the soul changeable in time but not in place and the body changeable in both time and place. Augustine applies his three levels of reality to his classification of visions. Augustine parallels but revises Tertullian's discussion of error in *de Anima*, applying his three levels of reality as well as including his notions of the incorporeality and impassibility of the soul. There are thus according to Augustine, three kinds of vision: intellectual or divine,

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30 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 8.20.39; Taylor, in Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 2:261n97.

spiritual and corporeal, where the first is the highest.[31] Each corresponds to a level of reality and a more extensive state of *ekstasis* within the person's mind; corporeal and spiritual visions can err but not the highest, intellectual visions.[32] Augustine's view differs from Tertullian's, for whom visions were error-proof, but their recall, interpretation and application might introduce error.

Augustine argues that Scripture always involves an intellectual vision in which anything true related during inspiration is purely God's action. Further, Scripture is especially the sole work of God. 'Since they were men who wrote the Scriptures, they did not shine of themselves, but "He was the true light, who lighteth every man that cometh into the world"'.[33]Augustine's view of inspiration is so high that under inspiration the Septuagint translators had licence to alter the original Hebrew.[34] In this case, Augustine understands the whole mind to have been moved aside while God works in the person perfectly so that God's actions are perfectly enacted and recorded. In this way, Augustine formalises the treatment of Scripture as a special case. For him Scripture is trustworthy because it is inspired, for by inspiration God guarantees God's own veracity.

While drawing on Tertullian, Augustine significantly revised Tertullian's description of inspiration, strengthening the high nature of special inspiration in contrast to other forms. The features of this Augustinian *ekstasis* description include:

- the separation of soul or spirit from the physical, with the image of God reflected in an impassible element of the human spirit;
- the assumption of a metaphysical anatomy that assigns functions of reason, judgement and direction to the soul which uses, interprets the senses and memory, and directs the physical body;
- a foundation which is a synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy, Neoplatonism and classical medicine, not Scripture;
- that the inspiring action of the Holy Spirit within the human person creates an *ekstasis* state similar to sleep, extreme fear and death;

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31 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram*, 12.7.16, 11.22, 12.9.25-26.
32 Augustine *de Genesi ad Litteram,* 12.25.52 – 12.26.53-54.
33 Augustine *The Gospel of John,* 1.6, in Schaff, P. (ed.) Post Nicene Fathers Series 1 Vol. 7, Edinburgh: T&T Clark (1996). Referring to the composition of the Psalms, 'For trance is used in another sense also, when the mind is not beside itself by fear, but is possessed by some inspiration of revelation'; Augustine, 'Expositions of the Psalms', *Psalms* 116.8. Trance is for Augustine another way to describe a state of *ekstasis*. This highest state vision or *ekstasis* is what adds to human knowledge about God. John learned a new thing, 'concerning the Lord by means of the dove, although he had already known the Lord. And this was discovered by the inspiration of the Spirit of God.', Augustine *First Epistle of John,* Hom, 7.1.3; 1 John 1:1 in Schaff, P.(ed.), Post Nicene Fathers Series 1 Vol. 7, Edinburgh: T&T Clark (1996).
34 Augustine *Expositions of the Psalms*, Psalms 88:9 in Schaff, P.(ed.), Post Nicene Fathers Series 1 Vol. 7; Edinburgh: T&T Clark (1996).

- the more complete the *ekstasis* the more reliable the inspired action;
- the most complete state of *ekstasis* is totally reliable;
- Scripture is reliable and hence must have been written in this special state;
- Scripture is therefore infallible.

These points encapsulate a way to speak of the manner of divine agency in human beings, which is predicated on anthropology requiring humans to have a metaphysical soul which the Holy Spirit displaces. When this displacement is total, the implied perfection of this unalloyed divine action dovetails neatly with the seventeenth-century understanding of divine perfections. This description also offered a rationale for affirming the authority of the books of God's revelation. The third point in this development is where Augustine most closely follows Tertullian.

The description implies that the production of Scripture is a special and best case of inspiration. There is however, no evidence or tradition in the early Church recording the writing of Scripture as occurring in special states of inspiration.[35] The assumption that the writing of Scripture involved special *ekstasis* only arises after Augustine's description. It will be argued that Augustine's *ekstasis* description of inspiration is not firstly theological in its derivation, beginning instead with an understanding of human metaphysical anatomy based in Greek philosophy and medicine. This allowed it to be readily used in the seventeenth-century environment of generic theology without reference to Christology. The seventeenth-century usage of inspiration saw a reversal in the relationship between the authority of Scripture and inspiration. Inspiration could become a guarantee of accuracy only when Augustine's description of divine agency had been taken for granted. For Protestants in the seventeenth century it provided a useful answer to the question where divine authority lay, along with the well understood influence of the late medieval understanding of the divine perfections and the notion of the two books of God's revelation.

Tertullian's description of inspiration made *ekstasis* mandatory for inspiration, thus making the inspired action error-free except in how it is recalled. However, Augustine asserted pure or total *ekstasis* as the highest form of inspiration and therefore perfect and free of human error even in recollection. While Augustine's view has dominated Western theology, surely an alternative description is possible – one not having the same implications and being more consistent with Trinitarian theology, a description which arguably may constitute a more fruitful basis for theological development and ultimately allow a more productive interaction between theology and science.

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35 That is with the exception of the legend of the translation of the Septuagint.

How the idea of the soul is developed in *de Anima*

So what is Tertullian's understanding of the soul in relationship to divine agency, which Augustine revises? By any current standard, Tertullian's ideas about the soul are unusual. However, knowledge now commonly understood about human anatomy and physics was unimaginable in the early third century. Indeed, the functioning of nerves and the brain only began to be understood in the nineteenth century.[36] Tertullian's *de Anima* nevertheless constituted a state-of-the-art contribution to intellectual debate in his own time.

Rather than seeing it in Nock's terms as 'a heated irrational attack on views differing from his own',[37] Tertullian's *de Anima* is an original attempt to synthesise critically an understanding of anthropology based on the light of Judeo-Christian revelation as well as what Tertullian gleaned as the best of *scientia* – Greek philosophy and then contemporary medicine.[38] Indeed, this synthesis constitutes the first systematic Christian theology in the West and, unlike the Jewish Philo and the Christian Platonist Alexandrian School, Tertullian develops this critical synthesis without recourse to allegory. It is worth noting that the refutation of the caricature of Tertullian as being anti-science and pagan learning is not new.[39] *De Anima* has the hallmarks of Tertullian's idiosyncratic rhetorical style and theological rigor but uses a broader range of references to philosophical and scientific literature than is usual for Tertullian.[40] *De Anima* remains an apologetic work in which Tertullian aims to show that the soul suggests evidence for God's existence and how God is to be understood.

Tertullian carefully used and revised Aristotle's explanation of the soul.[41] In Aristotle's terminology, it is the combination of the substances

36 Their function was as mysterious and spiritual or metaphysical to Isaac Newton as to Tertullian. As one of the first to publish in this area, T. H. Huxley questions the metaphysical description of the soul and thus inspiration; Huxley, T. H.'On sensation and the unity of structure of sensiferous organs', *Collected Essays* vol.6; Massachusetts: Clark University (1879); The Huxley File, Blinderman, C. & Joyce, D. Clark University. http://aleph0.clarku. edu/huxley/. (Accessed 15 May 2008).

37 Nock, A. D. 'Tertullian and the Ahori', *Viligiae Christianae* (1950) 4 no. 1, 129-141, 129.

38 Nock *op. cit.*, (37), 129.

39 Osborn, E. *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1997); Rankin, D. *Tertullian and the Church*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1995); Fredouille, J. C. *Tertullien Et La Conversion De La Culture Antique*, Paris: Etudes AugustiNeinnes (1972).

40 *Scorpiace* is his only other surviving example using this type of argument. While not uncritical, his engagement with this literature lacks his usual polemic. As this is one of his later works, past prejudice regarding Tertullian's alleged involvement in a separatist 'Montanist' group has led to this difficult work being minimised as merely an odd heretically informed set of speculations.

41 As neither Aristotle's explanation nor Tertullian's revision are well known in contemporary scholarship it is useful to briefly describe how Aristotle described the anatomy of soul, mind and flesh, before describing why Tertullian revises it.

of soul and body which constitute an individual. Aristotle argues that the soul is a body with matter and form. The element that knows and, thinks the *nous* or mind, is in the soul but not in the body. The mind within the soul is used in sensation, which combines the ability to sense with some organ of sensation. This combined action gives rise to thought. Sleep is the seizure of the primary sense organ rendering it unable to actualise its powers. The mind or the seat of identity is not an object or substance but a property of the soul.[42]

Tertullian guardedly uses platonic and stoic terminology.[43] He harbours extreme suspicion about the nature of the source of much of this philosophy. This is overt in the case of Socrates' reference to his demon and he implies it in other schools by their acquiescence to pagan deities.[44] Nor is Tertullian optimistic about philosophy's ability either to find truth or sustain the spirit. 'Such … is the enormous preoccupation of the philosophic mind that it is generally unable to see what is straight before it. Hence (the story of) Thales falling into the well. It very commonly, too, though not understanding even its own opinions, suspects a failure of its own health.'[45] In contrast, Tertullian appears to exempt the Lyceum from generalised dismissal in *de Anima*.

On the other hand, Tertullian also has a high regard for medical thought. In the same section in which he dismisses Plato and Socrates, he supports medicine over the philosopher:

> Soranus, who is a most accomplished authority in medical science, affords us as answer … Soranus has shown us from facts that the soul is nourished by corporeal aliments, let the philosopher (adopt a similar mode of proof, and) show that it is sustained by an incorporeal food.[46]

Scripture says very little about the structure of the human soul, its psychology or anatomy or the mechanism for its interaction with God. Typically, the narratives leave us with very bare statements such as the 'word of the LORD came to Jeremiah'.[47] Alternatively, the narrative describes the circumstances of God's interaction with people but usually not the inner workings of their soul or mind. Significantly, Tertullian seeks to explain the 'how' of this interaction by means of theological reflection. This is the case in the examples of Adam, Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, which

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42 Spicer, E. E. *Aristotle's Conception of the Soul* London: University of London Press (1934), pp. 3-7, 29-34, 60-63, 86-93, 95-96.
43 Tertullian here refers to Plato's Athenian academies, Stoic porches and Socrates' prison; Tertullian *de* Anima, 3.
44 Tertullian *de Anima*, 1.
45 Tertullian *de Anima*, 6.
46 Tertullian *de Anima*, 6.
47 Jeremiah 1:2.

Tertullian explains in *de Anima*.[48] Tertullian describes the nature of the soul as corporeal substance with a range of operative functions, which under divine agency in inspiration is set on one side, *ekstasis*. Corporeality in Tertullian's usage implies physical or spatial extension, not that it was necessarily material. It is however this insistence by Tertullian on the soul's corporeality which is the source of Augustine's greatest specific 'ravings' criticism of him.[49] Tertullian was concerned to clarify that the soul was created (thus corporeal) as opposed to Gnostic notions of the soul's pre-existence. Augustine on the other hand saw this as nonsense because in his scheme the incorporeality of the soul was how he saw the incorporeal Spirit of God as being reflected in the creature. This difference is not unexpected if it is considered that Tertullian, however guardedly, uses Stoic hylomorphism (in contrast to Augustine's use of Platonic dualism) in which any 'spiritual' substance is in some sense corporeal.

Tertullian applied *ekstasis* to a broad range of inspired activities from which he deduces the soul's attributes. 'Whether it be in the reading of Scriptures, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers, in all these religious services matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions.'[50] Tertullian does not expound how all inspired activity involves *ekstasis*, but he does assume it throughout *de Anima*. Although the cases described are unusual for contemporary readers, *ekstasis* is essential to Tertullian's description of divine agency by the Holy Spirit.

Tertullian uses the soul's attributes in building his case that the soul is to be described in revised Aristotelian terms. Tertullian's integration of functions of the soul (its sensorium) is similar to Aristotle's. While Tertullian, like Aristotle, regarded the mind as an attribute of the soul's set of interrelated and dependent functions, Tertullian distances himself from Aristotle's idea that there is an impassible divine element of the mind.[51] The mind as an attribute of the soul includes the intellectual powers and the sensuous faculties functioning as an integrated whole. 'What can sensation be, but the understanding of that which is the object of the sensation? And what can the intellect or understanding be but the seeing of that which is the object understood.'[52]

Tertullian extends *ekstasis* in a new way – Sleep is inaugurated by *ekstasis*. Sleep must involve an interruption of these functions, again recollecting Aristotle's notion. 'This power we call *ekstasis*, in which the sensuous soul stands out of itself, in a way which even resembles madness. Thus

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48 Tertullian *de Anima*, 11, 45.
49 Often this is mistaken as a general criticism.
50 Tertullian *de Anima*, 9.4.
51 Tertullian *de Anima*, 12, 22.
52 Tertullian *de Anima*, 18.

in the very beginning sleep was inaugurated by *ekstasis*: "And God sent an *ekstasis* upon Adam, and he slept."[53] Dreams then can be an example of the function of memory apart from their normal control.[54] Communicative dreams and prophecy come as the Holy Spirit works through a 'normal' nightly state of *ekstasis*. The final chapters deal with death as a special case of ultimate *ekstasis* prior to the resurrection of the body foreshadowed in life by sleep.[55] *De Anima* is not a comprehensive exposition of Scripture. As a longer work, Tertullian's lost *de Ecstasi*, it is possible to conjecture, may have been this type of comprehensive commentary in its seven volumes.[56]

The manner of divine agency of necessity must require *ekstasis* in Tertullian's formulation of the soul as it interrupts the integration of the sensuous faculties. The Holy Spirit must stand into the place of the human mind in the soul in order to use the human sensorium. The human soul must stand beside its normal thought processes. Prophecy, which Tertullian attributes to Adam and others as examples, must arise by God's standing aside of the person while the Holy Spirit operated that particular gift.

> Adam straightway predicted that 'great mystery of Christ and the Church,' when he said, 'This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they two shall become one flesh,' he experienced the influence of the Spirit. For there fell upon him that ecstasy, which the Holy Ghost's operative virtue of prophecy.[57]

> But this (gift of prophecy) only came on him afterwards, when God infused into him the ecstasy, or spiritual quality, in which prophecy consists.[58]

In this infusion the normal integration of the parts of the mind is changed, hence the soul cannot think as it does normally. Thus for Tertullian following this construction always means that *ekstasis* occurs in any prophet. The example of Nebuchadnezzar is used by Tertullian to demonstrate how it is that the same *ekstasis* occurs even in situations where it might not be apparent that it had. 'It was, indeed by an inspiration from God that Nebuchadnezzar dreamt his dreams; and almost the greater part of mankind gets their knowledge of God from dreams. Thus it is that, as

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53 '*Hanc uim ecstasin dicimus, excessum sensus et amentiae instar. Sic et in primordio somnus cum ecstasi dedicatus: et misit deus ecstasin in Adam et dormiit*', Waszink *op. cit.*, (26), Tertullian *de Anima* 45.

54 Tertullian *de Anima*, 45.

55 Tertullian *de Anima*, 50-58.

56 Tertullian's five volumes against Marcion may model a similar topical commentary.

57 Tertullian *de Anima*, 11.

58 Tertullian *de Anima*, 21; In this way his thought can be seen as a precursor of Augustinian and Thomistic notions of infused grace.

the mercy of God super-abounds to the heathen.'[59] By indicating the scope of how inspiration occurs and by including nonbelievers as examples, Tertullian indicates that *ekstasis* must come by God's action and choice.

Here it may be useful to use an illustration. In the system that Tertullian uses, *ekstasis* works like a school sports team into which international team players happen to have been substituted. While these players are on the ground, they use the same equipment and the same ball, and they wear the same strip, but the team plays better than was otherwise ever possible. The original team watches from the bench, aware of what is happening but taking no part in the action.

Because the Holy Spirit is active in the state of *ekstasis* this leads logically to Tertullian's discussion of error, which differs from Augustine's revision. In *de Anima* 24 Tertullian describes error in terms of forgetfulness, drawing on his Aristotelian analysis in *de Anima* 12.[60] Contrary to Plato, Tertullian argues:

> [W]e, however, who allow no appendage to God (in the sense of equality), by this very act reckon the soul as very far below God: for we suppose it to be born, and hereby to possess something of a diluted divinity and an attenuated felicity, as the breath (of God), though not His spirit; and although immortal, as this is an attribute of divinity, yet for all that passable, since this is an incident of a born condition, and consequently from the first capable of deviation from perfection and right, and by consequence susceptible of a failure in memory.[61]

Error has no function in the state of *ekstasis* when inspiration occurs. Error, if it occurs, comes later when the use of normal thought and emotions occur in interpretation and application. Tertullian's argument is with Plato and by extension the Gnostics, who held the soul as perfect being 'on a par with God',[62] and he turns from his brief comment on error in order to describe in detail the soul's origin and why it departs from perfection. This he argues results from the soul's creation in time. Tertullian concludes that the soul is formed at the same time as the body in the process of conception.[63] From medicine, Soranus in particular, he argues for the co-creation of body and soul at conception[64] and, following Cleanthes, that the

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59 Tertullian *de Anima*, 47.

60 Spicer, E.E. *op. cit.*, (42), pp. 95-96. Spicer incorrectly refers to Chapter 25.

61 Tertullian *de Anima*, 24.

62 Tertullian *de Anima*, 24.

63 Tertullian *de Anima*, 27.

64 Tertullian *de Anima*, 25-27; Tertullian refers to both Soranus' belief that the soul forms with the infant and to Soranus' reference to 'slaying' the unborn infant as a regrettable necessity in some cases of breach birth. In *de Anima* Tertullian shows familiarity with the technical detail of Soranus' Gynaecology by summarising a significant section of the treatment for breach births; Tertullian *de Anima*, 25; Soranus *Gynaecology*, Temkin. O. (ed.) Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press (1956), 4.9.61-4.13.70.

soul comes from the sperm.[65] Tertullian argues its proof by reference to the Holy Spirit's inspiring work. In particular, he cites the prophetic prenatal ability of Rebecca's twins foreshadowing the future struggles between the nations they were to represent and that of the unborn John the Baptist at the news of Mary's pregnancy.[66] The ability of the foetus to experience *ekstasis* proves that the soul is present before birth. Augustine follows Tertullian here almost without comment.[67]

Tertullian's presentation in *de* Anima is consistent with his use of the study of nature elsewhere. 'Some truths are known to us even by nature, like the immortality of the soul.'[68] However, these biblical examples only partly argue this case rather than settling human opinion as Tertullian claims.[69] While supporting the presence of the soul prior to birth they do not support the generation of the soul contrary to Plato's (and Gnostic) claims of the soul's eternal existence. In Chapter 27 Tertullian's argument mixes both Genesis 1 and physiological function to argue for the conception of the soul.[70] Strangely, Tertullian uses biblical examples to support conclusions gained from medicine, rather than vice versa. Augustine follows suit, only disagreeing when Tertullian argues for the soul's corporeality. Both Tertullian and Augustine base their understanding of the growth of the soul, whether understood as corporeal or metaphysical, as something which can be set aside by divine action firstly from contemporary science (medicine) rather than theologically.

Tertullian's revised Aristotelian metaphysical anatomy of the soul implies that any knowledge based activity during inspiration, such as prophecy, must displace normal thought processes. God acting in inspiration needs access to the same sensory apparatus in the soul as used by conscious thought. They both need access to the same sensory apparatus in the soul in order to work: understanding, memory, hearing and the ability to speak or write. This cannot occur at the same time and so inspiration of necessity must always involve *ekstasis* of self-awareness. Any action inspired by God then is thus totally a divinely motivated act and, by implication,

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65 Tertullian *de Anima*, 5, 25; Osborn, E. *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1997), p. 167; Tertullian agrees with Cleanthes' opinion that the soul forms from the male soul producing seed after conception; Tertullian *de Anima*, 25, 27; this is also the opinion of Soranus: Soranus *op. cit.*(64)*, 1.12.43; However Soranus also held that the soul could be affected for good or ill by the state of the soul of the mother: *ibid.*, 1.10.36-1.12.44.

66 Tertullian *de Anima*, 26.

67 Augustine *de Genesi*, 10.7.12 &. 10.20.35-10.26.45. 10.25.41 contains a rare moment of praise for Tertullian.

68 Tertullian *de Resurrectione*, 3,1-3.

69 Tertullian *de Anima*, 26.

70 The Scriptural injunction to sexual fidelity is interpreted as being a limit against harmful excess. This is not argued by the text. It is an interpretation which agreed with contemporary medical opinion: Soranus *op. cit.*, (64), 1.7.30 .

may be considered totally reliable. The conclusion for Tertullian is that *ekstasis* thus means that normal self-awareness is set on one side when God moves. Hence, inspired action is directly God's action in the soul with the body. As it is God's action, this action can only be perfect. Error has no place in this explanation of *ekstasis* revelation. If it occurs, then this is in the admixture of normal thought and emotions following the *ekstasis* in interpretation and application of the revelation. Error results from the work of 'that manifold pest of the mind of man, that artificer of all error'.[71]

What is interesting in their discussion of the nature and source of the soul in *de Anima* 24-26 and in *de Genesi* 10.20-26 is that neither Tertullian nor Augustine include any reference to Christology or the Trinity in their explanation of how divine agency applies to the soul. The exception is Augustine's assertion that the birth of Christ ought to be treated as a special case in order that no taint of sin would apply to Christ's soul. Theirs is a critical expounding of one of the foundation notions of western theology – how it is that God interacts with the human soul. There is little evidence here of Tertullian's scientific suspicion or of Augustine making science a servant to theology.

Implications

Tertullian's critical synthesis of Christian revelation and *scientia*,[72] later revised by Augustine are persuasive within the confines of scholarly verification of their period and throughout most of subsequent intellectual history up until the nineteenth century. It is only with the discovery of electric current and modern dissection that it has become possible to find a role for nerves other than growing finger nails at their ends and for the brain other than as hair fertiliser.[73] It is now known that the seat of the intellect is the brain, which is a part of the substance of the body, though how the soul relates to this remains a mystery. Indeed, whether the metaphysical soul actually exists is questioned by recent research which indicates that all functions traditionally attributed to the soul can be identified in biochemical reactions in the brain.[74]

Augustine's revision of Tertullian's description of the soul and its *ekstasis*, surprisingly differs from his otherwise Trinitarian theology in that it lacks Augustine's characteristic explicit Christological and Trinitarian references to the soul reflecting the triune nature of God. While Augus-

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71 Tertullian *de Anima*, 57.

72 Somewhat equivalent to what would now be called 'science'.

73 Tertullian *de Anima*, 51: 'As for the nails, since they are the commencement of the nerves, they may well seem to be prolonged, … The hair, again, is nourished from the brain.'

74 Russell, R. J. et al. (eds.) *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, Berkley and Vatican: Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (1999).

tine can never be accused of being non-Trinitarian there are parts of *de Genesi* which allow reinterpretation that empties it of personal divine interaction or any reference to who or what God may be. Newton does precisely this in his undated but early *de Gravitatione*, which is a precursor to his later *Principia* and theological works. The implication of this for both Newtown's thought and for his deist circle of natural philosophers deserves further exploration. It could be that this type of generic reappropriation of Augustine's notions of the soul and divine agency has a greater significance than often realised. Certainly at some point in early modernity two notions become essential elements to theological anthropology: that the metaphysical soul exists and that divine agency within this soul overcomes the limitation of human finitude enabling perfect revelation. If a causal link could be established this might clarify how these notions remained to become problematic in the nineteenth century when disciplined and thorough study of nature raised issues with the notion of ideal perfection of divine action. This led to the perfection of divine action being heavily revised and discussed in ever-eroding terms of teleological perfection[75] which Darwin ultimately rejected. His advocate Huxley further raised serious questions about the existence of a metaphysical soul. Both notions remain disputed.

Tertullian and Augustine both rely on first century medicine for a significant foundation to their understanding of the soul and divine agency. It may be argued that contemporary questions regarding the metaphysical soul and the nature of divine agency find their roots in an early Western theological argument developed from a 'scientific' world-view rather than beginning with theology. If a Christian description of divine agency must continue to rely on either assumption then this is problematic.

Rather than Tertullian and Augustine being exemplars of different approaches to the relationship of theology and science, this examination of the close dependence of one theologian on the other and on then contemporary best scientific knowledge further demonstrates that the relationship is far more complicated and interdependent than often acknowledged.

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75 Clayton, P. D. *The Problem of God in Modern* Thought, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2000); Passmore, J. *The Perfectibility of Man*, Indianapolis: The Liberty Fund (2000).