Thomas Traherne in Tradition: An Analysis of Platonist Cognition through the Writings of Plotinus, Ficino, Traherne, and Hobbes

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Abstract

Since the initial discovery of Traherne at the turn of the twentieth century, studies of his work have often neglected theological and philosophical analyses. Early caricatures of Traherne as a proto-Romantic have also colored his reception as a serious theologian. By placing the critical emphasis on the literary dynamics within the corpus, the intellectual history influencing Traherne and the construction of his ideas has subsequently been lightly addressed in scholarship over the years.

This dissertation presents Traherne as a sophisticated thinker who draws on the resources of Christian Platonism in an effort to create a philosophy for life. The argument puts him in dialogue with three other writers he knew well: Plotinus, Marsilio Ficino, and Thomas Hobbes. Plotinus and Ficino help locate the Platonist philosophical stream Traherne participates in. Thomas Hobbes helps illuminate the nascent empiricism indicative of the early modern period, a mechanical philosophy Traherne critiques in various ways.

With all four voices engaged, the topics of evil, soul, sense, and memory are investigated in order to reveal the textures of a Trahernian anthropology. A portrait then emerges where Traherne opens up, for the reader, possibilities of transformation arising from ordinary experience. The argument ultimately provides a re-interpretation of innocence in view of Traherne's Christian Platonism, showing how the concept of innocence works as a Platonic call to transformation and originary wholeness.

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Contents

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Dedication

To my daughter, Lydia, and my wife, Nikki.

Thank you for walking with me over the past five years in this endeavor, for your untold generosities in creating space for me to hide in my writing cave, and for your willingness to celebrate each turn of the page until there were no more to turn. I cherish our home and the daily felicities it brings.

Chapter 1 – Locating Trahernian Innocence Theologically

> Will you see the Infancy of this Sublime and Celestial Greatness? Those Pure and Virgin Apprehensions I had from the Womb, and that Divine Light wherwith I was born, are the Best unto this Day, wherin I can see the Universe.[1]

Thomas Traherne remains one of the most interesting literary discoveries of the twentieth century. His writings lived in obscurity for over two hundred years until a serendipitous passing by of a book burrow made them visible to the world.[2] In the century since that initial find, scholarship on the lost metaphysical poet has led in many, often divergent, directions. Recent manuscript discoveries are providing a more complex view of Traherne now, one that reveals both a philosopher and theologian alongside that poet examined in earlier critical assessments. The evolving horizon of Traherne's writings also invites a broader re-evaluation of his ideas and thematic tendencies. The examination I offer here focuses on his well-known emphasis on innocence in light of the philosophical and theological influences scholars already recognize in his work.

My thesis is that although Traherne's use of the idea of innocence has frequently been framed as a type of incipient Romanticism, this categorization neglects significant features of the thought experiments he explicates. I will argue that Traherne's return to innocence instead resembles the Plotinian contemplation of memory, a process that grounds itself in an ontological claim of humanity's infinite cognitive possibilities. This philosophy of transformation is connected to a Christian Platonist anthropology which I believe undergirds much of his writings.

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[1] From *Centuries of Meditations* in Thomas Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005-2014), V: 93.

[2] A concise accounting of the manuscript discovery dates can be found in the general preface. Ibid., V: ix-x.

To approach and then ultimately address Trahernian innocence, I will present four aspects of a Platonist anthropology and specifically examine the philosophy of cognition within that tradition. The four areas are the notion of evil, the concept of soul, the role of the senses, and the function of memory. Together these will provide the essential contours of an interpretative framework for understanding Traherne's theology. As the argument progresses, I think an intellectual portrait of Traherne will emerge which reveals his substantive engagement with the philosophical shifts underway in the early modern period.

To give some sense of the social turbulence Traherne experienced, he was appointed to Credenhill by the Commissioners for the Approbation of Public Preachers in 1657, "supported by some eminent Puritan preachers; five of the six ministers who provided certificates for him were ejected after 1660."[3] Yet with the Restoration, he sought ordination before a pronounced obligation to do so emerged. While my project is not concerned with tracing those associations nor locating Traherne accordingly, the volatility of the times with the church, at a minimum, indicates the complex circles Traherne knew and navigated as a theologian and priest.

Traherne also theologized historically under the auspices of the second Platonic Renaissance of England. As Verena Lobsien remarks, "this phenomenon of a revitalisation of Platonism in the mid-century climate of growing hostility towards metaphysical speculation of any, let alone this explicitly idealistic kind, comes as a surprise. Its very existence side by side with authoritarian models, rivalling explanations of the world and scientific ideas seemingly more suited to the pressing problems of immanence, may appear

[3] Julia J. Smith, "Attitudes Towards Conformity and Nonconformity in Thomas Traherne," *Bunyan Studies* 1, no. 1 (1988): 26.

astonishing."[4] As my discussion unfolds, Traherne will clearly reveal he is engaging this debate and constructing theological responses to the more problematic commitments embedded in that emerging empirical worldview.

1.1 Method

For this argument I will place Traherne in dialogue with three other thinkers: Plotinus, Marsilio Ficino, and Thomas Hobbes. I will surface the anthropological facets of evil, sense, soul, and memory in each figure and look for connections and contrasts along the way with Traherne. All three voices have been chosen because they are mentioned by Traherne and because they shape his writings in some way, whether by collaborative synthesis or by polemical necessity.[5]

Platonic strands in Traherne have long been recognized.[6] I will offer a more detailed exegetical comparison with the writings of Plotinus and Ficino (particularly *Platonic Theology*) to situate Traherne within that philosophical stream. With Hobbes, I will provide a series of ideological contrasts drawn in a somewhat generic fashion from the standard philosophical interpretation of his corpus.[7] There is little critical evidence that Traherne is addressing Hobbes directly in his corpus. But I think it will be clear as the discussion progresses that Traherne is quite aware of the mechanical philosophy Hobbes configures as an expression of empirical science. Hobbes was certainly a significant

[4] Verena Olejniczak Lobsien, *Transparency and Dissimulation: Configurations of Neoplatonism in Early Modern English Literature*, *Transformationen Der Antike* (New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 168.
[5] For traces of Ficino in the Traherne corpus, see Carol L. Marks, "Thomas Traherne and Cambridge Platonism," *PMLA* 81, no. 7 (1966): 523, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/461208. For traces of Plotinus, see Denise Inge, *Happiness and Holiness : Thomas Traherne and His Writings*, *Canterbury Studies in Spiritual Theology* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 16. For traces of Hobbes, see Kathryn Murphy, "Thomas Traherne, Thomas Hobbes, and the Rhetoric of Realism," *The Seventeenth Century (Manchester University Press)* 28, no. 4 (2013).
[6] For example, see Elbert N. S. Thompson, "The Philosophy of Thomas Traherne," *Philological Quarterly* 8 (1929).
[7] For recent literary scholarship on Hobbes and Traherne, see Murphy.

concern for the Cambridge Platonists[8] and Traherne sympathizes philosophically with that group in many respects. Samuel Mintz's summary below of the debate between the Cambridge School and Hobbism is transferable to Traherne I think.

> The most systematic and rigorous refutation of Hobbist philosophy was made by the Cambridge Platonists Henry More and Ralph Cudworth. Hobbes was not polemically present in the minds of Whichcote, John Smith, and Culverwell, but he lay behind much of their work, just as he was implied in the works of all the writers who comprised the Cambridge School… Whether by implication or direct attack, the Cambridge Platonists treated Hobbes as the opponent *sine qua non*.[9]

Given this intellectual affinity, I include Hobbes here because the comparison further locates Traherne in the intellectual history of this period and helps reveal how systematic Traherne is as a theologian. Hobbes, interestingly, attends to many of the same philosophical projects I will identify in this discussion, but with a different end in mind. Comparing that agenda with Traherne's robust Platonic logic gives credence to a more sophisticated reading of his theology. The contrast will also bring to light the immanent power and eloquence of Traherne's Christian Platonism.

My four anthropological areas all relate to human cognition and the subsequent chapters are organized around them. I am focusing on epistemology[10] in this argument because Traherne attends to it so often in the corpus. A theology of cognition seems to be a centering construct which informs most of his writings. I will bring those Platonic influences to the surface in a comparative fashion so that Traherne's theological voice can be heard within tradition. This will show itself concretely as I work through the discussion.

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[8] For an example of this with Cudworth, see Yves Charles Zarka, "Ralph Cudworth Et Le Fondement De La Morale: L'action, Le Sujet Et La Norme," *Archives de Philosophie* 58, no. 3 (1995), http://www.jstor.org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/stable/43037364.

[9] Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan : Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (Cambridge: University Press, 1962), 80.

[10] Regarding epistemology, I will employ the term under a broader definition. In its narrowest sense, epistemology is concerned with the study of knowledge and warrants for belief. In this thesis, I am using the term to point at broader theories of cognition.

In chapter two I will examine how evil is understood in each thinker. The notion of evil is treated first because I think it is an important mooring for Christian epistemology. Generally speaking, if evil is located with humanity in some manner, then cognitive capacities may also be suspect due to that corrupting influence.[11] If evil is something or somewhere else, then a different confidence may be placed in the mind. Thus the definition of evil, for my discussion here, creates a certain trajectory for the possibilities of human cognition. In this section I will look to Augustine in order to create a philosophical template and then discuss how each thinker portrays the conditions of embodiment and whether or not this state becomes a liability for human cognition. This chapter will show how Traherne as a Christian Platonist affirms the reliability of human thought. His understanding of evil will ultimately emphasize the exercise of freedom in view of God's relationality.

In chapter three I will talk about the soul. The existence and function of the soul is critically important for apprehension of spiritual realities in Traherne. The soul's faculties play a significant role in the alteration of consciousness. In this section I will explore four specific themes: transformation and cognition; the contemplation of *logos* and love; the nature of an embodied soul; the nature of the irrational soul. I will interact with all four of our thinkers around these ideas. This chapter will show how Traherne sees human cognition as potentially transformative and how he translates this transcendence as an experience of divine love. It will also examine how Traherne utilizes Trinitarian theology to Christianize the more problematic aspects of the Platonic soul tradition.

[11] The notion of evil becomes a clear line of demarcation between Calvinism and Christian Platonism. Gillespie's discussion of Erasmus highlights this train of thought. "Erasmus minimizes original sin. Indeed, it becomes almost insignificant. The source of evil lies not in man's nature but in his education. Humans are weak rather than evil." See Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 163. Gillespie here is analyzing the debate between Luther and Erasmus. For the broader discussion, see ibid., 135-69.

In chapter four I will analyse the senses. The corporeal senses are important to understand in our thinkers because knowledge is constructed from whatever input they receive. As the empirical worldview emerges in Traherne's time, the sensory process becomes a topic of debate. I will explore some of those issues in our four thinkers through the themes of estimation, mechanics, and service. With estimation, I will look at how the senses are valued in light of other cognitive abilities. With mechanics, I will examine how the senses operate within the body. With service, I will talk about how sensory experiences contribute to the learning endeavor. I will show how Traherne rejects any skepticism regarding the senses and instead places sensory experiences into a larger continuum of human learning that when oriented properly, reveals divine truths concerning human identity and vocation.

Finally, in chapter five I will talk about memory. Memory is an important facet to consider when reviewing this Platonist tradition because it carries with it an embedded claim about mental capacities. I will structure this discussion around four themes: the relationship between individuality and transcendence; attitudes towards temporality; the process of recollection; and the value of bodiliness. For Traherne, memory helps reveal an ontological truth about human origin and potential. Here I will show how the Trahernian mind somehow connects with God outside of time and recovers a primal grasp of identity as part of its search for the divine. I think Traherne's understanding of memory offers an intriguing contribution to Christian Platonism in the early modern period, one which incorporates a subjective element into what has been historically articulated in a cosmological and impersonal manner.

My argument does not attend to every facet of Traherne's anthropology. The four aspects I have chosen serve primarily to accentuate Platonic tendencies in his writings. I

would also sound A. Leigh DeNeef's note of caution in studying Traherne[12] that we have a very limited view of him due to his early death and short period of productivity. Declarations of what he thought should be taken with appropriate qualification. This is a compressed picture at best. The argument is also not decisive on the anthropologies at work in Plotinus, Ficino, and Hobbes. They are brought in here to help illuminate Traherne, but it will not be possible to sound out all critical perspectives for the interlocutors. I have tried to follow consensus views as much as possible in this treatment.

There are some things this project will attend to lightly. While I will spend significant time locating Traherne in tradition, this does not thereby exclude readings of him from other perspectives. I certainly see value in structuralist and other approaches for greater insights into his thought. I do, however, also recognize a compelling need to more appropriately understand him as a theologian conversant with his times. I believe my theological inquiry will demonstrate that value. I should also say that I am reading Traherne as a theologian for theological research. Literary engagement with Traherne is valuable, but it has also been well served. My project here attends to areas not yet covered sufficiently by scholarship.

The remainder of this chapter reviews the secondary literature around Traherne. I will present a short commentary on how Traherne has been portrayed critically.[13] I will also attend to scholarship engaged with the mystical elements seen in his writings and present three interpretative choices from that dialogue. I will then focus on critical work which attends to the Christian mystical influences in Traherne and from there talk about

[12] A. Leigh DeNeef, *Traherne in Dialogue : Heidegger, Lacan, and Derrida* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988), 33-34.
[13] For a broader review of critical history, see Denise Inge, "Re-Examining the "Poet of Felicity": Desire and Redemption in the Theology of Thomas Traherne" (Dissertation, King's College, 2001), 8-45.

the current state of Trahernian studies. The chapter ends with discussion on the Cambridge Platonist movement and how Traherne affiliates with that intellectual tradition.

1.2.1 A Brief Review of Traherne's Critical Reception

The early framing of Traherne's work and the peculiar narrative surrounding his discovery put him sharply in view for the literary world.[14] He was quickly understood as a Platonist poet,[15] but this identification was often tainted with a less than enthusiastic appraisal of his literary technique.[16] Added to this, his emphatic attention on childhood seemed out of ideological alignment with contemporaries like John Donne or Henry Vaughan.[17] Traherne largely wrote without an existentialist temperament. His exuberant praise of humanity's capacity to experience fulfillment in God in the midst of creation is a striking perspective given the tumultuous time he lived in.[18] For some critics, this unrefined naiveté relegates him to a secondary status in literary history, as Arthur Quiller-Couch exemplifies: "Well, let that be—we all have our little vanities. But of Traherne himself the first and last word is that he carries into a sustained ecstasy this adoration of

[14] "To this short list of mid-seventeenth century lyricists, - Vaughan, Herbert, Crashaw, must now be added the name of this other poet of the gentle life." See W. D. MacClintock, "A Re-Discovered Poet," *The Dial* 34 (June 16 1903): 395.
[15] "Thomas Traherne, on the other hand, was one to whom this Platonic idea, or something very like it, was a constant obsession. Recollections of early childhood, as reflected in a mind continually brooding over the mystery and the wonder of the universe, are the very substance of Traherne's poetry." W. Lewis Jones, "Thomas Traherne and the Religious Poetry of the Seventeenth Century," *Quarterly Review* 200 (1904): 459.
[16] "Mr Dobell is positive that 'neither Herbert, Crashaw, nor Vaughan can compare with Traherne in the most essential qualities of the poet.' Far from being the superior, he is not, in our opinion, the equal of any one of the three, tried by any test of poetical quality." Ibid., 438. Lock, while embracing Traherne readily, shares a similar assessment of the poetic form. See Walter Lock, "An English Mystic," *Constructive Quarterly* 1 (1913): 828-29.
[17] See Inge's footnote on DeNeef's assessment in Denise Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 2.
[18] One example of comparison from Hodgson: "In the enthusiasm naturally aroused by the discovery, some years ago, of Traherne's works, a tendency arose to rate him above Vaughan. All such comparisons are futile and fruitless, because the two men were so utterly different in temperament, Vaughan being a devout soul, but irreparably saddened by the dark times, while Traherne bubbled over with joy in the surrounding glory of the material universe." Geraldine Emma Hodgson, *English Mystics* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1922), 238-39.

the wisdom of childhood … and it is truly marvellous how the man can harp so long and elaborately on one string."[19] For others, it prioritizes him as mystic first and poet a rather distant second, as Towers illustrates: "But the key of religious ecstasy undoubtedly unlocked the ivory gates for Traherne. He is both mystic and poet, but it may be questioned whether he would have been a poet had it not been for the mystic flame which set his soul on fire. No other poet of his time shows so little regard for tradition. There is scarcely a hint in his work that he cared for the great poetry of the past."[20]

In the first major scholarly work a few decades later, Gladys Wade proclaims "Thomas Traherne, in fact, has yet come into his own."[21] Her book is saturated with affirmations of Traherne. She regularly lauds his philosophical insights[22], with statements like "it is quite clear that Traherne believed himself to be a philosopher, and that the philosophy he practiced, and preaching in his books, was new no less than true."[23]

Wade illustrates something important in Traherne's reception. Critical praise from scholars is often coupled with an affirming view of the Platonist elements in his corpus.[24] Conversely, alternative readings of Traherne as an incipient Romantic akin to William

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[19] Arthur Quiller-Couch, *Studies in Literature* (Cambridge: University press, 1918), 153. He would later rescind this dismissive tone: "The above remarks intend no belittling of Traherne … They are cautionary, rather, and come of an affection that, trusting to know its object as it really is, shrinks, as from an indelicacy, from hearing it overpraised." Thomas Traherne, *Felicities of Thomas Traherne*, ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch (London: P. J. & A. E. Dobell, 1934), xix.

[20] Frances Towers, "Thomas Traherne: His Outlook on Life," in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, ed. James Knowles (London: Leonard Scott Pub. Co., 1920), 1029.

[21] Gladys I. Wade, *Thomas Traherne* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944; repr., 1969), 11.

[22] "The other outstanding feature of Traherne's philosophy, its other major claim to real originality, lies in the manner it combines vastness with unity and coherence." Ibid., 237.

[23] Ibid., 215.

[24] "That Traherne was a Platonist defines his position as an advanced and liberal thinker in his own age." G. I. Wade, "Thomas Traherne as "Divine Philosopher"," *The Hibbert Journal* 32 (1934): 403.; "But Traherne is not an adjunct. His achievement is unique… At the same time, he finds probably the best expression in the language for the schemes of those more laborious divines, the Cambridge Platonists, with whom his thought is closely connected." T. O. Beachcroft, "Traherne and the Doctrine of Felicity," *The Criterion* 9 (1930): 291-92.; A more negative assessment that addresses the Platonist schemes at work in Traherne can be found in Thompson. Thompson does nonetheless acknowledge that Traherne provides an unusual presentation of ideas given his personality. Ibid.

Wordsworth or a philosophical peer to John Milton or Vaughan regularly yield a dismissive critique. While these are very early angles taken from such a limited portion of the corpus now available, the two trajectories resurface throughout the twentieth century in the scholarship. I think Denise Inge puts it well by saying "we approached it from a kind of side alley, thinking that what we see first is the front; that right from the start we have mistaken Traherne, or only partly understood him."[25]

1.2.2 The Influence of Comparative Studies on Mysticism for Traherne's Reception

This initial reception is also set against a larger backdrop of scholarly interest in comparative religion studies in the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly regarding mysticism. Herman's introductory thoughts capture the ethos: "it has become a platitude to speak of a mystical revival, but so far it has been a revival of interest in Mysticism rather than of Mysticism itself."[26] The dialogue around mysticism has divergent camps, of course, from objective comparative assessment across religious boundaries to enlivened advocacy within Christianity's communicants.[27] Mysticism studies focused on the anthropological phenomenon have a tendency to collapse distinctions across religious traditions.[28] Christian mystical theology that appropriates the Platonist tradition often

[25] Inge, "Re-Examining the "Poet of Felicity": Desire and Redemption in the Theology of Thomas Traherne," 15.
[26] E. Herman, *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Clarke, 1916), vii.
[27] Hügel's ambitious project to synthesize Hellenism, Christianity, and Science in *The Mystical Element of Religion* sees mysticism as integral to the meaningful life: "Only a life sufficiently large and alive to take up and retain, within its own experimental range, at least some of the poignant question and conflict, as well as of the peace-bringing solution and calm: hence a life dramatic with a humble and homely heroism which, in rightful contact with and in rightful renunciation of the Particular and Fleeting, ever seeks and finds the Omnipresent and Eternal; and which again deepens and incarnates (for its own experience and apprehension and for the stimulation of other souls) this Transcendence in its own thus gradually purified Particular : only such a life can be largely persuasive, at least for us Westerns and in our times." Friedrich Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1909), 368.
[28] An example from De Marquette: "We have been through so many halls of magnificence and seen so many vistas of radiant glory, we sensed so repeatedly the tremendous, august and awe-inspiring Divine Reality beneath the very thin veil of religious transport." Jacques De Marquette, *Introduction*

does so in an effort to enrich the self-understanding of the tradition. Anselm Stolz, in 1938, speaks to these efforts in a broader theological enterprise.

> Today whoever takes his bearings in mysticism discovers that he has been led out on to a battlefield. The conflict seems to be about fundamental questions. A theology of mysticism cannot begin with an exposition of the pros and cons of this dispute… The dispute is entirely conditioned by circumstances of time, arising as it does from a concrete situation in the last century, from reaction against the excessive value attached to purely discursive and meditative prayer and from the effort to restore to mysticism its place in the Christian life.[29]

These divergent perspectives around the idea of a mystic, I think, contribute to a diffused philosophical analysis of Traherne. This is further complicated by his initial discovery being couched within the small sample of his poetic writings. The theologian revealed decades later in other manuscripts is simply not perceived.[30] These interpretative presuppositions manifest themselves in various ways and subsequently impacted later readings of Traherne.

1.2.3 Broader Scholarship Addressing Traherne's Mysticism

In this section I will narrow the dialogue partners down because Christian Platonism may not converse well with critical approaches that do not consider metaphysical constructs. This will help sharpen our focus towards the mystical aspects of Traherne's writings. I also acknowledge semantic issues whenever the term "mystic" is used regarding Traherne. In Christian theology, "mystic" is understood against a

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to Comparative Mysticism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 185. A similar sentiment from Spencer a couple decades later: "The study of mysticism in the various religions of the world reveals very wide differences in its forms of expression, but at the same time it reveals a certain essential unity of experience and outlook." Sidney Spencer, *Mysticism in World Religion*, *Pelican Books* (Baltimore,: Penguin Books, 1963), 326.

[29] Anselm Stolz, *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection* (London: Herder & Herder Co., 1938; repr., 2001), 4-5.

[30] Inge is helpful here: "Looking back over the familiar corpus of writings with the influence of the new discoveries, we may see that whatever is new has been intimated in the previously known works. What really *has* changed is that we can now speak with more confidence and clarity about Traherne's theological positions." Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, 4.

philosophical backdrop also found in the Christian tradition. Outside my discipline, "mystic" may convey a broader engagement with transcendence and the religious nomenclature is secondary. In the review below, I will not be parsing this issue directly. I only want to point out the imprecision in terms when it comes to Trahernian scholarship.

Louise Willcox in 1911 minimizes the Platonist schooling Traherne received as she locates him alongside Wordsworth. "It would be, perhaps, too forced and fantastic to point out all the parallels of Platonic doctrine in the two poets, since all men are supposed to be born Aristotelians or Platonists, and no one could question to which school these two writers belong."[31] At the conclusion of her essay, Willcox gives a similar pass at the philosophical elements in Traherne.[32] Thus she affirms the label 'mystic' while essentially severing its connection to any Platonist scheme.

Walter Lock, in a similar fashion, sees a mystic focused on the external world and relationality.[33] Nature and love are the ground of knowledge and the objects of study. The wellspring of Traherne's imagination is located away from any sort of Trinitarian life one finds in Christian Platonism. Though Lock identifies Christian elements in Traherne,[34] he sees them in clear service to other things. This again is an understandable gap given what little corpus was available to frame the discussion. Yet parsing Traherne in this way can create a diffusive space between his theological constructs and poetic meditations.

Though Percy Osmond's chapter on Traherne recognizes the cautionary view towards the Cambridge Platonists,[35] he nonetheless sees him as a "mystical writer of the

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[31] Louise Collier Willcox, "A Joyous Mystic," *The North American Review* 193, no. 667 (1911): 900, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/25106954.
[32] Ibid., 904.
[33] "He is the mystic of Nature, but no less the mystic of Love." Lock goes on to say that Christ is not the central thought for Traherne's mysticism. See Lock, 835-36.
[34] For a discussion on the value of the cross, see ibid., 834.
[35] "A modern writer on mysticism speaks in a somewhat disparaging tone of the 'the tepid speculations of the Cambridge Platonists'." Percy H. Osmond, *The Mystical Poets of the English Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 195.

very highest rank."[36] Osmond explores the Plotinian constructs in Traherne with an affirming tone, examining ideas around desire, felicity, and the unity of experiences between body and spirit.

> Special attention must be drawn to the success with which, in an age when it was particularly difficult to do so, he coordinated the ideals of Hellenism and Hebraism. He followed the Τὸ Καλόν (sic) of Hellenism with the "clean hands and pure heart" of Hebraism, taking the keenest pleasure in the beautiful without any consciousness of sensual entanglement.[37]

Osmond demonstrates this thread in Trahernian scholarship I mentioned earlier, one where Christian Platonism is seen as the backdrop for his writings rather than a relic from which Traherne is trying to free himself as later Idealists would.

Gladys Willett's essay in 1919 sees mysticism as "fundamentally the same – its essential characteristic being an ardent desire for union with God. But it expresses itself in different ways, according to the nature, nationality, and religion of the mystic, and the time in which he lives."[38] She explores the nature and love motifs identified in Traherne by Scott. She also attends to the Plotinian philosophy, situating him within the Cambridge Platonist movement.[39] But when Traherne becomes more theological in *Christian Ethics*, she finds it uninspiring.[40]

Willet also places Traherne's interior contemplations above any external learning. She believes it is "easy to see that Traherne's mysticism was not a set of ideas received purely from outside sources, but an integral part of himself."[41] While there is certainly a

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[36] Ibid., 234.
[37] Ibid., 246.
[38] Gladys E. Willett, *Traherne : (an Essay)* (Cambridge, Eng.: W. Heffer, 1919), 6.
[39] Ibid., 8-9.
[40] "But on the whole Traherne has excluded from the 'Ethics' all that mystical rapture which we peculiarly associate with him, and he has thereby excluded his genius." Ibid., 33.
[41] Ibid., 44.

very personal element to his writings, this tilt towards interiority also relegates his undergirding theology to the shadows.[42]

Interpretations of Traherne as an idealist continue to appear at this time. Elbert Thompson defines mysticism as the "reception of divine truth through hidden, spiritual channels."[43] It is an inward gaze with or without religious orientation. Mysticism transforms the reality of the material world for the unreality of interior illumination. Traherne and Blake are pervasively transformed in this regard, where everything was "subjective not objective; for they gained consciousness of the finite through the infinite … (this) closely resembles the subjective idealism of the nineteenth century."[44] Hugh Fausset follows this same line of thought. Traherne "sentamentalises reality to satisfy his own desire."[45] Mystical speculations are thus reflections on the unreal in the face of material finitude.[46] J. B. Leishman interprets Traherne under a similar Berkeleyan light. Traherne's concept of a human being means that "God's manifestation of himself, only becomes significant, only really exists, through the mind of man."[47]

1.3.1 Three Interpretative Stances for Traherne

[42] Willett is more interested in the emotive qualities experienced by the reader with Traherne rather the philosophical insights. This shows at the end of the essay. "But the root of Traherne's sublimity in the 'Centuries' cannot be found by mere analysis of his prose. In the end we can only judge whether a writer be sublime or not by our own feelings when we read him." Ibid., 56.
[43] Elbert N. S. Thompson, "Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century English Literature," *Studies in Philology* 18 (Jan 01 1921): 4.
[44] Ibid., 189-90.
[45] Hugh I'Anson Fausset, *Studies in Idealism* (London: J.M. Dent, 1923), 102.
[46] Fausset's concluding remarks demonstrate this logic. In speaking of the modern poet he says "the (modern) poet no longer indulges in large gestures and splendid pomps. He observes the small things of life with a wistful scrutiny. He will neither escape from life into a world of purely sensational romance, nor drug his pain, his disgust or his anxiety with soothing narcotics. Rather he seeks to explore reality with a studious and, so far as he can, a disinterested vision, reconciling where possible what he desires with what is, but not shrinking from revealing the gulf which so often yawns between the ideal and the real." See ibid., 276.
[47] J. B. Leishman, *The Metaphysical Poets: Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Traherne* (Oxford,: The Clarendon press, 1934), 199. This seems to be stated within a meager understanding of Plotinian metaphysics. Leishman can see the Platonist tradition here but makes unsupported jumps in his attempt to precursor Berkeley with Traherne.

It seems then that within the first few decades of Traherne's rediscovery, three interpretative stances emerge. The first reads Traherne as a Christian Platonist, a backward looking posture that situates him comfortably within Christianity, albeit on the fringes of what is normally understood as Orthodox.[48] This interpretation is informed by the philosophical cues in the early corpus available. The second stance reads Traherne as a mystic, but with a significant disregard for the particular religious elements. This interpretation seems connected to renewed interest in the phenomenon of mysticism at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Finally, a third posture sees Traherne as some sort of proto-Romantic. Romanticism is a somewhat nebulous term. Iaian McCalman offers this helpful definition.

> Crudely we may define this as a displacing ideal forged by artists, writers, and intellectuals as they struggled at the turn of the [19th] century to cope with commercial and professional changes in the arts and letters, as well as with the ferment of national war and revolution… it was nourished by the biographical myth that insecure intellectuals erected for themselves, a transcendent ideal that elevated creative imagination, individual genius, and the inward self over the prosaic requirements of scribbling for a living. [49]

Traherne, of course, predates British Romanticism by a century or more, yet the framework is appealing to think of him as an early manifestation given the preponderance of interior reflections in his writings. He certainly witnessed the volatility of the Interregnum period and a retreat into the perfection of an idealized childhood innocence

[48] This discomfort with the approach of the Cambridge Platonists was felt in Traherne's day. In recounting a 1662 correspondence to Simon Patrick, Levine writes "The latitudinarians, he reported, desired to settle religion in a 'virtuous mediocrity' between the puritans and the papists on the one hand and the skepticism and materialism of the atheists on the other hand." Levine goes on to say "There were, of course, platonists long before there were latitudinarians and there were soon to be latitudinarians who were no longer platonists, but for a short time the two became synonymous." Joseph M. Levine, "Latitudinarians, Neoplatonists, and the Ancient Wisdom," in *Philosophy, Science, and Religion in England, 1640-1700*, ed. Richard W. F. Kroll, Richard Ashcraft, and Perez Zagorin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 85.

[49] Iain McCalman, *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age : British Culture, 1776-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.

sounds like a Romantic move. This line of thinking is also what gave credence to assessments of Traherne that he was a less eloquent Wordsworth of his day.

For my argument here, I am reading Traherne under the first option. This is primarily because the subsequent manuscript discoveries, beginning with the 1964 discovery of *Select Meditations*, invite significant theological analyses. In my view this is best pursued in conversation with the Christian Platonist tradition. I also find numerous indications in Traherne's larger corpus that he was greatly concerned with how he could articulate an accessible Christian philosophy of life that sustained a sense of meaning and purpose.[50] The other two interpretative options above tend to neglect this pastoral agenda.

1.3.2 Scholarship Engaging the Christian Mystical Tradition

With my interpretative choice now in sight, I want to survey a few more perspectives in the scholarship that make contributions along these lines. T.O. Beachcroft notes that Traherne's philosophy "renders his mystical experience legible to ordinary readers."[51] As for Cambridge Platonism, Beachcroft sees it as a necessary backdrop for understanding the mysticism. Traherne's poetic efforts even expand the Platonist dialogue.[52] Wade examines *Christian Ethics* under a Thomist light. While the final philosophy differs, she believes the Thomist foundation informs the structure of Traherne's

[50] For example, "Because the Soul naturaly desires to see the Lineaments of its own face, Humanity is Delightfull which displayeth its features. It is admirable, because it unfoldeth Wonders that are incredible; but more because it doth it in a maner so plain and easy, for its Objects are within us; It is therfore the most certain of all Sciences, becaus we *feel* the Things it declares." From *Seeds of Eternity* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I:233.
[51] T. O. Beachcroft, "Traherne and the Cambridge Platonists," *Dublin Review* 186 (1930): 278.
[52] Ibid., 279-90. Beachcroft offers a useful discussion on how Traherne intersects some key thinkers in the Cambridge Platonist movement.

thoughts in that work.[53] Wade, in a different essay, declares that "his very Christianity is Platonic … he is a Christian first and a Platonist afterwards."[54]

Itrat Husain studies Traherne as a mystic who "apprehended the truth of Christianity philosophically."[55] He also sees similarities with the Cambridge Platonists, ones which reflect the "general spirit of the movement rather than any particular side."[56] Though Husain situates Traherne as a love mystic within orthodox Anglicanism,[57] the survey spends significant time examining Plotinian constructs at work in his philosophy. Husain qualifies this at the beginning of his chapter on Traherne.

> But he is not a Neo-Platonic mystic like Plotinus; his conception of God as the "God of Love" is essentially Christian, and it differs from that of Plotinus, who conceived God as the "Pure One." This difference is often overlooked by Traherne's critics.[58]

Husain's distinction is helpful here. This relationality in Traherne is specifically Trinitarian. The label of 'love mystic' used in some criticism blurs this undergirding theology.

A wave of fresh assessments followed James Osborn's 1964 discovery of *Select Meditations*.[59] There is a sense in the critical responses that Traherne is more engaged with the issues of his time than initially perceived. Keith Salter sees Traherne's mystical vision as a means to restore a sense of balance. The reflections preserve him amidst the tumultuous events of the interregnum period. His philosophy thus guards against the

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[53] G. I. Wade, "St. Thomas Aquinas and Thomas Traherne," *New Blackfriars* 12, no. 140 (1931): 672, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1931.tb01855.x.
[54] Wade, "Thomas Traherne as "Divine Philosopher"," 401. Similar thoughts from Wade can be found in her monograph on Traherne. See Wade, 215-38.
[55] Itrat Husain, *The Mystical Element in the Metaphysical Poets of the Seventeenth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1948), 264.
[56] Ibid., 267.
[57] Ibid., 295.
[58] Ibid., 266.
[59] James Marshall Dr Osborn, "A New Traherne Manuscript," *The Times Literary Supplement* (October 8 1964).

earliest tides of secularization.[60] Scientific discovery, though, is embraced because the "study of nature cannot be separated from the study of God."[61]

Salter provides a lengthy comparative analysis of Traherne as a Christian mystic.[62] He also acknowledges many points of contact with the Cambridge Platonists, but in the end the mysticism is not defined by the movement. Traherne gives attention to the participatory dimension of contemplation rather than the cosmological arguments attended to by so many of the like-minded philosophers of his day.[63]

Louis Martz is one of the first critics to examine Traherne within a larger theological tradition. He presents *Centuries* as Augustinian "in theme, in style, in method of mediation,"[64] and then looks to Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* to the illuminate the mystical progression.[65] Martz considers Traherne an informed theologian. This examination positions him within a Christian Platonist heritage. The nuances of various thinkers are synthesized by Traherne, yielding a unique theological voice. While Martz's assessment defines the mysticism as a purely inward realization,[66] his exercise still

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[60] By secularization, I mean the shift away from traditional metaphysics. Salter calls this "natural causation." See Keith W. Salter, *Thomas Traherne : Mystic and Poet* (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), 6. Affirming this Salter's idea of balance, Inge says "*Select Meditations* are replete with considerations and asides showing his enthusiasm for the restoration of the king and of an established order." See Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, 14.
[61] Salter, 6-7.
[62] His scaffolding for this comes primarily from Evelyn Underhill. See ibid., 41, 43.
[63] Ibid., 87-91.
[64] Louis Lohr Martz, *The Paradise Within : Studies in Vaughan, Traherne, and Milton* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 54.
[65] Martz provides a brief outline of this overlay. See ibid., 57. For the full discussion, see ibid., 54-102. For a critique of Martz's approach, see Gerard H. Cox, III, "Traherne's 'Centuries': A Platonic Devotion of 'Divine Philosophy'," *Modern Philology* 69, no. 1 (1971), http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/436695. Cox takes issue with the Augustinian influence inferred by Martz. The foundation for his objection seems a bit strained though, saying "the temper of Traherne's mind is too unlike Augustine." Ibid., 10.
[66] "Paradise, then, may be regained by uncovering these inner forms of truth and good." See Martz, 36. Martz attaches this move towards interiority to social upheaval. "With the collapse of ancient institutions in the middle of the seventeenth century, many of the finest minds in England without the help of the old ecclesiastical establishment." Ibid., 37. *Contra* Martz, Traherne seems to resist the solipsism brought about by an inward gaze. "Traherne cannot be looked at in the light of romantic ideas about beauty and nature, for he shows in his poetry the certainty that in nature outward beauty is the proof of inward beauty, and outward good of inward good." See Thomas F.

provides a helpful historical backdrop worth consideration. Carol Marks also makes significant contributions in situating Traherne. Her work on ideological connections with the Cambridge Platonists, Hermes Trismegistus, and Ficino reveal him as a careful and selective thinker.[67]

Arthur Clements in *The Mystical Poetry of Thomas Traherne* begins by saying "criticism of Thomas Traherne has too often been marked by error of fact, gross misunderstanding, uncritical repetition, and exceedingly faulty judgement."[68] The misconstrued interpretations of his mysticism are "general, superficial, and disappointing." [69] Clements sets out to reveal the Christian tradition informing Traherne's poetry, categorizing the poems into Creation, Fall, and Redemption.[70] The mysticism also shows an interesting reconciliation of *via negativa* and *via positiva* modalities. Traherne embraces the silent descent typical of *negativa* in the midst of his exuberant verbosity.[71]

Others, also in reaction to Romantic or Idealistic interpretations of Traherne, highlight a need in the scholarship to better understand the theological and philosophical tradition informing his writings. S. Sandback, for example, addresses the early critical association of Traherne to Berkeley[72] by examining the poem "My Spirit." "Traherne, in the last analysis, does not doubt the extra-mental reality of the 'objective' world. The resemblance, discredited by Berkeley, between the outer world and our own perceptions

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Staley, "The Theocentric Vision of Thomas Traherne," *Cithara* 1964, no. 1 (1964): 44. The broader corpus seems to suggest Traherne was looking for a 'middle way' amidst the upheaval.

[67] Marks; Carol L. Marks, "Thomas Traherne and Hermes Trismegistus," *Renaissance News* 19, no. 2 (1966), http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2858616; Carol L. Marks, "Traherne's Ficino Notebook," *The papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 63 (1969).

[68] Arthur L. Clements, *The Mystical Poetry of Thomas Traherne* (Cambridge,: Harvard University Press, 1969), 3.

[69] Ibid., 8.

[70] Clements asserts that Traherne incorporates Biblical elements into his writings alongside the Neoplatonic constructs. Ibid., 14-15.

[71] Ibid., 56.

[72] "Bertram Dobell says that Traherne was 'a Berkleian before Berkley was born'; for though he never actually affirms 'the non-existence of independent matter', he is constantly hinting that things receive all their qualities from thought." Willett, 23.

and ideas, is, to Traherne, the central miracle of human knowledge."[73] Sandbank also looks to the Cambridge Platonists and Ficino for a larger tradition at work in the poetry. "In this re-integration of religious experience, Traherne … stands outside – and against – the 'cultural revolution' of his time."[74] Malcolm Day, in concert with Clements,[75] also rejects charges of solipsism. After a careful examination of the soul's powers in *Ethiks* and *Centuries*, he concludes that "Traherne unquestionably belongs"[76] to the mystical tradition of Neoplatonism.

Richard Jordan, in his literary study of eternity-time found within *Centuries*, hopes to "establish more securely Traherne's position in philosophy."[77] He sees his concept of time applied with great consistency. While Traherne provides a unique formulation for his context, the philosophical heritage connects with Boethius, Anselm, Aquinas, and Ficino.[78] Jordan also finds points of resonance with the larger school of thought represented by the Cambridge Platonists.[79] Patrick Grant explores the latitudinarian movement's interest in Irenaeus, particularly on the doctrine of humanity. Grant concludes that "not only are the main lines of Irenaeus's teaching but also the cruxes of his theory are reproduced with

[73] S. Sandbank, "Thomas Traherne on the Place of Man in the Universe," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 17 (1966): 128.
[74] Ibid., 136.
[75] "Traherne's position does not constitute a denial of external reality or of an observing self. It merely asserts, affirms the truth, that the object and subject exist only as abstractions from the concrete experience of perception, which experience 'includes' subject and object as the end limits of a single, integrated reality." A. L. Clements, "On the Mode and Meaning of Traherne's Mystical Poetry: "The Preparative"," *Studies in Philology* 61, no. 3 (1964 Jul 01 1964): 505.
[76] Malcolm M. Day, "Traherne and the Doctrine of Pre-Existence," *Studies in Philology* 65, no. 1 (Jan 01 1968): 97.
[77] Richard Jordan, *The Temple of Eternity: Thomas Traherne's Philosophy of Time*, *Kennikat Press National University Publications Series on Literary Criticism* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1972), 8.
[78] Jordan takes issue with Martz regarding the influence of Augustine. See ibid., 52-55.
[79] Ibid., 36-40.

remarkable fidelity by Traherne."[80] This Irenaean anthropology is a key to a unified understanding of Traherne's philosophy.[81]

Day sees Traherne's speculative mysticism akin to Meister Eckhart, John Tauler, and Nicholas of Cusa. He finds continuity with Florentine Renaissance thinkers like Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola.[82] There is also significant discussion of the Cambridge Platonists.[83] "These doctrines were ultimately founded upon the great ideas of Christian Neoplatonism and mysticism, not upon a simpler rationalism like that of later deists."[84] Francis King, in her examination of Traherne's 'imaginative process', assumes these Platonist connections as foundational.[85] Her analysis, though, is not a philosophical exercise but rather an exploration of the linguistic structures in *Centuries.* Theology and poetic prowess are disregarded by Traherne, in the end, as linguistic experience ultimately creates satisfaction.[86]

Sharon Seelig's examination of Traherne focuses on his "dual vision of reality."[87] *Dual* for Seelig points at the interplay between the immaterial and the material. Perceptions of creation relate to experiences of God and humanity is competent to understand.[88] This knowledge involves a circularity, from initial innocence to growing

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[80] Patrick Grant, *The Transformation of Sin: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), 185.
[81] Ibid., 203.
[82] Malcolm M. Day, *Thomas Traherne*, *Twayne's English Authors Series* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 14-18.
[83] Ibid., 9-14.
[84] Ibid., 9.
[85] Francis King, "Thomas Traherne: Intellect and Felicity," in *Restoration Literature: Critical Approaches*, ed. Harold Love (London: Methuen, 1972), 122.
[86] "As with the theology so the poetry: it is as though his eye is on the Beatifick Vision from the beginning and does not need the kind of commitment, whether to theological or poetic exploration, that fuses language and thought into something capable of supporting the full weight of the searching imagination." Ibid., 137. This move by King repeats mistakes of the past in criticizing Traherne. It seems hard to justify such a commitment in Traherne in light of the available corpus. The same sort of move appears in Alvin Snider, "The Self-Mirroring Mind in Milton and Traherne," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (May 1 1986), http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/utq.55.4.313.
[87] Sharon Cadman Seelig, *The Shadow of Eternity : Belief and Structure in Herbert, Vaughan, and Traherne* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1981), 102.
[88] Ibid., 106.

distortion to restored simplicity of vision.[89] In thinking rightly about the world, "man, himself a creator, returns to God a better gift than was given him."[90] Humanity is thus a microcosm of the Divine. Though Seelig spends little time identifying these constructs within a larger theological tradition, her insights are consistent with ideas seen in Christian Platonism. Nabil Matar traces influences from Gregory of Nyssa in Traherne as some of his contemporaries. The infinite nature of God and the soul's attraction to it provided a meaningful alternative to the religious upheaval of mid-seventeenth century England.[91]

DeNeef examines Traherne in an imaginary dialogue with Martin Heideger, Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida. It is a detailed effort to test the validity of New Historicism's critical theory. Traherne offers a suitable exercise because "in a very real sense, I would argue, the old historicism has constructed a Traherne that is blatantly unhistorical."[92] He is aware of the potential pitfalls in this experiment, but ultimately thinks the questions around being, psychic identity, desire, and the discursive economy of supplementarity can be approached with a transhistorical analysis.[93] DeNeef certainly offers structural insights into Traherne's mysticism, but what is most refreshing is the positioning of the critic before analysis occurs.[94]

Michael Suarez carefully traces the method of spiritual progress through the four estates of innocence, misery, grace and glory.[95] Traherne underscores the importance of self-sacrifice and shows the journey to be one of disciplined work.[96] The mysticism in

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[89] Ibid., 113.
[90] Ibid., 125.
[91] Nabil I. Matar, "Mysticism and Sectarianism in Mid-17th Century England," *Studia Mystica* 11, no. 1 (1988): 56-58.
[92] DeNeef, 5.
[93] Ibid., 16.
[94] The first chapter is very instructive for this reason. Much of the earlier criticism seems to lack this self-awareness. It may very well be due to blind spots in Old Historicism approaches.
[95] Michael Felix Suarez, "Against Satan, Sin and Death: Thomas Traherne and the "Inward Work" of Conversion," in *Reform and Counterreform: Dialectics of the Word in Western Christianity since Luther*, ed. John C. Hawley (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 90.
[96] Ibid., 88.

Traherne is not an asceticism turned inward[97] but rather a full redirection of lifestyle towards union with God.

Suarez also examines the dialectical criticisms of Traherne. This interpretative stance prioritizes the linguistic dynamics in the texts above a recovery of the historical backdrop at work in the writer. This does produce new insights. Yet it also dislocates Traherne from his time. Suarez warns against this gap in perspective.

> Nevertheless, to imagine that Traherne conceived the relationship between the four estates as essentially dialectical is seriously to misunderstand the position of orthodox Christian theology regarding the soul's salvation history.[98]

This particular issue in Traherne criticism again echoes one of the difficulties we have seen before in the first few decades after Traherne's initial discovery. The theologian can easily be muted by critical presuppositions. Reading him for insights into the phenomenon of mysticism or situating him as an idealist without a substantive awareness of the theological constructs at work in his thoughts often yields incomplete and sometimes faltering conclusions, particularly on the meta-concerns Traherne conveys in the corpus. These are understandable problems given the unique history of the manuscripts. Nonetheless, contemporary readings of Traherne should give careful attention to their grounding approaches, realizing what blind spots may develop with various critical stances.

David Ford locates Traherne within a theological tradition and yet leaves room for innovations that fit the context of mid-17th century England, including an innovation Ford describes as feasting.

> The metaphysics of feasting is first of all about the reality of that God who transcends all our categories; then about the 'logic of superabundance' which

[97] Compared to Teresa of Avila, for example.
[98] Suarez, in *Reform and Counterreform: Dialectics of the Word in Western Christianity since Luther*, 91.

> might be discerned in creation and history; and finally about the orientation of divine economy. [99]

Traherne 'feasts' on felicity in all manners of thought: aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, and hermeneutics. This spirituality of transformation is "by joy into God's image, which involves a new relationship with all creation as well as with God."[100] Gordon Mursell, in his section on the Latitudinarians and the Platonic tradition, mentions Traherne alongside other thinkers like Peter Sterry and Sir Thomas Browne. Traherne in several places is portrayed as the theologian who goes 'further.' Whether it is in his view of the soul's capacity, possession of the world through contemplation, or transformation of the mind, Traherne presses "Platonic thought to its furthermost point compatible with Christian theology."[101]

Paul Cefalu begins his essay by acknowledging a consensus view that Traherne's work is informed by Neoplatonist sources.[102] Yet, according to Cefalu, Thomistic elements do not synthesize well with the neo-scholasticism in his work. Traherne is thus a "neo-scholastic who makes use of Platonic imagery and concepts, not a Platonist who sometimes invokes scholastic terminology."[103] His discussion is contained to matters of human psychology and cognition, moral philosophy, and the nature of God. Cefalu's consideration is an important one in terms of influences. But the argument dismisses Plotinus too quickly and does not ultimately reveal a larger Thomistic framework present in Traherne's corpus.[104]

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[99] David Ford, *Self and Salvation : Being Transformed*, *Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 270-71.
[100] Ibid., 278.
[101] Gordon Mursell, *English Spirituality - from Earliest Times to 1700*, vol. 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 338. Mursell also finds elements of Franciscan spirituality. See ibid., 332.
[102] Paul Cefalu, "Thomistic Metaphysics and Ethics in the Poetry and Prose of Thomas Traherne," *Literature and Theology* 16, no. 3 (2002): 248.
[103] Ibid., 249.
[104] Cefalu's argument goes against the grain of the synthesizing tendencies in Traherne as well as the Cambridge Platonist movement on the whole. These 'latitudinarians' were labeled thus because they were seeking a middle ground amidst sectarian forces.

Mark McIntosh uses Traherne as a case study in his broader analysis of illumination theory.[105] Augustine, Bonaventure, and Aquinas all participate in this divine ideas tradition alongside Traherne.[106] McIntosh examines the function of gratitude in Traherne, seeing thankfulness as an expression of Trinitarian life with God.

> There is a vital link in Traherne between our ability to perceive the truth and reality of life and our ability to receive life gratuitously. We cannot really perceive things as they *are* unless we perceive them in the light of the infinite generosity that pours them out to us and us to them.[107]

For McIntosh, the mysticism at work in Traherne is not a withdrawal from creation in exchange for the seclusion of interior ecstatic reflection. It is instead a full embrace of createdness as gift. This gratitude is increasingly energized by an illuminated vision of how all things are sustained by God. "In this way, everything has a double availability to us, as meeting our present needs and as drawing us more and more into that heavenly communion."[108]

In Paul Marshall's study of mystical experience, Traherne's mysticism is categorized as extrovertive and expansive.[109] While the natural world provides mystical encounter, it is part of a larger internal understanding about God's immanence. This connection reflects a dynamic seen in Plotinian metaphysics.[110] Traherne "joins inclusivity

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[105] Mark Allen McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth : The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 2004), 237-49.
[106] Ibid., 234.
[107] Ibid., 241.
[108] Ibid., 242.
[109] Paul Marshall, *Mystical Encounters with the Natural World : Experiences and Explanations* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 40-41.
[110] Marshall offers this helpful frame: "But is the Plotinian intellectual vision properly 'extrovertive'? Although the vision is undoubtedly introvertive *by path*, being an interior experience reached by a withdrawal from the senses, it can still be regarded as extrovertive *by contents* if it reveals the universe in its depths. The vision does indeed reveal cosmic reality, but Plotinus' treatment is rooted in Platonism, which makes a distinction between the universe of sensory vision and the universe of intellectual vision. It is therefore open to debate whether the intellectual vision is properly extrovertive since its object is not the universe we ordinarily know, but the realm of Forms from which the sensible world derives. Plotinus holds to the Platonic two-world distinction but perhaps attenuates it in his vivid portrayal of the intelligible cosmos, which is no mere static repository of abstract, universal ideas. It has sometimes been remarked that the Plotinian two worlds are best

with momentariness: each moment of time, if inspected closely, would reveal the eternal spaciousness."[111] Marshall also has an interest in contemporary dialogue for Traherne, particularly at the intersection of modern science and mystical experience. Traherne offers a "monadological idealism" that seems to offer an attractive address to the mind-body problem in philosophy.[112]

Inge provides the first theological monograph in full view of the available corpus. As Ford remarks in the preface, she "does not attempt to determine Traherne's place among today's theologies."[113] But she clearly illuminates the theologian in much of the writings. The book does not contain a prolonged examination of the mysticism *per se*, but Inge does discuss Traherne's connection with the Platonist movement of his day as well as ideological points of dissonance with traditional Neoplatonism.[114] The most significant point of departure from Neoplatonism is in his perception of God from the created world.[115] To Inge, creation cannot offer the Neoplatonist a perception of God.[116]

Edmund Newey focuses on Traherne's use of child, seeing it as a "poetic trope and theological icon."[117] Childhood encapsulates a *via affirmata,* where all of life becomes sacramental through a restored innocency. This is made possible through the Cross. "This Trinitarian understanding of the Cross as the focal point of creation and redemption is a

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understood as one world viewed in two different ways. If this assessment is justifiable, then the Plotinian cosmic vision would indeed qualify as extrovertive." Ibid., 44-45.

[111] Ibid., 73. Jordan's overall treatment on Traherne and time is also useful.

[112] "It not only offers a coherent approach to the mind–body problem but also copes well with extrovertive phenomenology. A monadological form of idealism seems to be especially promising if we take seriously the suggestions of a holistic, interpenetrating universe to be found in some mystical accounts and in modern physics." Ibid., 261.

[113] Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, xii.

[114] Ibid., 98-106.

[115] Ibid., 103.

[116] This attempt by Inge for philosophical precision is likely a response to past scholarship. But the label may be a hindrance given Traherne's synthesizing tendencies. It may also dislocate him from his day. Recovering how Neoplatonism was understood (if at all) in the seventeenth century is likely impossible.

[117] Edmund Newey, *Children of God : The Child as Source of Theological Anthropology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 19.

vital corrective to the common tendency to see Traherne's theology as concerned almost exclusively with the affirmation of the glory of creation."[118] For Newey, the redeemed childhood in Traherne is more theologically fecund than the prelapsarian imaginings. Thus there is a transformative journey being advocated.[119]

Cassandra Gorman provides detailed analysis of intuition in Traherne. It is indicative of his Neoplatonic hermeticism. Intuition is knowledge "that is immediate and instinctive, and unaffected by rationality or physical perception. It is through this perspective that Traherne's instruction to transcend 'all time' and 'becom eternity' is supposedly realised."[120] Bruce Foltz reads Traherne alongside John Muir in response to Heidegger's attacks on metaphysics.[121] Traherne's insistence that the Beatific Vision be normative for the Christian life sits contrary to Heidegger's onto-theology critique. Foltz fits Traherne against a larger mystical tradition, a legacy much more pronounced in the East.[122] He sees familiar Eastern processes like *theoria*, *noesis*, and *katharsis* in Traherne's theology. Even with this theological insight, Foltz interestingly implies an anticipation of William Blake and other environmental writers.[123]

1.4.1 The Current State of Traherne Studies

Jacob Blevins's helpful annotated bibliography[124] has brought much of the scholarship into focus that previously seemed dispersed and atomized. This was much

[118] Ibid., 41.
[119] Ibid., 43.
[120] Cassandra Gorman, "Thomas Traherne's Intuitive Knowledge," in *Poetry & Religion: Figures of the Sacred*, ed. Ineke Bockting, Jennifer Kilgore-Caradec, and Cathy Parc (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 43.
[121] Bruce V. Foltz, *The Noetics of Nature : Environmental Philosophy and the Holy Beauty of the Visible* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 55-62.
[122] Ibid., 66.
[123] Foltz's project is fundamentally different in scope. He is after an intellectual history of environmentalism.
[124] Jacob Blevins, *An Annotated Bibliography of Thomas Traherne Criticism, 1900-2003* (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 2005).

needed in Traherne studies, especially since manuscript discoveries created bursts of critical activity rather than a continuous stream. In his introduction to a recent collection of essays on Traherne, Blevins says a new chapter for scholarship is needed because "Traherne's work is immensely complex and needs to be read and re-read." [125] He hinges the literary fate of Traherne on contemporary critical engagement.

The critical work in the past decade affirms this more complex view of his writings and I am certainly in agreement on the timeliness to re-read Traherne with some contemporary lenses. The most significant gaps, it seems to me, involve our understanding of Traherne as theologian. The scholarship is very sparse in this regard. It is an understandable vacancy given the unique story of Traherne's manuscript discoveries. With the broader horizon now available, more precise theological readings enable us to recover a deeper understanding of his ideology and pastoral concerns.

At present in Traherne studies, the theological picture is incomplete. Parts of the corpus that express his systematic mind like *The Kingdom of God* or the more polemic *A Sober View of Dr. Twisses his Considerations* are not weighed heavily enough in our collective portrait. Added to this, Traherne's historical invisibility as a thinker in his own time has hindered investigation into his theological engagement with the tumult of his day. The argument being put forward here, then, is that Traherne's theological anthropology is an important interpretative key to his writings on the whole. He is, I think, very engaged in the issues of mid 17th century England and offers a unique configuration of ideas in response to these secularizing shifts.[126]

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[125] *Re-Reading Thomas Traherne : A Collection of New Critical Essays*, ed. Jacob Blevins, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007), xviii.

[126] It is an anachronism to think Traherne understood secularization *per se*. I do think he was aware of considerable shifts in the philosophical culture under a different nomenclature.

I want to explore innocence within this anthropology because it is a connected system. Traherne, for some critics, quickly escapes significant theological problems of evil and suffering for the sanctity and safety of his interior reflections on innocence. I think this kind of misreading is due to the dislocated analysis of his theology. Traherne, from my perspective, constructs his views amid a Platonist tradition with philosophical depth, with great consistency, and with concern for others unaware of God's transformative work. The critical charges of exuberant escapism simply fail to consider his careful work as a theologian. With a better understanding of some of the primary constructs Traherne employs, future critical work may avoid tendencies of the past that misappropriated his location in the history of ideas.

I also think scholarship of this kind will also improve Traherne's visibility as an important thinker during a critical period in Western culture. Explorations of the systems at work in his theology will yield a more accurate picture of the available philosophical responses in the face of an emerging scientific worldview. And at a time when shift is again occurring,[127] theologians like Traherne also offer meaningful resources applicable to our contemporary milieu. His concern for the everyday experience of God amidst competing perspectives sounds a pastoral note worth consideration.

In the next section I want to briefly situate him in the Cambridge Platonist school and highlight two primary issues that movement confronted. These are important to set in place as an additional backdrop for Traherne's theology. I will also discuss how the

[127] "In spite of everything, we keep on talking about God. Even in seemingly godless ages, God lingers as a tantalizing presence, incapable of eradication by the most vicious of ideologies or technological mechanisms… Indeed, the history of ideas suggests that the assertion of the hegemony of materialist approaches to reality invariably creates a backlash, generating a new interest in the domain of the transcendent." Alister E. McGrath, *The Open Secret : A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2008), 24.

Cambridge movement was an iteration of a larger historical tradition in Christianity. Finally, I will layout my method for surfacing this anthropology in Traherne.

1.4.2 The Cambridge Platonist Connection

Traherne's affinities with the Cambridge Platonist school is illuminative when considering his anthropology. Traherne's portrayal of human beings is indicative of two realms of defense we find within that broader philosophical movement, the human reasoning capacity and the extent of human knowledge. It was an entirely religious endeavor. Cambridge Platonists understood philosophy and theology to be the same enterprise.[128] The first defense we see is in the reaction to Calvinism. With few exceptions, most of the Cambridge Platonists came from Puritan backgrounds.[129] Emmanuel College had become a citadel of Calvinism and Puritanism. Frederick Powicke credits the Platonist revival (via Benjamin Whichcote and others) to that oppressive atmosphere. "The law of reaction must have been at work. The very stringency of Puritan and Calvinist rule would tend to create exceptions to it, and drive men of an independent or antipathetic temper into revolt."[130]

Patrides illustrates the essential debate as he recounts a letter exchange between Whichcote, then Provost of King's College, Cambridge and Anthony Tuckney, Master of Emmanuel. Tuckney expressed his increasing unease with Whichcote's discourses in 1636 by encouraging him to "keep thy heart humble … Let Phylosophy not be asham'd to be confuted, nor Logick blush to be confounded", to which Whichcote replied "Sir, I oppose

[128] J. H. Muirhead, "The Cambridge Platonists (I)," *Mind* 36, no. 142 (1927): 159, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2249461.
[129] *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 8.
[130] Frederick J. Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists: A Study* (Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons LTD., 1926), 3.

not rational to spiritual, for spiritual is most rational."[131] For Whichcote, Calvinism's insistence on an epistemological finitude rendered the Christian life incoherent.[132]

This confidence in the power and beauty of reason connects deeply with Cambridge Platonist spirituality. Reason enables humanity "to attain an almost mystical awareness of God where the rational and spiritual meet."[133] The process of philosophical inquiry requires an internal virtuous disposition. Reasoning out the love of God produces an internal transformation.[134] Traherne's anthropology approaches cognition in a similar way.

A second defense addressed by the Cambridge Platonist movement was concerned with Hobbesian mechanics. "Hobbes's work denied God and the church their rightful place as well as offering heretical alternatives to many accepted doctrines."[135] His materialist causality was particularly off-putting to those who "asserted the priority and supremacy of spiritual realities."[136] Hobbes's philosophy eliminated the spiritual dimension from human reason and decision making. Perez Zagorin posits that his consideration of civil wars fueled by religious differences in England and elsewhere strengthened his skepticism about Christian claims of truth. Hobbes could not consequently ground his philosophical system on "principles whose ultimate sanction is an unknowable God."[137]

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[131] *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. C. A. Patrides (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 11.
[132] "But this great Truth is hereby hinted; *that the way of Reason, is the way most to accommodate to Humane Nature.* Therefore let us lay aside imposing one upon another; or to use any canting in Religion. Let us talk Sense, and Reason: for the Apostle doth here shew, and prove *by Reason*. And God Himself, who hath all Priviledge; he says, he will draw them *with the Cords of Men:* what is that, but *Arguments* satisfactory to the Mind of Men?" Benjamin Whichcote, "The Use of Reason in Matters of Religion" in ibid., 52-53.
[133] Ibid., 17.
[134] Taliaferro and Teply call this an intrinsic search. See *Cambridge Platonist Spirituality*, ed. Charles Taliaferro and Alison J. Teply, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 10.
[135] R. E. R. Bunce, *Thomas Hobbes*, *Major Conservative and Libertarian Thinkers* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 70.
[136] *The Cambridge Platonists*, 14.
[137] Perez Zagorin, "Cudworth and Hobbes on Is and Ought," in *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England, 1640-1700*, ed. Richard W. F. Kroll, Richard Ashcraft, and Perez Zagorin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 135.

The Cambridge Platonists espoused an intimate connection between what we know and God's instillation of it in us. Whichcote, for example, portrayed reasoning and revelation as complementary. "Whichcote believed that religious truth comes from two sources: one is the light of reason which is the light of God's creation, the other the light of scripture or revelation. God teaches man first by instilling principles into his very nature and then by biblical revelation."[138] If the world were only matter in motion as Hobbes suggested, then the relationality between these innate ideas and encounters with revelation could not exist. Traherne gives considerable attention to this process of perception as well.

Platonism may have appealed to these thinkers precisely because of its mystical anthropology.[139] In the face of Calvinism's broad denigration of humanity and the emerging threat of a purely materialistic causality, the Cambridge Platonists articulate a way of thinking that preserves transcendence in the world while embracing the discoveries of the scientific revolution as well as the capacities of mankind to reason spiritual truths.

1.4.3 Traherne in Tradition

The Cambridge Platonist movement is also part of a larger intellectual history of Christian mysticism.[140] While the Cambridge group was comprised of "scholars, steeped in the comprehensive (and sometimes undiscriminating) learning that was a heritage from the Renaissance,"[141] they were theologians first. The perennial philosophy they appealed

[138] Dominic Scott, "Reason, Recollection and the Cambridge Platonists," in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. Anna P. Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 140.
[139] Louth's introduction is helpful here. See Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition : From Plato to Denys*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), x-xvi.
[140] Taylor categorizes the Cambridge Platonists under the "Erasmian" tradition. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self : The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 249.
[141] *The Cambridge Platonists*, 11.

to was, in their minds, consistent with Christian thought. Charles Taylor recognizes this important synthesis point in the history of Christianity.

> The reading of the goodness of things in terms of Plato's order of Ideas, which we owe to the Greek fathers as well as to Augustine, was one of the most influential and important syntheses which helped to form Western civilization … Through it the notion of an ontic logos was welded for centuries into the very centre of Christian theology.[142]

According to Louis Dupré, "the idea of God's immanent presence in creation soon drove Christian theologians, especially in the Greek-speaking world, to Neoplatonic philosophy."[143] Platonic thought found a certain compatibility with early Christian doctrines on transcendence. For early church fathers like Origen and Clement, the Scriptures not only preserved a history of God's activity in the world, but also contained a hidden mystery on His relationship with it through Christ. "To read the Scriptures with this aspiration of allowing Christ to open what has been closed is now referred to precisely as a 'mystical' interpretation."[144]

This infusion of Platonism into early Christianity did not produce a monolithic result. The numerous voices from East to West carry their own nuances appropriate to their times and circumstances. It is beyond the scope of my argument to trace this in detail,[145] but I do want to suggest a few markers to watch for in Traherne's work that demonstrate a broader tradition.

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[142] Taylor, 220.
[143] Louis K. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity : An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 31.
[144] Mark Allen McIntosh, *Mystical Theology : The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology*, *Challenges in Contemporary Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 42. For a broader discussion on this history, see ibid., 39-53.
[145] For a good survey of the Divine Ideas tradition from inception to the early modern period, see McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth : The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge*, 23-81. For a contemporary historical treatment focused on the Radical Orthodoxy movement of the twentieth century, see Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Theologie and Sacramental Ontology : A Return to Mystery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

First, Christian Platonism offers a philosophical scaffolding for a Trinitarian relationality with creation. The forms of all things emanate from the Divine Mind, drawing humanity into a greater reality inhabited fully by God. As Olivier Clément puts it, "God is absolute beauty because he is absolute existence. As such, he awakens our desire, sets it free and draws it to himself."[146] God is the initiator and sustainer of this relationship of love, animated by contact with all creation. Traherne's writings often appeal to this ontology and relish in creation as a gift received.

Second, humanity has the ability to perceive the hiddenness of God. Christian Platonism has a developed articulation of this process. Turner calls this a "Neoplatonic dialectical epistemology." [147] There is interplay between God's 'mind' and our own. This is an inherent ability in humankind, placed there by God, which is brought to greater utilization through the Forms. Traherne's anthropology appeals to this dynamic consistently.

Finally, the intellectual movement towards God is one of expansive love into the Real. God calls humanity towards divine reality. Christian Platonism describes this as a transformation to love in its fullest expression.

> In genuine mystical life there is neither "creative will" seeking direct exaltation in pure adventure or endless surpassing, nor "magic will" seeking self-exaltation in mastery over the world and in complete possession. Here there is love … here there is charity, which uses knowledge-which love itself makes delectable and present through the action of God's spirit-to adhere more fully to the Beloved.[148]

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[146] Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism : Text and Commentary* (New York: New City Press, 1995), 21.

[147] Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God : Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5. Turner is specifically studying medieval mysticism in this work and contrasting it with contemporary ideas. But the label seems apropos to the larger mystical tradition I am identifying here.

[148] Jacques Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite, or the Degrees of Knowledge*, ed. Ralph M. McInerny, trans. Gerald B. Phelan, *The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 11.

Traherne spends considerable time exploring the expansion and transformation of consciousness along these lines, particularly in his repeated attention to 'infinitie' and 'capacitie.'

My argument that follows will contribute to the scholarly dialogue around Traherne in a few important ways. First, by analyzing his philosophy of cognition in key areas, it will become evident that he is a sophisticated and systematic thinker who is aware of his historical moment and able to produce a significant and creative theological response to issues that concerned him as an Anglican divine. Second, my comparative analyses with other Platonic influences will provide a stronger sense of the philosophical tradition he participates in and will also show his Trahernian innovations within that stream. Finally, this discussion will highlight various strengths of a Christian Platonist anthropology which intentionally critique the mechanical worldview appearing in Traherne's day, an intriguing experiential polemic of non-duality that continues to resonate with contemporary culture.

Chapter 2 – The Notion of Evil

Evil is a useful starting point when surfacing the anthropology at work in Traherne's writings because he is often given to sweeping claims about the world's goodness. For example, in *The Kingdom of God* Traherne seemingly connects all this with God's goodness as its fountainhead.

> The Nature of the fountain is of principal Concernment, becaus the Quality of the Streams dependeth therupon. If the seed be Injured, or Chrusht in the Womb, if the Root be blasted, or Cankard in the Ground, If the River be poysoned in the Head, Nothing but what is feeble or destructiv can spring therfrom. Had any Leven, or Mixture of Evil been in the Divine Nature, the Emanations of his power had been tainted in their Streaming forth, and his Works infected with the Malevolence of their Author. Had any feebleness or Defect of power appeared in his Essence, His Operations had been Weak, the Want would hav passed upon all his Works, and Evry Creature hav Savoured of the same.[149]

With texts like this, his theology on the problem of evil can be difficult to identify. Some impressions of early critics[150] are that Traherne simply retreats into an ecstatic vision of childhood innocence and relishes in the felicities that experience can produce for him, which resembles a Romantic impulse. This conclusion treats Traherne as a case study of mystical experiences and relegates his abilities as a theologian and philosopher to a perfunctory status. Though some, like Clements,[151] argued otherwise, initial scholarly assessments around this apparent naïveté continue to affect Traherne's reception.[152] So I

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[149] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, 281.

[150] In speaking of Traherne's choice to reside in simplicity after Oxford, Iredale says "Traherne applauded his own choice and of course he sought happiness not for himself alone, but for all humanity who cared to benefit by his discovery. Yet despite his obvious self-denial in material matters, he was seeking to live in the way which delighted him most." Queenie Iredale, *Thomas Traherne* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1935), 29. Lock acknowledges the general early reception of Traherne, saying "He may seem at times too optimistic, with too little sense of the evil and cruelty of Nature, of the meaning of pain, and of the hold of sin upon human life." Lock, 835.

[151] "The common misapprehensions of Traherne's theme of childhood and the repeated allegations of egocentrism and subjectivism clearly reveal the critical failure to grasp Traherne's mystical philosophy." See Clements, 8.

[152] It should be noted that this perception also relates to justifiable attempts in understanding Traherne's historical moment. This consensus view is seen easily in the first half of the twentieth century. With his Puritan education at Oxford and the "trends of seventeenth-century ethics, where man knows good by knowing evil and measures his salvation against his awareness of damnation," the corpus seems to leave significant questions on evil of this sort unaddressed. See Rosalie L. Colie,

think a closer examination of his concept of evil can help to portray Traherne in a more sophisticated light.

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, it is also important to discuss the idea of evil because it helps determine whether Traherne sees cognition as reliable. If evil somehow corrupts the human mind from within, then this introduces a distrust into whatever logic a person adopts as she reasons alongside corporeal processes. If evil is defined as something else a bit more external, then a greater confidence is possible for interior human logic. As I compare our Platonist thinkers and our materialist Hobbes, I will hover over that line of contrast in different ways to ultimately illuminate Trahernian commitments on evil. I will give significant attention to the relationships between matter, desire and human freedom. The interplay between these three themes will help us understand how evil is working itself out in the embodied state.

In order to help frame this discussion, I want to begin with some comparative scaffolding drawn from various stages in the thought of Augustine, ranging from his pre-Christian Manichaeism to his conversion. The influence of Augustine is difficult to overstate. Medieval scholasticism in the West treated him as an authority that "one could not afford to be in open conflict with"[153] and Traherne seems to formulate his ideas under the auspices of that tradition.

"Thomas Traherne and the Infinite: The Ethical Compromise," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1957): 77, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3816293. I would argue Traherne attends to the question of evil substantively and that it is most visible when viewing it from the Platonist tradition he draws resources from. As Inge notes that "there is growing awareness in the critical canon from the latter part of the twentieth century onwards, that Traherne's felicity needs to be re-examined not just because an accomplished, easy happiness is alienating for many readers but because it does not resonate with the depth of insights found in other aspects of his work." See Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, 22.

[153] Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius : A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100-1625* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1999), 99.

It should be noted that these three construals of evil are not endorsed equally by Augustine in his corpus. For my purposes here, they can provide a conceptual map of sorts useful to the analysis in this chapter. I am not attempting a significant engagement with exegetical experts in Augustinian studies but rather am appealing to general consensus views surrounding these specific concepts. With all that in mind, the three views I will focus on briefly are Manichaean, Platonist, and Christian Platonist. I will surface some distinctive elements in each of these categories that will later aid in clarifying constructs of evil at work in Plotinus, Ficino, Traherne, and Hobbes.

2.1.1 Manichaean

The Manichee sect captured Augustine's attention for more than nine years, prior to his conversion to Christianity.[154] Manichees acknowledged the immutable goodness of God and explained evil as a co-existent reality in competition with Godself.[155] Evil is enviously aware of Good, and the consequence for the cosmos is perpetual conflict.[156] This warring distills into a duality in lived human experience between these two cosmic natures, the physical (Dark) and the spiritual (Light).

God is not culpable for evil in this tradition nor can evil alter good. God speaks directly to the soul, calling it to its true divine identity. Evil retaliates by ensnaring the soul in materiality, taking advantage of the soul's habitation in the flesh to provoke inordinate desires towards matter. This contest is complicated by good's inherent unwillingness to

[154] Evans sees Augustine's preoccupation with evil as the main force behind his enthrallment. See G. R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 13.
[155] As Mann puts it, "God is doing the best he can against evil, but finds himself facing an independent opponent as formidable as he." See William E. Mann, "Augustine on Evil and Original Sin," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 98.
[156] Christopher J. Brunner, "The Ontological Relation between Evil and Existence in Manichaen Texts and in Augustine's Interpretation of Manichaeism," in *Philosophies of Existence, Ancient and Medieval*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 81-82.

war against evil. Spiritual progress, then, involves an ascetic stance towards physical existence in order to nullify the passions in service to the body.

So when it comes to evil for the Manichee, a couple of points are helpful as my discussion unfolds. First, evil in this system exists independent of good. It is not derivative of some sort of 'fall,' but is mythically established as a dynamism of the universe.[157] Human contact with it cannot be avoided due to embodied existence. Evil is always present and eager to trap the soul in matter. Second, it is not conquered (or at least diminished) as portrayed in the Christian metaphysical scheme.[158] Evil is a self-sustaining power ever contended with. Thus the Manichaean approach to illumination tears at the phenomenon of an embodied self, giving ideological preference to the soul's nature and capacities. The physical world offers nothing of value. Rather, physicality and the material body are barriers to illumination.

2.1.2 Platonist

After his conversion to Christianity, Augustine ardently rejects the Manichaean scheme in favor of something characteristically Platonist. The shift is defined by another type of dualism, this time between corporeal and spiritual beings.[159] Augustine held pagan Platonism in high regard, validating some of its truth claims and refining it towards a

[157] According to Evans, "The Manichean explanation took away the need to search his heart and to avert his eyes from the troubled state of his own conscience, and allowed him … to argue grand issues concerning the structure of the universe." See Evans, 15.
[158] "This grand historical narration explained the processes of being according to three stages – before, during, and after the mingling of the two eternal metaphysical essences. Although, in the third stage, equilibrium will be restored, the universe will forever remain modified from its primal state; cosmic history will have eternal consequences." See Brunner, in *Philosophies of Existence, Ancient and Medieval*, 79.
[159] Mann, in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 41.

Christian narrative.[160] I first want to attend to the essential Platonist idea of evil seen in his writings and then highlight the means by which Augustine Christianizes it in his theology.

For the Platonist, evil does not exist. It is instead 'known' when Good is deprived of articulation. Evil only manifests when good is absconded. It is not tied to a particular moral failure either, but shows itself in the choosing of lesser things. Spiritual progression then is a basic movement away from illusions towards true being found in the Good. Or, to employ Plato's allegory, the shadows on the wall are distortions only understood as we progress towards the daylight.

It is important to note that this system necessarily elevates the importance of freedom. Evil is dependent upon a person's choice to reject Good. For the Manichaean, evil is always a contested presence within the composite being. For the Platonist, evil is a choice to move away from true being. Or in different terms, Platonic evil is a devolution into nothingness. While there may be confusion as to what is exactly real, the act of choosing what is inferior constitutes the substance of evil. In *On Freedom of the Will*, Augustine explains it this way:

> Therefore, we do not come to know evil things, and there is no point in your asking from whom we learn to do evil things. Or else we do come to know them, but only as things to be avoided, not as things to be done. It follows that doing evil is nothing but turning away from learning.[161]

Avoidance requires some sort of choice and awareness of possibilities. In Platonist thinking, evil lacks any agency to actuate decisions. Instead, desires present the soul with a choice of where to turn its attention. When Good is in view and moved towards, "learning" occurs.

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[160] See Rist's helpful treatment on General and Advanced Philosophy in Augustine. John Rist, "Christian Philosophy," in *Augustine's City of God a Critical Guide*, ed. James Wetzel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 205-14.

[161] Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 2.

2.1.3 Christian Platonist

With this basic construct of Platonic evil in view, I now want to show some of the adjustments we might ascribe to Augustine as he appropriates this philosophy for Christianity. He openly lauds the insights of the pagan philosophers, but in the end he also finds them limited by the constraints of the reasoning process.[162] For Platonism to be Christian, it must require God's agency in light of humanity's condition. This divine activity goes beyond the unmoving availability of pure Being. It also actively draws everything into a cosmic reconciliation, continually redressing imperfections that block divine intellection. For Augustine, it is not possible for human beings to simply turn to the Good once aware of it. Creation itself has a paralyzing chaos that can only be lifted by divine charity. God acts first and creates the conditions for spiritual progression. Humankind responds to divine initiative and remains reliant upon it for spiritual progress. When compared to what we see in pagan Platonism, it is this proactive view of God that helps the philosophy become more compatible with the Christian narrative of Scripture.

A Christian conceptualization of evil in Augustine's writings invites configuration around a few keys areas of classic doctrine: original sin, demonic agency, and what I will call illuminated thinking.[163] Original sin, for Augustine, becomes a doctrine of necessity for his theology because freedom can run amuck. If we are entirely free and unfettered in our ability to produce righteousness when right choices are made, then the salvific activities of an interceding God become sidelined. This is the basic argument put forth by the Pelagians, one which forced Augustine to recalculate humanity's capacity to choose in light of Adam's legacy. Augustine, in the end, chooses a complicated parsing of human agency

[162] Rist, in *Augustine's City of God a Critical Guide*, 205.
[163] Kenney identifies this as "contemplation," where interior reflection brings the soul into immediate contact with truth. See John Peter Kenney, "Faith and Reason," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 279.

in order to preserve the idea that no one can be forced into sin. As G. R. Evans remarks, "it is simply that a man remains free only in evil. He cannot be made free in good until God makes him so, because Adam lost that freedom for all his progeny."[164] The idea of original sin encompasses this darkened capacity in humankind.[165]

Closely related to this, demonic agents cannot coerce the soul into evil mannerisms. They can, however, tempt towards poor decisions. Satan's mythic rebellion against God provides a "template to which the psychology of many human sins conform."[166] Humans, in their darkened thinking, become proud of their own carnal accomplishments. They neglect to exercise the soul's capacity to pursue the Good. Indulgences of the flesh, spurred on by unbridled passions, mistakenly become the highest expression of embodied existence. Humans lose the intimate connection with God espoused by the prelapsarian Garden and become fixated on whatever else might be available outside that union. Spiritual beings play a critical role as influencers but can never become instillers of defects. This contrasts notably with the Manichaean view that evil agents have territory in humankind via the material body.

Against these two mitigating dynamics of the embodied state, Augustine is equally certain that all is not lost. Original sin is a consequence of procreated flesh, but it does not damage the soul irreparably. There remains an ability to experience God through illuminated thinking. Intercession for the flesh is necessary because of the composite state. The war between the flesh and spirit cannot be won solely by a person's choosing. The material propensities are set in order through the salvific work of Christ and the soul is once again free to pursue unity with the Divine.

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[164] Evans, 128.
[165] Mann puts it this way: "All sinful souls suffer from two penalties, ignorance and difficulty… Ignorance, not inborn stupidity: humans now lack the kind of noetic intimacy with God enjoyed by Adam and Eve." Mann, in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 107.
[166] Ibid., 106.

It is this universal requirement for redress of original sin that Christianizes Platonism for Augustine. The soul's ability to know God remains essentially the same between the two philosophies. Illumination of the mind is possible in both systems, but in Christian Platonism the mediation of Christ becomes the only means to reconcile a divided self that is weighed down by the effects of original sin.

In summary then, we have these three basic frames to consider as we approach our four philosophers. The Manichaean posits an independent force of evil, the progenitor of matter itself and one that is still active in it. The Platonist declares evil as a state of non-being, where rejection of the Good leads to dissolution of reality. The Christian Platonist perceives evil in a similar manner, but points to original sin as the universal condition to remove solely though the mediation of the cross. I will now apply one of these interpretative lenses to each thinker in an effort to discuss what liability evil presents in human beings and how this condition affects confidence in cognition. This exercise will ultimately clarify what Traherne's account of evil is as we orient towards his model of cognition in the remaining chapters.

2.2.1 Evil in Plotinus

Evil, for Plotinus, is not a sentient metaphysical entity manifesting itself or some malevolence embedded in materiality. It is the opposite of eternal Good, a state of non-being. As the One emanates subsequent distinct states down to the sensory world, the scale of being necessitates an antithetical stopping point.

> Those who enquire whence evils come, either into reality as a whole or to a particular kind of reality, would make an appropriate beginning of their enquiry if they proposed the question first, what is evil and what is its true nature. In this

> way one would know whence it came and where its seat is and what it affects, and one would be able to decide the general question whether it really exists.[167]

Evil is the 'place' where procession transforms into the genesis of return. Yet Plotinus does not offer an antagonistic dualism between the two metaphysical movements. Evil is not matter *ipso facto.*[168] It is a condition of matter, a state of connected deprivation.[169] If absolute and ineffable Good emanates from the One, then evil is experienced at the bottom of the chain of being. [170]

The problem of evil then is not focused on experiences of it in the material world *per se* but rather on how evil could possibly come about if all that exists has emanated from the One.[171] Evil appears when the mind's attention is neglected. Conversely, evil becomes inconsequential as the mind returns to God. Therefore, the general curative for evil in the world is people thinking rightly. [172]

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[167] *Ennead* I.8. All excerpts from *The Enneads* are taken from *Plotinus*, trans. A. Hilary Armstrong, 7 vols., *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967). Hereafter I will notate them by ennead and tractate.

[168] "The view of matter as pure potency is closely connected with the judgement that the material world is an excellent and necessary part of the universe, and is the one which is dominant in Plotinus's cosmology." Arthur Hilary Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus. An Analytical and Historical Study* (Cambridge: University Press, 1940), 87. This view of creation resembles much of what we see in Traherne.

[169] Louth says "the furthest limit of the One's emanation is matter, which is on the brink, as it were, of being and non-being". See Louth, 38. Inge describes it similarly as a "single illuminated reality". See William Ralph Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 3d ed., 2 vols., *Gifford Lectures* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), Volume 1,128-39.

[170] Lovejoy calls this a pregnant theorem of 'fullness', something latent in Plato's philosophy which he never realized. See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being; a Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 52-55.

[171] "Indeed, the problem of Evil in its most popular significance, and in that with which we have to deal with it in Plotinus, is the problem of reconciling the hypothesis of a good and beneficent deity with existence of an apparently evil and imperfect world. Or, since omnipotence is commonly regarded as a necessary attribute of divinity, it asks how God can be at once omnipotent and entirely good." B. A. G. Fuller, *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1912), 18. This is an important distinction to draw out when evaluating modern assessments of Traherne's treatment of evil. Part of the initial disconnect with modern metrics regarding evil is the categories of assessment. For example, Fuller partitions evil into metaphysical, physical, moral, and the discrepancy between "reward and merit." Ibid., 2. These realms of inquiry may not be immediately useful in reading Traherne since he is operating under a different philosophical tradition.

[172] This view of evil seems in concert with the Puritan backlash seen in the Cambridge Platonist movement, particularly on the Calvinist denigration of man. See *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg, *A Library of Protestant Thought* (New York,: Oxford University Press, 1968), 8-11.

Plotinus is careful to preserve the goodness of the One and yet allow nuanced digressions towards matter and the potential for evil. His macro triad of the Intellect, Soul,[173] and Matter is woven together via constant communications between these states of being. Good eventually descends to matter in order to actualize forms and returns things back to the One in an unending cycle of love. The further something descends from the One, the less real it is for Plotinus, but it retains a vague element from the first procession.[174] This vestigial characteristic in matter requires a perceiving subject as well as a developed scheme of what interactions might occur.

You can see this separation of states when Plotinus explains the nature of Intellect. Evil cannot affect the higher soul. Yet the soul can reason. How can this be?

> Evil is done when we are mastered by what is worse in us-for we are many-by desire or passion or an evil image. What we call thinking falsities is a making of mind-pictures which has not waited for the judgement of the reasoning faculty-we have acted under the influence of our worse parts.[175]

Matter, in one sense, 'tempts' us towards evil. When the soul descends into the sensory world as a composite being, matter provides the opportunity to turn the contemplative gaze away from the One. Material existence can cloud the vision of God, but materiality is not the culprit. Freedom is. Evil is manifested when a person chooses to look away.[176]

2.2.2 Desire

Desire is also critically involved in the production of evil. As individuation occurs and increasing particularity proceeds from the One down to the level of matter, the

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[173] In this chapter I will use the terms *soul* and *mind* somewhat interchangeably.
[174] By first procession, I mean the initial movement from One to Intellect (Nous). For a brief discussion on degrees of realities, see A. C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 137-39.
[175] *Ennead* I.1.9.
[176] "It is not out of hatred and disgust for the body that we must detach ourselves from sensible things. The latter are not, in themselves, evil. It is the *concern* they cause us which prevents is from paying attention to the spiritual life which we unconsciously live." Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus, or the Simplicity of Vision* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 31.

composite being discovers the possibility of complete diffusion when matter is solely embraced. Or as Georges Leroux puts it, "it is not exclusively matter or the material world that introduces evil into the metaphysical structure, but, correlatively the fact that the incorporation of the soul into the composite submits it to the wrenching pull of desire and opens up the possibility of failure and defeat."[177]

Desire is a part of the soul's self-reflective activity. The soul yearns to bring about the Forms in the material world. Bodily composition is an act of kindness from a higher state to a lower one. Loving desire moves the soul to 'create' matter and join with it.[178] But sensuous desires from the material body can also drag the soul into a forgetful state. I am not distinguishing here between passions and desires in Plotinus, though this is needed if one wants to understand the place of virtue. I am mainly concerned with the objects of desire/passion and the epistemological phenomenon Plotinus describes. This loss of connection with the Forms is the state of evil.

> It is the irrational part of the soul which is receptive of evil, that is of unmeasuredness and excess and defect, from which come unrestrained wickedness and cowardice and all the rest of the soul's evil, involuntary affections which produce false opinions, making it think that the things which it shuns and seeks after are evil and good respectively.[179]

The soul can choose otherwise, looking back to the Forms and moving towards greater illumination and coherence with the One. The spiritual journey of the composite self is one of transcending material diffusion and distraction, where a person gradually becomes

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[177] Leroux calls this a tragedy. See Georges Leroux, "Human Freedom in the Thought of Plotinus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 297.

[178] O'Brien offers a useful comparison of perspectives on the production of matter by soul. See Denis O'Brien, "Plotinus on Evil: A Study of Matter and Soul in Plotinus' Conception of Human Evil," in *Le Néoplatonisme : Royaumont, 9-13 Juin 1969.*, Colloque International Sur Le Néoplatonisme (1969 : Royaumont, France) (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1971), 133-39.

[179] *Ennead* I.8.4.

"unconcerned and unperturbed by the contingencies and tribulations of earthly existence."[180]

At this point we can see no Manichaean tendencies in Plotinus, as expected. His view of matter is neutral and he instead considers misappropriation of internal desires to be a key place of concern in his aspirational philosophy. Before leaving Plotinus, I will examine the ways matter does affect human cognition.

2.2.3 The Influence of Matter

So, evil can only 'exist' in the very lowest of states. It is an epistemological phenomenon unique to the relationship between the composite self and matter. If someone manifests evil and chooses to gaze at the distractions, then we should ask if evil can embed itself into the soul and distort intellection in the future. The answer is no in the Plotinian system.

First, matter is pure potency and, for Plotinus, the substrate of evil. He is "always emphatic that the ultimate origin of evil is not the soul, but Matter, which communicates its own weakness to the bodies based on it."[181] When the cognitive dialectic shifts away from matter and moves up the scale of being, it is impossible for evil to be present. Secondly, higher modes of thinking necessarily preclude the phenomenon of evil. Rappe's distinction of discursive versus non-discursive thought is helpful here.

> Now this is an important dimension of Plotinus' epistemology, and Plotinus does explicitly suggest (V.5) that self-knowledge is the principle of all truths. The problem is that thinking about an object does not, for Plotinus, equate with knowing it objectively, that is, knowing it as it is in itself. Plotinus is concerned to

[180] Suzanne Stern-Gillet, "Dual Selfhood and Self-Perfection in the Enneads," *Epoche: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 13 (Spring 2009): 339, accessed 4/24/2015.
[181] Richard T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995), 76.

> show that human beings cannot think their way out of a limited point of view, since discursive thinking itself constitutes one such limited perspective.[182]

Matter can trap the soul into these discursive wanderings. But evil, if it is ultimate particularity, manifests solely in the discursive mind. For Plotinus, movement away from discursive reasoning towards a non-discursive reality will also entail an abandonment of evil, or at least a relinquishing of the potential for evil.

Plotinus takes this line of thinking a step further by saying that evil is bound and thus limited in its reach.

> But because of the power and nature of good, evil is not only evil; since it must necessarily appear, it is bound in a sort of beautiful fetters, as some prisoners are in chains of gold, and hidden in them, so that it may not appear in its charmlessness to the gods, and men may be able not always to look at evil, but even when they do look at it, may be in company with images of beauty to remind them.[183]

Wherever evil is possible, good is also beckoning. In this chain metaphor, good is even the more attractive of the two. Matter lacks any power to affect the choices of humans. It is bound by the freedom of the higher state, awaiting an interaction. But matter can frustrate the soul because it resists the Forms being imposed upon it, as Christian Schäfer points out.

> It is because soul's entirely well motivated intentions of form-giving despair vis-à-vis matter's completely amorphous inability to be formed, to be 'mastered by form' (Enn. I.8[51].5,24). This passive resistance to the communication of form and the frustration of soul's ἐνέργεια εἰς ἄλλο it brings with it, make it clear why matter is called 'evil' in the Enneads.[184]

2.2.4 Summary of Plotinus on Evil

[182] Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism : Non-Discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 30.
[183] *Ennead* I.8.15.
[184] Christian Schäfer, "Matter in Plotinus's Normative Ontology," *Phronesis* 49, no. 3 (2004): 279, http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1163/1568528042568631.

In summary, Plotinus attends to the question of evil primarily as a phenomenon of the composite existence. Evil does not inhabit matter. Consequently one can affirm materiality as inherently good in the *Enneads* and simultaneously understand matter as complicit in the manifestation of evil. This involves the soul's forgetfulness of the Forms that, paradoxically, occurs as it involves itself in the material world. While intending Good, the soul can find itself ensnared in the diffusive particularities unique to material existence.

So as we turn back to our conceptual map from Augustine, we find Plotinus to be in substantial harmony with the pagan Platonist concept of evil. Evil is not equivalent to matter, as the Manichaean posits. Nor does evil await a deliberate divine intervention that somehow enables humankind to progress towards the Good, as a Christian Platonist would suggest. Plotinus places the power of evil solely in the hands of the mind that entertains it while living in the composited state.

This elevation of freedom in view of evil's diffusion is, I think, an essential characteristic of our Platonist stream for this argument. Freedom ultimately places confidence on a human being's abilities to improve their understanding of the world and to have some sort of capacities within to do so. As we anticipate Traherne, this elevation of choice will be seen again. Traherne as a Christian, of course, embeds that freedom within a soteriological scheme. But this faith in humanity's ability to choose otherwise remains quite compatible with these Plotinian tenets I have been reviewing. Before we arrive at that discussion, I want to turn first to Ficino to show the moves he makes when resourcing this Platonist tradition when it comes to evil.

2.3.1 Evil in Ficino

Evil in Ficino's writings resembles what we have seen earlier in Plotinus. The discussion of it in *Platonic Theology*, however, moves away from ontological assertions about matter to the dynamic realm of human pursuits. Matter is benign for Ficino, a potentiality awaiting the activity of God.[185] "Just as God at the highest level of things is pure act, is in need of nothing, is the creator of all forms, so there must be something at the lowest level which is pure potentiality, which needs everything, and which in itself is without form yet capable of taking on all forms."[186]

Evil does not reside in humanity inherently but is entered into through a rejection or confusion concerning the Good.[187] Humanity sins when she "forgets the infinite God to grasp at finite goods."[188] This corruption occurs within Ficino's chain of being,[189] a continuum of reality where God reaches towards the material world to transform it. "God creates and gives unity to matter,"[190] thus matter can only be locative in the process of defilement. Matter cannot act upon higher forms, but it does provide a place for distraction from the Good. In speaking of incorporated forms, Ficino says

> Such a nature is contaminated when it is in the bosom of nature. Instead of being simple, it becomes divisible and impure, instead of being active, it becomes subject to passion, to being acted upon; instead of being swift to act, it becomes clumsy and incompetent. So this form is neither pure nor true nor perfect.[191]

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[185] For a useful discussion on Ficino's concept of primal matter, see James Snyder, "The Theory of *Materia Prima* in Marsilio Ficino's Platonic Theology," *Vivarium* 46, no. 2 (2008), http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1163/156853408X255909.
[186] Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, trans. James Hankins et al., 6 vols., *I Tatti Renaissance Library* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001-2006), II: 19.
[187] Hankins remarks "If we do not see clearly the existence of God and of the moral law, it is because of physical or moral impediment, a blindness of spirit. Belief in God is essentially prephilosophical, a position which resembles Friedrich Schleiermacher's religion of intuition and feeling." See James Hankins, "Marsilio Ficino and the Religion of the Philosophers," *Rinascimento* 48 (2008): 10, accessed April 4, 2014, http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:2961670.
[188] Ficino, IV: 321.
[189] For a succinct explanation of Ficino's hierarchy, see Edward P. Mahoney, "Marsilio Ficino and Renaissance Humanism," in *Humanism and Creativity in the Renaissance : Essays in Honor of Ronald G. Witt*, ed. Ronald G. Witt, Christopher S. Celenza, and Kenneth Gouwens, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, (Boston: Brill, 2006), 235.
[190] Ficino, II: 27.
[191] Ibid., I: 29.

Evil *occurs* rather than *exists a priori*. When the mind chooses material diffusion, evil manifests itself in the confused activity. For Ficino, this is the lowest level of being.[192] His Platonic philosophy offers a way out of this enmeshment with near non-existence.

> The Philosopher first contemplates, through wisdom, the divine or absolute nature of the Good. Then he governs human affairs by directing men's activities towards their end in this Good. But there are two prerequisites for this. The first is a recognition of what human nature is and how it is delivered from evil and led to the Good: this condition the Philosopher meets through insight. The second is putting in order people's attitudes and actions, moderating and restraining them in such a way that they easily incline towards the Good, which wisdom has discovered and to which insight has shown them the way.[193]

The capacity for evil is always available in Ficino's metaphysical system because a soul can always choose.[194] Though desire for God is implanted in everything, God does not force contemplation of Godself. To do so would make God reliant upon reciprocity.[195] Yet everything, in Ficino's view, awaits transformation via the process of illumination.[196] The true nature of reality, once perceived, compels the wise person to now direct all of life towards that end.[197]

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[192] "Ficino, therefore, considers the soul's attention to be fractured between the upper and lower realms in a Janus-like way. While it has a natural affinity for things above, it inclines towards matter below, and as a result it is preoccupied with the protean shapes, colors, and pleasures of the material world. Ficino concludes from this state of affairs that the soul is generally afflicted with a certain confusion concerning what is real and good. The most pernicious confusion that follows from this state of affairs, Ficino argues, is an untutored species of materialism that leaves the mind functionally incapable of conceiving of anything that is not made of matter." James G. Snyder, "Marsilio Ficino's Critique of the Lucretian Alternative," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72, no. 2 (2011): 170, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/23011297.

[193] Marcilio Ficino, Summary of Plato's Book on Philosophy or The Lover in *Gardens of Philosophy : Ficino on Plato*, trans. Arthur Farndell (London: Shepheard-Walwyn, 2006), 10.

[194] Ardis B. Collins, *The Secular Is Sacred : Platonism and Thomism in Marsilio Ficino's Platonic Theology*, *International Archives of the History of Ideas V 69* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), 52-53.

[195] "God is infinite because he receives no limit from without. He is unlimited insofar as he is uncaused. He is not determined by anything outside himself. Although he receives nothing from without, he gives definite character and determination to all things." Ibid., 45.

[196] Jörg Lauster, "Marsilio Ficino as a Christian Thinker," in *Marsilio Ficino : His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, ed. Michael J. B. Allen, Valery Rees, and Martin Davies, Brill Studies in Intellectual History (Boston: Brill, 2002), 299.

[197] Wynn offers a refresh treatment on the Platonist valuation of the sensory life. According to Wynn, the illuminated life has a sensory experience where "the appearances cease to be deceptive, because they are now structured from within by a true conception of the nature of things." See Mark Wynn, *Renewing the Senses : A Study of the Philosophy and Theology of the Spiritual Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 127.

I think it is important to pause here and acknowledge a longstanding difficulty in situating Ficino within orthodox Christian doctrine. His view of evil, in *Platonic Theology* at least, and his pervasive willingness to draw on the resources of pre-Christian philosophy alongside church teachings can be interpreted as syncretism. The idea that humanity can work its way towards union with God via contemplation of higher forms[198] seems to relegate cosmic Christian soteriological schemes to the background, if not to irrelevance. His valuing of freedom appears to parallel Pelagian tendencies, but that kind of labeling may conflate the complex synthesis being attempted by Christian Platonists like Ficino (Traherne 'reads', as we shall see, in a similar fashion, often appearing to skirt soteriological frames one would expect from an Anglican divine of his day). In my view it is a fair criticism when narrowing in on specific anthropological tenets as we are doing here. However, that judgment seems less persuasive when considering the full extent of Ficino's work[199] and his ultimate reception by the church of his time.[200]

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[198] As Allen puts it, "one's own moral effort can lead to mental clarity and thence illumination." See Michael J. B. Allen, "At Variance: Marsilio Ficino, Platonism and Heresy," in *Platonism at the Origins of Modernity : Studies on Platonism and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Douglas Hedley and Sarah Hutton, Archives Internationales D'histoire Des Idées (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2008), 32.

[199] Trinkaus captures an important thrust of Ficino's aims with this: "The ultimate achievement of man, to become God Himself, remains beyond the powers of the human species, so that man's autonomy is not complete. Yet Ficino so yearns for this total fulfillment of human autonomy that he speculates, given the proper instruments and material, mankind could recreate the universe itself." Charles Edward Trinkaus, "Marsilio Ficino and the Ideal of Human Autonomy," in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Olga Zorzi Pugliese, University of Toronto Italian Studies (Ottawa, Canada: Dovehouse Editions Canada, 1986), 149.

[200] Allen contrasts the goal of pagan Neoplatonism with Ficino's ultimate end in apportioning the philosophy. "For Ficino, predictably, one of its most important consequences was to draw our attention to Christ's Transfiguration … as the supreme Platonic moment in the New Testament." See Allen, in *Platonism at the Origins of Modernity : Studies on Platonism and Early Modern Philosophy*, 43-44. Again, I think one finds a similar aspiration in Traherne. Trinkaus puts it this way concerning Ficino, akin to the pursuits we see in Traherne: "The effect of such new integrations would be not only to render licit and Christianly admirable a whole series of activities and achievements of which the men of those times were justly proud anyhow, but to provide a new inducement to faith and religious fervour within a point of view which made the Christian religion compatible with the more human values history had imposed on the men of those times and rooted in them." Charles Edward Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness : Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, vol. 2, 2 vols., *Ideas of Human Nature Series* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970), 464.

2.3.2 The Importance of Good

Returning to my discussion then, good is a far more compelling directive in Ficino's system. Evil lacks the ability to hold things together because the desire for good permeates creation at the deepest levels. Good and evil are opposites, but they are mismatched in potencies.[201] Good thus subverts all else. In Ficino's commentary on Plato, he writes:

> Plato's intention in Hipparchus is to teach us that all men strive after the Good, since even those who seem to go astray through greed are also striving after the Good. Because they desire gain, gain is useful; but the useful is good, and therefore they desire the Good. For gain is the opposite of loss; but since gain is opposed to evil it is the opposite of evil. The opposite of evil is the Good: therefore gain is the Good. For this reason, since even those who seem to fall away from striving for the Good desire the Good, nothing now militates against the fact that all men strive after the Good.[202]

Ficino sees evil as contrary to the natural state and desires of humanity. Committing one's mind to dim reflections rather than God's light is to live in a state of imbalance.[203] Evil calls divine justice into transformative action, reforming the malignancy by the power of God's infinite goodness.[204] This compulsion towards the Good is sustained by his valuations of the immortal soul.

Good and evil are also inseparable when it comes to cognition. Contrary elements in matter destroy each other, but the mind can hold contraries together as an aid towards understanding. "It (the mind) simultaneously understands things good and bad, useful and useless, beautiful and ugly, the light and the dark … and so on, and it judges the

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[201] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, IV: 325.
[202] Ficino, Summary of Plato's Hipparchus in *Gardens of Philosophy : Ficino on Plato*, 9.
[203] Hankins calls this a psychology of irreligion. See James Hankins, "Religion and the Modernity of Renaissance Humanism," in *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Angelo Mazzocco (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006), 150.
[204] Ficino says that the rational soul, under divine justice, finds redirection even while it is deviating in its own thinking. These deviations are effectively illusions. See Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, IV: 327-29.

one more clearly because of its knowing the other opposite."[205] The knowledge of evil then is necessary for clarity on the good. When the incorporated soul acts upon matter towards the Good, evil possibilities exist in the choices available. Rejecting the way of diffusion and shaping matter towards greater unity with God always involves knowledge of evil. Evil, in a sense, clarifies good options in the mind and vitally sharpen the soul's commitment towards the purposes of God.

2.3.3 Freedom

So evil is not an assumed liability in human experience. Freedom is.[206] Ficino has an unwavering faith in the power of Good to direct the actions of a soul. He also places choice at the forefront of spiritual progression. Choice is energized by God-implanted desire for the good.

> The good then, since it is the ultimate end, is certainly the universal first principle. If it exists above being, *a fortiori* it exists above life and mind… Its splendor is beauty, which is nothing other than the refulgence of the rational order of the many forms in the mind, the soul, nature, and matter… we desire beauty for the sake of the good, hoping it will profit us… Therefore the one and the good are completely identical, since they are equally desired; similarly disunity and evil, being identical, are equally shunned.[207]

Matter cannot actively prohibit a soul's gaze towards God.[208] But it does provide opportunity to exercise desire in the wrong direction.[209] Thus, as Ardis Collins remarks, "it is the continual determinability of matter which is the principle of corruption."[210] Freedom of the mind encounters matter and the choice of 'where' to gaze produces either infinite

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[205] Ibid., II: 343-45.
[206] Human reason is the free agent for Ficino. It can oppose the sensuous passions or be confused by them. See *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall Jr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 191.
[207] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, II: 39-41.
[208] Ibid., V: 233.
[209] Ficino also discusses demonic influences. "For one would not expect a divine mind to be so deceived and attacked by the senses if the demons were not party to the attacks." See ibid., V: 307-11.
[210] Collins, 51.

digression and corruption or infinite regression towards unity with God. "Man is guided by his own intellect that can err."[211] There is no other culprit for evil to Ficino.

> Thus even when the condition of things and of the body stays [unchangingly] the same, we often choose differently, now in one way, now in another; and when it changes to something different, we often choose in the same way. Or rather, in the same moment, almost, and on account of the various options proffered by the reason, and even as the corporeal conditions remain the same, we arrive at various and in a way contrary choices. For we deliberate in order to subjugate, not our soul to things, but things to our soul.[212]

2.3.4 Summary of Ficino on Evil

To summarize then as we look back to our Augustinian map, Ficino essentially carries forward a pagan Platonist notion of evil. It is nonetheless communicative with the Christian tradition with its emphasis on the independent capacity in humanity to choose the Good. The material world for Ficino lacks any influence in the production of evil. It is only the place where distraction and confusion occurs. Corruption reveals itself when freedom is exercised poorly and passions for material pleasures obscure divine forms within them that lead back towards God. The need for divine intervention is notably muted in *Platonic Theology*, with much greater attention being given to the importance of choosing wisely in the midst of material experiences.

As I turn now to Traherne, we are starting to see a Platonist concept of evil emerge where materiality is not an independent liability. Matter does, however, offer a realm for fulfilling desires to the detriment of human potential. Traherne will not lose that concern. But as I will show, his theology of createdness emphasizes the ability to encounter God's love in bodiliness.

2.4.1 Love as Foundation In Traherne

[211] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, III: 33.
[212] Ibid., III: 41-43.

The love of God serves as a primary backdrop for understanding evil in Traherne. All creation exists and is sustained by love. The Trinity itself is defined by a loving relationality between God, Christ, and Spirit.[213] Love is given and received within Godself via infinite capacities. Christ begotten becomes the meeting place of material and spiritual.

Love reaches down to Creation. The material world becomes a "Mirror wherin you Contemplat the Blessed Trinity. for it plainly sheweth that GOD is lov."[214] In the first stanza of *The Choice*, the eternal willfully impresses itself upon the void to nurture awareness of God in the material world.

> When first Eternity stoopt down to *Nought*
> And in the Earth its Likeness sought;
> When first it out of Nothing fram'd the Skies,
> And form'd the Moon and Sun
> That we might see what it had don[215]

Creation is a purpose-laden expression of divine charity. All that exists by this primeval act of stooping leads humanity to its highest state of being.

> Hence did *Eternity* contrive to make
> The Truth so winning for our sake,
> That being *Truth*, and *fair*, and *easy* too,
> While it on all doth shine,
> We might by it becom divine[216]

Evil, then, is a resistance to the activities of God that underpin existence itself, "for whatever God doth, is Good. And if God hate without Cause, to hate without a caus will be Good. Now to hate without a Caus is to do Evil. For Hatred is the Fountain of all Evil."[217]

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[213] "Lov in the Bosom is the Parent of Lov, Lov in the Stream is the Effect of Lov, Lov seen or Dwelling in the Object proceedeth from both. Yet are all three one and the self same Lov: tho three loves." *Centuries of Meditations* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 67.
[214] Ibid., V: 68.
[215] *Poems of Felicity* in ibid., VI: 160.
[216] Ibid., VI: 160-61.
[217] *A Sober View* in ibid., I: 193.

Evil happens whenever God is "bereaved of his Great Design"[218] and his causes are ignored or resisted. To illustrate how this may happen, I will examine the human capacity for hatred.

2.4.2 The Role of Hatred

Abhorrence, for Traherne, is an ability implanted in the mind of humankind by God. It is there that she "might be more Secured in the Possession of His Happiness."[219] When self-love is embraced, abhorrence arises in the mind to indicate injury to the soul. For Traherne, this capacity can usefully extend into all things to detect evil at work.

> It is seated in the Centre if we respect the place wherin it lies, but extends itself to all Objects in *Heaven* and in Earth. That is, if we respect the Facultie, it can abhor all that is evil in any Object… to look into the Nature of Angels and to survey their Actions: to be present in all Kingdoms, Ages, Islands, Cities, Continents, Villages, etc. It can behold Hell and see into Heaven … were there an Object infinitly evil, it is a Facultie able to Detest it: and the more for being infinit.[220]

Abhorrence also communicates with the soul and invokes hatred whenever it detects "Disturbance or Confusion."[221] When God's love as ultimate causality is perceived, hatred becomes a tool to avoid and dispel corruption. Conversely, when divine love is ignored, hatred will confuse the mind and breed evil actions.[222] This internal choosing is reminiscent of what we have seen in Ficino, where the arena of personal freedom is the potential staging ground for evil to manifest. Where Ficino discusses it to further emphasize the value and powers of the immortal soul, Traherne sees this freedom as an

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[218] Ibid.
[219] See the entry on 'Abhorrence', *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 5.
[220] *Commentaries of Heaven* ibid.
[221] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 7.
[222] Another example of this kind of thinking from *Seeds of Eternity*: "A man may gaze in a solitary maner upon his own Perfections, and so dote upon them, as to grow Proud therby; which was the fall of Angels. But I will so consider them as to be enflamd with Divine Love in the Meditation, and which is a Strange Effect of ones own Excellency, to be filled with Abhorrence of my self, bec. I hav defiled so excellent a creature." Ibid., I: 235.

invitation to explore the created world in search of God's loving causality. Hatred is, strikingly, conceived here as a possible tool to redirect one's mind.

In *Christian Ethicks*, Traherne explains this connection between love and hate.

> ALL Creatures that are sensible of Pain or pleasure, must of necessity be addicted to Love and Hatred; to the Love of what is pleasing, to the Hatred of what is Painful. And if any Question be made, which of these Twins is the First born? the answer is; that they may seem Twins in respect of Time, but in nature Love is the first born, and the Mother of Hatred. For where nothing to be hated does at all appear, pleasant Things are Beloved for their own sake: whereas if there were no pleasant thing to be beloved, nothing could be hated, because nothing could be Hurtful, which appeareth by this, because where there is no Love, there is no Interest, and where there is no concernment, there can be no Affection, no Fear, or Hope, or Joy, or sorrow.
>
> AS Fire begets Water by melting Ice, so does Love beget contrary passions in the soul of a living creature, Anger, Malice, Envy, Grief and Jealousie: not by its own nature, but by the accidental Interposure of some Obstacle, that hinders or endangers the fruition of its Object.[223]

The object of the mind's attention is critical here. Hatred can be an expression of love as long as it intends to serve as an aid to the pursuit of God. If hatred forgets its role, then corruption is inevitable.

We can see the same sort of unusual apportioning with love. Where it is typically considered virtuous, Traherne can see a vicious possibility in its practice. "LOVE is *then* a vice, when it is irrational and illegal, rebellious and Sensual, Blind, Defective, Unjust, Absurd. When Evil things are beloved, when Good things are preferred above the Better, and the Best neglected."[224] Love and hatred have a spiritual 'direction' to them. For either to become virtuous, they must be in service to the pursuit of perfection and felicity. The

[223] Thomas Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, *Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 78:05* (London : Printed for Jonathan Edwin ..., 1675., 1675), 71-72.
[224] Ibid., 81.

created world, consequently, cannot infect the mind with evil when one is searching for love in all things.[225]

2.4.3 Matter

As I mentioned earlier, for Traherne the material world awaits contemplation by humanity, hiding its treasures until a person pursues desire for the Good.

> We are therfore prone to conclude, that Heaven and Earth are full of Mysteries, and that we are seated in the World, as so many Centres environed with Glory, for the Mysteries which allure the Sagacitie, and stir up the Desire and Curiositie of the Soul to enquire and contemplate the Things that are behind this Outward Appearance, are full of infinit and Eternal Love, the Mysteries of Goodness and Blessedness and Glory.[226]

Matter is laden with these secret leadings toward the love of God. Evil, likewise, is not embedded in material existence nor can a person become passively tainted by interacting with creation. Matter is simply unable to influence.

In his entry on *Apprehension* Traherne says "matter is of it self no more able to conceiv, or apprehend, then Nothing."[227] Material things are entirely passive towards human interactions. Without apprehension, gold, diamonds, 'oyl', and amber "would be Dead and Empty."[228] Apprehension is a faculty of the soul that is able to receive the objects of God's love.[229] Here Traherne is not speaking of the object itself in the material sense. It is an 'inner' reality of matter where sits an ontological deposit of divine intention.

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[225] "HAD GOD limited and confined our understanding, our power of Loving had been shut up in Bounds. Had he made it infinite, but not prepared objects for the same, our Love had been deluded, and had lost its force. Had he made some Objects, but not so many as it was capable of Loving, it had been Superfluous and dissatisfied; Had he prepared Objects innumerable and Endless, but made them evil, our Love had been irrational, had he commanded us to Love them; Had he made more Objects then we were able to love, we had been discontented: But having made all Objects infinitely Amiable and Glorious, and filled his Immensity and Eternity with himselfe, and with the Lustre of his Actions, Love is an infinite Vertue, because nothing is wanting, but an Act of Love to enjoy them." See ibid., 86-87.
[226] *Commentaries of Heaven* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, III: 138.
[227] Ibid., III: 171.
[228] Ibid., III: 174.
[229] Ibid., III: 169. I will give 'faculties' additional attention in chapters 3 and 4.

> "The Will of GOD doing what it listeth, with infinit Ease giveth Existence to all. For by Willing it worketh, and can easily Act as Think, Creat as conceiv, Effect as Desire, and have its Objects as easily imagine them. All Worlds being made with the same Facilitie as the smallest Sand. This Will which giveth the Being, giveth the Modifications, Measures and Durations, to evry Existence."[230]

Creation in all of its diversity is entirely saturated with the will of God for Traherne. Evil exists when someone ignores that spiritual dynamism. Even if Nature offers a profound mystery to consider, one can always rest in the knowledge that it originates in the love of God. What is prized to Traherne is not comprehension of all things material and material processes *per se* but the fostering of gratitude as creaturely perception reveals the undergirding divine love on display for the spiritually attuned.[231] Apprehension, then, gives humanity a unique role in engaging the reality of the world.[232] Evil becomes phenomenon when the human soul ignores or distorts this intended purpose. If divinely implanted desire for relationship goes unsatisfied in a person, evils abound.

Evil in Traherne stems from a type of deprivation that I have talked about in Plotinus. In the *Enneads*, matter, in total neglect from acting forms, invites confusion into the mind. For Traherne, the unwillingness to recognize divine ideas in creation is an act of disobedience. Divine love, for both thinkers, calls all things back to itself. When one judges God to be maleficent or irrelevant, the soul is essentially starved from communion with the Divine. Traherne calls this conclusion a "fundamental Error in the Root of Nature" which "brancheth forth it self into Innumerable Adsurdities in all its Proceedings; and the fruits of it are bitter and Dreadfull Impieties."[233] All that remains are actions rooted in

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[230] Ibid., III: 173.

[231] "Som men when they see some prodigious Effect of Skill and Ingenuitie, had rather be taught the Way how so Miraculous an Effect was wrought, then receiv the Thing as a Gift. How rich should We be therfore could we prize the Maner of GODs Perfections and the things he bestoweth on us!" Ibid., III: 170.

[232] Traherne celebrates the enfleshed soul often. For example: "For our bodies therefore, O Lord, for our earthly Bodies, hast thou made the World: Which thou so lovest, that thou hast supremely magnified them by the workds of thy hands: And made them Lords of the whole Creation." See *Aserious and patheticalContemplation Of the Mercies of God* in ibid., IV: 326.

[233] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., III: 181.

corruption. This lack of fulfillment centers on exclusive concern for the realm of sense and the pleasures it can produce.[234]

2.4.4 Atomist Theory

Traherne's optimism about the inherent goodness of creation and its communicative nature has an interesting intersection with scientific theories of his time and resembles the idea of 'prime matter' in Ficino.[235] Where in Plotinus nothing exists within the infinite parsing of matter, Traherne sees stability in the primary matrix of atoms.

> That Gods power Should be Infinitly Magnified in all the Heights and Depths of possibilitie; It is convenient to believ; It being Infinitly Great in things infinitly Small, as well as Great. And that things infinitly Small, Should be made capable of Infinit Uses, is Suitable to that Goodness which is evry Way Illimited and Endless, as in these Atoms we shall Immediatly behold.[236]

He attributes the creation of atoms to God and then parallels their natures to Godself, imbuing them with simplicity, immutability, and incorruptibility. "If Almighty power then be truly exerted in the production of an Atom, how Glorious is the World; and how Infinitly deep is evry Creature in which there is an Infinit Number of Such Atoms Composing its Existence!"[237] All creatures are thus intrinsically stable.

While this assessment already represents a significant departure from Plotinus' appraisal of matter, Traherne goes even further, seeing a connection to Christian resurrection.

> They (atoms) may change their Behavior, but not their Wisdom. A Mirror of the Resurrection lies hid in this Intrinsecal Immutabilitie. The Whole is a Third thing, resulting from the union of these Simple Parts which continuing afterwards, may assist under other new Formes in the Production, or Existence of other Bodies, and bec. the Particles continue after the Dissolution of the Body which they composed

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[234] "The Reason why man is a Feeble worm is because He Despiseth His understanding, and lives onely by His Fleshly Body. would He live by His understanding He Should Soone perceiv Himselfe an infinite creature." See *Select Meditations* in ibid., V: 367.
[235] See Snyder's treatment in Snyder.
[236] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 343.
[237] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid.

> the self same Parts may return again, and make the same Individual that was before. The Same Matter, and the Same Spirits united together in the same maner, composing the very same object, that was before their Dissolution. For Time and Continuance are not the Principles of Individuation, but unitie of Matter and Forme. The same Book may be taken all to pieces and made up again, the same House, and the same Cabinet.[238]

Atoms are "infinitly usefull."[239] They can be united and divided according to the purposes of God. This atomic conservation goes beyond some sort of universal law. It demonstrates to Traherne that God's glory can be found anywhere, in any configuration. The atom is the least expression of this truth, one that pervades all things the senses can detect.

2.4.5 Freedom

With matter undergirded by this immutable atomic glory, evil then can only manifest within the exercise of freedom. The good material world can present something to a person as 'evil,' but the illuminated mind will see past the illusion and work to perform a "Diviner Art"[240] upon the object considered.

> And that is like a Royal Chymist to reign among Poysons to turn Scorpions into fishes, Weeds into flowers Bruises into Ornaments, Poysons into Cordials. And he that cannot this Art of Extracting Good out of evil, is to be accounted Nothing.[241]

Traherne here is not advocating the magical transformation of matter between various material forms but rather admonishing a deeper perception of reality where Good resides at the very basis of creation. Regardless of where one turns his gaze, God's charity awaits the attention and will faithfully lead a person towards Godself.

In the poem 'Dumness', [242] Traherne clearly distinguishes between the pristine reflectivity of createdness and the infectious participation in evil brought on by social experience. "Man was born to meditat on things" where "Life and Lov might be his

[238] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 344-45.
[239] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 346.
[240] *Centuries of Meditations*, ibid., V: 150.
[241] Ibid.
[242] *Poems of Felicity* in ibid., VI: 148-49.

chiefest Treasure." When the world is silent, Traherne is completely enthralled by the love of God. But this state passes when mortal words taint his hearing. "For Sin and Death Are most infused by accursed Breath That, flowing from corrupted Intrails, bear Those hidden Plagues which Souls may justly fear." Traherne chooses to overcome these influences by once again returning his gaze upon creation that "spake Divinity." His eyes become ears, listening to the "Oracle," where "Earth did undertake The Office of a Priest." Evil from without enters into the mind but redirection of the heart's gaze overcomes even the most toxic of influences.

2.4.6 Desire

Desire also plays an important function in Traherne's anthropology and his construct of evil. As Inge remarks, Traherne is "convinced of the primacy of desire in the universe."[243] Desire in Traherne is tethered to specific objects of attention. When something leads the mind away from enjoyment of God, it is evil. When something leads to greater unity with God, it is good.

> Let it be your Care to dive to the Bottom of true Religion, and not suffer your Eyes to be Dazled with its Superficial Appearance. Rest not in the Helps and Remedies that it bringeth, but search for the Hidden Manna, the substantial Food underneath, the Satisfaction of all Wishes and Desires, the true and Coelestial Pleasures, the Causes of Love, and Praise, and Thanksgiving founded in the Manifestations of Gods Eternal favour, especially in the Ends, for the sake of which all Helps and Remedies are prepared.[244]

What is considered beneficial may ultimately distract someone from complete satisfaction in God. Thus Traherne warns his reader not to let temporary pleasures prevent a soul from

[243] Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, 27. DeNeef, similarly, describes Traherne "as preeminently a poet of desire." See DeNeef, 116.
[244] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 50-51.

engaging the substructure of God's love that sustains all experiences. To resist this ultimate awareness is to choose a spiritual blindness.[245]

In his poem "Desire"[246] Traherne finds this longing in his being from birth. It "incessantly a Paradice Unknown suggest," becoming a source of irritation that cries out for satisfaction. Good things pale in comparison to God, "evry Joy and Pleasure but a Wound, So long as I my Blessedness did miss." The physical world deadens as desire pushes the soul to seek divinity. This "Sacred Thirst" makes him "apt to Prize, and Taste, and see, Of Things, doth Bliss to Souls dispence." Happiness is known when divine desire encounters a metaphysical structure in the universe where God's love completely satisfies. Evil, then, is broadly construed under this portrayal. Whenever an object inhibits the full experience of beatific vision, it is not fulfilling its original purpose and thus provides an occasion for evil.

God's willingness to satisfy the Divine desire implanted within elevates the importance of His image in humanity. It also brings to the forefront question of why the world is as it is. Traherne openly acknowledges the difficulty of theodicy.

> Our Heart being tempted to Suspect his veracity, Goodness, and Love, by Reason of the Blindness of our Corrupted Nature. The same Scruples invade, and afflict us about the Original of Evil, and why Sin cam: into the World, and how it was permitted even with Pietie in God; or how, if not permitted, it could enter.[247]

Traherne is unwavering in his conviction, throughout his entire corpus I think, that "all these depend in their Solution upon a Right Apprehension of God's Glory in the first Beginning of his Ways, which is his Wisdom and Goodness in the Creation of his Image."[248] This solution to evil is a helpful interpretative anchor to be aware of in Traherne's writings. It reflects something of his basic anthropological commitments as a theologian and

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[245] "Sin is a *Moral Obliquity*, and the change it produceth in the Soul is *Spiritual*." Ibid., 55.
[246] *Poems from the Dobell Folio* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, VI: 71-75.
[247] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 459.
[248] Ibid.

philosopher. It also illuminates why so much of his material is focused on the accessibility of divine ideas. With such confidence in the essential nature of humanity and the inherent goodness of creation, the main task from his pastoral point of view is to help others understand the blessings of clarity that come with the soul's vision of life.

Looking back to our other two Platonists, we can see how Traherne resembles this tradition in a couple of ways. First, matter is neutral. But Traherne seems to emphasize an embedded relationality in creation. Materiality can still confuse the mind, but it can also reveal a foundational divine love for humanity. Second, Traherne places great import on the use of freedom, in line with what we have seen in Ficino and Plotinus. Spiritual discernment guides the stewardship of this power. It is choice that determines cognitive expansion in the Platonist tradition.

2.4.7 Christology in Traherne

Despite the above alignment with our Platonist stream, we are also able to see ways Traherne transforms his Platonism through his Christology. Unlike Christianity, pagan Platonist philosophy[249] does not employ any sort of soteriological scheme in the cosmic sense. The turning of a Platonist soul to God is an independent act, rooted in an individual's choice. The divine does not force a change of attention in humanity nor does a person become ensnared in evil to the point that the only recourse available is some sort of cosmic divine intervention. Augustine discusses this ideological chasm between Platonism's aims and Christian formation of the soul in Book VII of *Confessions*.

> At that time, after reading the books of the Platonists and learning from them to seek immaterial truth, I turned my attention to your 'invisible nature understood through the things which are made' (Rom. 1:20). But from the disappointment I suffered I perceived that the darkness of my soul would not allow me to

[249] For a brief and helpful discussion on this, see Pappas' section on "Divine Inspiration" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2015 ed., s.v. "Plato's Aesthetics," http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/plato-aesthetics/.

> contemplate these sublimities… Of these conceptions I was certain; but to enjoy you I was too weak. I prattled on as if I were expert, but unless I sought your way in Christ our Saviour (Titus 1:4), I would have been not expert but expunged. I began to want to give myself airs as a wise person. I was full of my punishment, but I shed no tears of penitence. Worse still, I was puffed up with knowledge (1 Cor. 8:1). Where was the charity which builds on the foundation of humility which is Christ Jesus?[250]

Augustine does not seem to regret the skills he learned while tutored in pagan philosophy. They are portrayed as guiding influences which ultimately led to the belief in God and His Word.[251] But there came a point for Augustine where pagan Platonism bred pride instead of humility. Relying upon Christ enabled Augustine to "discern and distinguish the difference between presumption and confession, between those who see what the goal is but not how to get there and those who see the way which leads to the home of bliss, not merely as an end to be perceived but as a realm to live in."[252] Because I am arguing Traherne to be a Christian Platonist, I think it will be helpful to surface his soteriology in a broad sense as well as the role Christ plays in illumination.

Traherne addresses the debate of his time on the postlapsarian nature of humanity and whether evil resides ontologically as a result of the fall.[253] This awareness can be seen in *A Sober View of Dr. Twisse*. In discussing the connotations of 'reprobate', he utilizes the life of King Saul as polemic.

> But the Question is whether the Holy Scripture calleth them Reprobats, and truly I think it must be held in the Negative. For wherever the word Reprobated, Rejected, or Cast away, occurreth, it is always taken in an Evil Sence, and plainly implieth the Merit to precede the Punishment … In Scripture Language therfore none are called Reprobates but they only upon whom all Means were Spent in vain, and that have finaly provoked and rejected God. Saul was not Elected, further then as he was one of Gods chosen, that enjoyed the Means of Grace, yet was never rejected, till he rejected God. 1. Sam. 15.23.[254]

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[250] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 129-30.
[251] Ibid., 135.
[252] ibid., 130.
[253] For information on the background of this debate, see Patrick Grant, "Original Sin and the Fall of Man in Thomas Traherne," *ELH* 38, no. 1 (1971), http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2872362.
[254] *A Sober View of Dr. Twisse* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 121.

Humanity is not functionally marred before experiencing its freedom to exist and choose.[255] Evil first manifests by rejection of God's design for humanity and the subsequent directing of the mind towards lesser things. This misdirection of attention can focus on external created objects or the internal wonders of the human soul.[256] The reflective capacity itself is neutral in terms of good or evil. The exercise of it however reveals fallenness or elevation to Divine intent. For Traherne goodness becomes real when felt and delighted in. Evil, likewise, is a refusal to engage objects towards the end that God desires of them.

> I am amazed when I consider the Perfections of My Soul: of which as it is in other Riches an Evil Use may be made, but a good one too. A man may gaze in a solitary maner upon his own Perfections, and so dote upon them, as to grow Proud therby; which was the fall of Angels. But I will so consider them as to be enflamd with Divine Love in the Meditation, and which is a Strange Effect of ones own Excellency, to be filled with Abhorrence of my self, bec. I hav defiled so excellent a creature. [257]

Traherne sees the degradation of reflective capacity as a confusion generated by social experiences.[258] "Were all men Wise and Innocent," he remarks, "it were easy to be Happy. for no man would injure or molest another."[259] In one of his more pessimistic assessments of the fallen state, he describes the depth of that spiritual confusion: "Sin hath degraded the Soul, and made it Diabolical. The Effects of Human Corruption are so Direfull and

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[255] "GOD causeth not the Means of the Reprobats Damnation: but prepareth Means for his Salvation: and by preparing Means for his Salvation, maketh him capable of it; and not only so, but sheweth that He desireth it." Ibid., I: 51.
[256] *Seeds of Eternity* in ibid., I: 235.
[257] "Tho we know things never So well we must actually Feel and Delight in their Goodness, or else they will be Lost." See *Select Meditations* in ibid., V: 366.
[258] "The first Light which shined in my Infancy in its Primitive and Innocent Clarity was totaly Ecclypsed … If you ask me how it was Ecclypsed? Truly by the Customs and maners of Men, which like the Contrary Winds blew it out." See *Centuries of Meditations* in ibid., V: 96. In *Aserious and patheticalContemplation* he writes something similar: " Yet have I been wholly estranged from thee, by the sinful Courses of this World, by the Delusions of Vain Conversation." Ibid., IV: 332. For a brief discussion on associationism, see Paul Cefalu, *English Renaissance Literature and Contemporary Theory : Sublime Objects of Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 143-48.
[259] *Centuries of Meditations in* Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 149.

Prodigious, that we know not what we were nor what is our Interest."[260] This corruption ignores a cardinal rule of creation for Traherne. Nature has implicit goodness and necessary consequences when its inherent truth is misunderstood and misappropriated.

> The Principal and Grand Rule of Nature .. is this that followeth. Good is to be Beloved, and Evil must be hated. The Best is to be chosen and the Worst refused. The Better is to be preferred abov the Worse. Not to do which includes all Folly, and Impietie: In the observation of which all Religion, and Right Reason is founded: for Want of which, All Atheism, Infidelitie, and profaneness is Introduced, Scepticism, and Ignorance, and Dimness and Error are continued in the World for want of this one Observation.[261]

Evil arises out of a refusal to think clearly. When humanity lacks divine illumination, denigration of thought is the only remaining possibility for existence.

This sinful break in reasoning is reparable in his view, first by Christ through the sacrament of baptism[262] and sustained afterward by an intentional contemplative vision.[263] Christ's salvation through the cross empowers the journey back to God. "The Cross of Christ is the Jacobs ladder by which we Ascend into the Highest Heavens."[264] Traherne also invokes the salvific activity of Christ to regain an untainted thinking.[265] It is a specific atonement[266] in response to Traherne's sin of placing an "Object before Thee Which thou infinitely hatest."[267] The love of God through Christ removes the impediment and allows Traherne to once again live in concert with Divine image within. "He came that we might be restored to that End For which we were made: to relate to Bodies, which was that

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[260] This statement is precluded by Traherne's assessment of Platonic dualism (corporeal/spiritual). See "Amendment" in *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., III: 52.
[261] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 327.
[262] *A Sober View of Dr. Twisse* in ibid., I: 81-82.
[263] Traherne gives a progression of purgative, illuminative, beatific, and divine, a somewhat different construct than the four estates describes elsewhere in his writings. See "Amendment" in *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., III: 53. For the four estates, see Inge's discussion in Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, 162-69.
[264] *Centuries of Meditations* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 29.
[265] "Enable me to keep thy Temple sacred! … Enable me to wash my hands in Innocency." See *Aserious and patheticalContemplation Of the Mercies of God* in ibid., IV: 332.
[266] One example of this specificity can be seen in "Ascension" from *Commentaries of Heaven*: "The Holy Ghost came down within ten Days after his Ascension upon all the Apostles ... It Subverted the Corrupt world, and purified the true one." See ibid., III: 241.
[267] *Aserious and patheticalContemplation Of the Mercies of God* in ibid., IV: 346.

there might [be] room and Place among invisible Things for Material creatures use and Benefit in a Material world."[268] Beatific vision is restored and created life is now understood "according to the transcendent Presence of my (Traherne's) Spirit everywhere."[269]

It is also a continual refinement of the soul[270] which Traherne sees spoken about in Scripture. For example, he sees the cleansing work of Christ in Adam and Eve, annulling the claim of original sin.[271] In *The Ceremonial Law*, Christ is consumed like the manna of the Exodus.

> We cannot prais being faln, as before,
> Nor in his Lov delight, nor him adore.
> Till Jesus comes who doth our Strength renew,
> On whom we feed, while his Lov do view.
> From Heaven the Bread of Life in him comes down[272]

Traherne connects this transformation by feeding in clear view of Divine love. In the *Church's Year Book*, he enters into the story of Emmaus in Luke, breaking out with invocations that Jesus "illuminat my Faith, Enflame my Lov, add Wings to my Speed … that at last I may with these two Disciples lay aside all Humane Fear."[273] In the section on the festival of St. Philip and James, he recounts the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts. Philip helps the eunuch perceive "the Glory concealed beneath the Letters."[274] The apostle knew Jesus and in response to Christ's suffering fulfilled the divine "Prerogativ abov the Angels to beget the Divine Image"[275] via his instruction to the traveler. In *Centuries of Meditations*, Traherne interprets the counsel given to the Ephesian church in the book of

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[268] *Select Meditations* in ibid., V: 350.
[269] Ibid., IV: 347. In *The Kingdom of Heaven*, we see a similar imperative: "The Life is Spiritual, which we ought to lead. And they alone are blessed, that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. To Enjoy things in the Image of GOD, is the best Way, wherby they can be Enjoyed." See ibid., I: 268-69.
[270] "Desire" in *Poems from the Dobell Folio* in ibid., VI: 75.
[271] "Sin sploil'd them; but my Savior's precious Blood Sprinkled I see On them to be." See "The World" in *Poems of Felicity* in ibid., VI: 108.
[272] *The Ceremonial Law* in ibid., VI: 227.
[273] *Church's Year Book* in ibid., IV: 25.
[274] *Church's Year Book* in ibid., IV: 53-54.
[275] Ibid.

Revelation as an admonition to esteem things rightly: "He that knows not to what He is redeemed cannot Prize the Work of Redemption."[276] The reconciling work of Christ is to deepen spiritual vision of the church so that all things are "infinitly prized in a Glorious Light."[277]

In *Inducements to Retirednes* Traherne goes through a list of "holy persons" where solitude provided occasion for divine communication.

> What Adam did in Paradice, What Moses in the Wilderness, what Elijah at the Brook Cherith, while he tarried there so long, few can imagine. Yet are there certain Rules wherby we can Discern their most Secret and Hidden Thoughts, and have Communion with them in all their Solitudes. When Jesus was in the Wilderness, and John the Divine in Pathos [sic],[278] neither of them was alone: the one was present with all Ages, and the other with God in all Places of his Dominion.[279]

Though these are secret meetings of sacred characters, Traherne finds their experiences to be accessible to anyone. He rebuffs the claim that this kind of thought experiment is arrogant.[280] What Traherne is after here, I think, is not the specific ideas experienced by Biblical figures but rather the contemplative sensation of awe inspired by the loving presence of God. In speaking of Adam, he goes on to say "For certainly He had such a measure of Intuitiv Knowledge that He Knew Him self, and Knew there was a God whom He felt within Him: And that the World was made for his Sake, and that Him self was Lord and Possessor of it."[281] This intuitive knowledge is conditioned on the intentions of God for all creation.[282] So, any thought experienced by anyone becomes available to Traherne whenever he imagines it under the auspices of Christ's redemptive work and purposes.

> Of that Kind which Adams Thoughts were, in the Estate of Innocency, ours ought to be, since our Redemption only with this Difference; As there has been since the fall

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[276] *Centuries of Meditations* in ibid., V: 51.
[277] Ibid.
[278] "Pathos" is likely "Patmos." Ross indicates a gloss in the manuscript related to Revelation 1:9.
[279] *Inducements to Retirednes* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 29.
[280] There is an interesting manuscript note critiquing this idea. See footnote 46 in *Inducements to Retirednes* in ibid., I: 30.
[281] Ibid.
[282] "May we but Assigne Three Things, and assure our selvs of them, we may know any Thought in the whole World. And they are his Principles, his Interests, and his Object that thinketh." See ibid.

> an Addition of Mercies, so ought there to be in us an Addition of Resentments. And as the Mercies which Adam enjoyed, are in their Lustre and Valu to us Enhanced, so ought our Joy and Estimation to increas. Evry man Esteeming Him self as Adam was, the Sole Possessor of the Whole World. For the Heavens and the Earth serv him as much as they did Adam, yea far more, when the Truth is Known.[283]

Thus Traherne shows significant continuity with a Platonist concept of evil. It is only experienced through the refusal to 'gaze' at the Good. Traherne's Christian Platonism also considers the intentions behind creation. For him, a loving Trinitarian reality manifests in material things. Spiritual perception brings this eternal aspect into view, calling the seer to honor the gift of love by utilizing it for the end it was intended for: praise and delight in God's presence. Traherne attends to the Calvinist claims of total depravity in humankind and rejects the tenet of inherent fallenness. Instead he recognizes the distorting power of social experiences and envisions Christ to intercede in those confusions. God substantively comes to live in us, with "the Lov of GOD being seen, being GOD in us. Purifying, Illuminating, Strengthening and Comforting the Soul of the Seer."[284]

2.4.8 Summary of Traherne and Evil

Let us now turn back to our conceptual map from Augustine. As I have shown, Traherne carries forward a Christian Platonist view of evil, but with a couple of points of emphasis. First, evil arises from noetic failings. Matter is filled with divine intention and only a willful rejection of God's loving invitation leads to corruption. Second, the condition of original sin is not as crippling to perception as in Augustine. Traherne's Christology responds to the cosmic effects of sin created by the misuse of personal freedom, but there seems to be much more optimism about human perception in the embodied life.

I will now attend to Thomas Hobbes and the concept of evil within his mechanical philosophy. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Hobbesian philosophy was a major concern for many within the Cambridge movement. So an examination of Hobbes's ideas

[283] Ibid., I: 31.
[284] *Centuries of Meditations* in ibid., V: 68.

around this anthropology will further ground Traherne as a Christian Platonist. Hobbes also presents us with insights into the foundations of some strands of modern thought.[285] Thus I think it is helpful to examine his cognition model to gauge whether Traherne somehow leans into modernity philosophically and in what manner that expresses itself. In the next section I will show how Hobbesian evil introduces a liability into human thought under the auspices of a subjective epistemology, an instability we do not see in Traherne's philosophy.

2.5.1 Evil and Pain in Hobbes

Evil in Hobbes is connected to pain at the individual level. It is not a concrete objective reality separated from a particular experience.[286] The word 'evil' is used to discriminate types of actions, but is not anchored to a metaphysical scheme.

> But whatsoever is the object of any mans Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth *Good*: And the object of his Hate, and Aversion, *Evill*; And of his Contempt, *Vile*, and *Inconsiderable*. For these words of Good, Evill, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves.[287]

Humanity does not correlate its knowledge of good and evil with ultimate expressions encapsulated by God and non-existence in the Platonic sense. Moral bearings are instead taken from one's own desires and the impact this has on others and self. An evil act for one person is also not necessarily evil act for another. A person in isolation tends to resist pain but when participating in a larger society, pursuits differ. These conflicting aims then

[285] Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch, *An Introduction to Political Thought : A Conceptual Toolkit*, 2 ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 71.
[286] Helen Thornton, *State of Nature or Eden? : Thomas Hobbes and His Contemporaries on the Natural Condition of Human Beings*, *Rochester Studies in Philosophy* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 18.
[287] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, trans. G. A. J. Rogers and Karl Schuhmann, 2 vols., *A Critical Edition by G.A.J. Rogers and Karl Schuhmann* (London: Continuum, 2005), VI.

generate evil in society for Hobbes and necessitate the role of a sovereign to stabilize the common life.[288]

This subjective conceptualization of evil connects with Hobbes's distrust of absolutes that cannot be explained mechanically. "Nor is there any such Thing as Absolute Goodness, considered without Relation: for even the Goodness which we apprehend in God Almighty, is his Goodness to us. And as we call Good and Evil the Things that please and displease; so call we Goodness and Badness, the Qualities or Powers whereby they do it."[289] His philosophy connects all manners of thought into a materialist causality. Sensory experiences become the fountain head for all ideas held. Immediate pleasures define themselves as "good" and moments of pain are interpreted as "evil."[290] When people organize into societies, these conflicting ideals of good and evil require some sort of amelioration. Subsequently, stable social order is obtained by the power and discernment of the sovereign.

Evil is collectively discernible in the context of social strife. Evil becomes whatever harms the group. Good, however, falls under the auspices of the sovereign. A common good is thus sustained by the wisdom of a governor and experienced collectively via submission to that authoritative power. The sovereign is appointed by the community in response to their fears and the entire political contract is rooted in a materialist

[288] Current scholarship on Hobbes is reexamining this standard philosophical interpretation. Hobbes's moral philosophy in particular is under fresh consideration. For a review of the standard interpretation and variances, see S. A. Lloyd, *Ideals as Interests in Hobbes' Leviathan : The Power of Mind over Matter* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6-47.
[289] Thomas Hobbes, *Humane Nature, or, the Fundamental Elements of Policy Being a Discovery of the Faculties, Acts, and Passions of the Soul of Man from Their Original Causes, According to Such Philosophical Principles as Are Not Commonly Known or Asserted*, The third edition, augmented and much corrected by the authors own hand.; Reproduction of original in the Union Theological Seminary Library, New York. ed. (London: Printed for Matthew Gilliflower, Henry Rogers, and Tho. Fox, 1684), 38.
[290] Hobbes connects pleasure and pain to physiological processes. See Bunce, 26.

discernment of pleasure and pain. The ruler can forge peace when everyone gives up their individual perceptions of good in exchange for the security of a centralized common good.

> First of all it is essential to peace that each man be adequately protected from the violence of other men, so that he may live in security, i.e. so that he may not have reasonable cause to fear other men as long as he refrains from wronging them. It is in fact impossible to secure people from harm from each other, so that they cannot be wrongly hurt or killed… Security is the End for which men subject themselves to others.[291]

Notice that this is quite different from Traherne's understanding of God-implanted desire. God in Hobbes cannot be causally connected to human desire via matter, yet desire animates the body. Life, in its broadest sense for Traherne, is organized by a power that creates longing for God. This philosophical bridging between the spiritual and the physical is the only adequate means of explaining existence in Trahernian logic.[292] Hobbes and Traherne both acknowledge that pain is the object of hatred. Yet for Traherne, this aversion leads to a stronger embrace of God, whereas in Hobbes it is leads to the pursuit of pleasure.

2.5.2 Innatism

Hobbes's view of good and evil is connected to his desire to replace any metaphysical chain of being with a mechanical system.[293] Truth claims grounded in the incorporeal realm have little value for political stability and do not contribute to human knowing. Hobbes takes great issue with "the scholastic vision of a harmonious world that was a manifestation of divine reason and justice."[294] Evil, for Hobbes, is only germane when it relates to social order. Thus evil exists when someone has reasoned his way through a sensory experience into a destructive outcome that affects the community.

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[291] Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), VI, 3.
[292] See *Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 409-18.
[293] Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 6.
[294] Gillespie, 208.

Hobbes, in contrast to the Platonists we have been reviewing, rejects any sort of innate wisdom which can lead to a singular and simple Good to correct what is wrong in the world.

This is, arguably, a redefining of the *natural law* tradition. Natural law, as articulated by many scholastic philosophers of the Middle Ages, placed its transcendental foundation on God's design of nature, attributing high value and reliability to the innate reasoning power of the human mind to perceive divine truth.[295] Hobbes does not hold to the same ontology. Good or evil outside the self is merely an abstraction awaiting a more accurate illumination of its causality. Nature does not inherently hold transcendent forms or act according to divine mandates.

I want to pause for a moment and connect this discussion to Traherne and the perception that he is some type of Romantic. Romanticism, among other things, can be represented as a shift from trust in the external structures of the world to a trust in an internal structures created by the mind. We can see here in Hobbes just this sort of move to subjectivity in light of a fluctuating external world. But when we consider Traherne, there is an external reality that mitigates the internal logic. So one could suggest, arguably, that Hobbes provides a more tangible expression of proto-Romanticism than Traherne and his Platonic counterparts.

It is helpful to also note here that Hobbes's philosophy, while not positioning itself as theology proper, also speaks to a larger discussion of his time over the primeval Eden narrative. As Peter Harrison points out, the Eden story required a response as competing anthropologies were put forward. "Varying estimates of the severity of the Fall gave rise to different assessments of human capacities and strategies for knowledge acquisition."[296]

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[295] Perez Zagorin, *Hobbes and the Law of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 8.
[296] Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 144.

Hobbes seems interested in establishing an ontology outside of scholastic theology that supports a mechanical epistemology.[297]

Hobbes does, interestingly, espouse an innate right in being human. This right of nature "is the fundamental human right, rooted in what he believes is empirically observable as the most elemental feature of human nature, namely, its instinct and desire for self-preservation and fear of and aversion to death, especially violent death, as the greatest of natural evils."[298] This tenet is foundational to his political philosophy. Reasoning about evil happens in conjunction with the threat of death.[299] People also have the right to come together under mutual social contract in order to empower a sovereign against degrees of harm that happen in the world. As Kinch Hoekstra argues, Hobbes's aim as a philosopher is pursue practical benefit,[300] one which is obtained solely through a materialist epistemology.

2.5.3 Matter

When it comes to matter and its ability to 'host' evil actions, Hobbes resists any claim that those experiences can be universally understood. There is nothing akin to a Platonic 'non-being.' Matter is similarly neutral, having no moral nature. Engagement with it is completely relative to the interpretations of each person. As Richard Tuck points out, "the only thing Hobbes appears to deem plausible as a general obligation is the proposition that we should successfully coordinate our judgments about what conduces to our preservation. Other than this, he does not put forward any potentially universal

[297] Hobbes is also, in many ways, harmonious with what one finds in Calvinist thinking of that time. Harrison's discussion on this is very helpful. See ibid., 139-54.
[298] Zagorin, *Hobbes and the Law of Nature*, 27.
[299] Dupré thinks death is the "stabilizing principle that forces individuals to reenter the system." See Dupré, 140.
[300] Kinch Hoekstra, "Ii*—the End of Philosophy (the Case of Hobbes)," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society (Hardback)* 106, no. 1 (2006): 29, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9264.2006.00138.x.

principles of preservation."[301] This relativism is a stark contrast against the poles of Platonic reality. For Hobbes, there is no universal, least-desired mode of existence and likewise no most-desired pursuit of truth. Negotiated peace in society stands supreme. Ultimate individual claims on good or evil cannot substantively overcome a social contract pursuing common stability.

The evaluations of atomist theory between Hobbes and Traherne are strikingly different as well. Traherne, as I shared earlier, sees a cohesive relationship between the love of God and the atomic substratum of materiality. The atom becomes the building block of material existence and human identity. It is stable because it has been conceived out of Divine charity. For Hobbes, atoms are also at the base of material existence. But all matter is in motion and thus no moral conclusions can be drawn from what is essentially a fluid reality. As Amos Funkenstein remarks, "with great vigor Hobbes set out to prove that even though all human institutions-language, religion, law-have their origin *in* nature, they should be understood as artificial constructs through and through… they derive … their *validity* not from nature, but from human imposition."[302] Hobbes is unwilling to correlate a beneficial Divine relationality to material processes until a specific social enterprise settles collectively on that "truth." Reliability does not exist until humankind manufactures it in the pursuit of common peace.

2.5.4 Freedom

In light of this essential instability in the natural world as well as in the realm of shared public truth, I will now examine the role of choice in Hobbesian philosophy. Freedom for Hobbes is subservient to the motions at work in the world. There is no God

[301] Richard Tuck, "Hobbes' Moral Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 191.
[302] Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 332.

impressing its desires and forms upon the material world in his philosophy. Instead the world is in constant physical motion. Human beings are just another substance awaiting the interactions from other material objects.

> The inclusion of any one action within a web of antecedent causes makes an important statement about the nature of persons, as Hobbes's critics were wont to show. If causation doesn't begin with the will, but rather with attitudes and before that with reasons for those attitudes, then the special place of the person in the overall scheme of the cosmos has been taken away. On the most basic sense of things, Hobbes does not consider persons to be different in substance from other entities in the world. His description of the universe—in which "every Object is either a part of the whole World, or an Aggregate of parts"—admits of one substance, reducible in all instances to the atoms that make up minds and bodies alike.[303]

Hobbes's causality effectively dismisses personal freedom and its ability to determine the moral worth of events in life. Without ultimate conclusions on evil and good at the personal level, individual moral determinations have little to no value if social contract is primarily about a surrender of individual conclusions for the common good.

Patricia Springborg sees this depersonalization expressed in Hobbes's conflicts with the church. Matters of personal conscience cannot trump the truth claims of the state. "Hobbes subscribed to a form of religious toleration that left citizens free in all but the most central beliefs of the state church."[304] This redefinition of freedom introduces a type of competing duality in thought where some truths are held personally and others are accepted through social construction. Personal truths have no outlet for social validation and collective truths are robbed of personalized transcendent anchors. This opens up an existential chasm in the self, according to Dupré.

> What previously had given meaning to human life precisely because it surpassed individual aspirations, now came to be conceived in terms of personal need and fulfillment. Isolated from the totality from which it drew its very content, the self

[303] Kramnick, 33-34.

[304] "The strategy was to abandon emphasis on conscience, to withdraw from the individual the right to interpret Scriptures, to disempower priests, and to make conformity of morals and manners the test of Christian faith." See Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes on Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 352.

> had nowhere to turn but to itself. Hobbes, conscious of the problems of such an isolation, attempted to incorporate that self within a single system of nature, but his mechanistic view deprived that system from the kind of teleology indispensable to any genuine morality.[305]

Morality under this shift takes on an ambiguous quality, constantly awaiting a social construction via the sovereign power. This presents a difficult dilemma for the individual within the turn towards a scientific modernity. Self-understandings that include transcendental truths are certainly still experienced, but their social currency is destabilized. The self's ability to draw truth inferences from any of life's experiences becomes suspect.[306] This pronounced cloud of moral uncertainty is not seen in our Platonist tradition.

2.5.5 Desire

The same sort of skepticism we see in Hobbesian cognition also affects the desire to create good. Desires are in motion for Hobbes and they must be subservient to the political process. Personal aspirations lead each individual towards mechanisms of power able to acquire the object of one's desire.

> From Desire, ariseth the Thought of some means we have seen produce the like of that which we ayme at; and from the thought of that, the thought of means to that mean; and so continually, till we come to some beginning within our own power. And because the End, by the greatnesse of the impression, comes often to mind, in case our thoughts begin to wander, they are quickly again reduced into the way: which observed by one of the seven wise men, made him give men this praecept, which is now worne out, *Respice finem*; that is to say, in all your actions, look often upon what you would have, as the thing that directs all your thoughts in the way to attain it.[307]

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[305] Dupré, 143. This gap, I think, is precisely what Traherne rails against in the mechanical philosophy.

[306] Tuck remarks "'Freedom' for Hobbes was still a meaningful term, but it meant purely the condition of having no hindrance to the securing of what one wants; the will itself, or the act of wanting, could not be free. The idea of the 'free self' was as imaginary as the idea of the self." See Richard Tuck, *Hobbes*, *Past Masters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 47.

[307] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, III.

This appetite for actions creates conflict in two ways. Sometimes desires align and competition arises to gain the object. Other times desires conflict and violence erupts as pursuits challenge one another. With either direction, desires necessitate a state power for peace.[308] Stephen Toulmin describes these disparaging individualized desires as "willful social atoms… (who) must be made to understand that their personal activities take place under, and are constrained by, the shadow of this overwhelming central force."[309]

Desire is consequently a liability because of its volatility. While everyone seems to have this innate impulse towards satisfaction, the end is quite different from unity with God's love under the Christian Platonist scheme. Human perfection takes on an entirely different trajectory towards empowerment. "The greatest good is thus progressing towards satisfaction with the least hindrance, and the greatest evil the cessation of all movement in death. Each person in Hobbes's view is thus a self-interested individual who seeks to maximize his own power and satisfaction."[310] Morality can become a means or a menace, depending upon the goal. The same relativized perspective enters the sovereign state. Force contains no boundaries as long as a population agrees to the vision of peace. The idea of human flourishing is thus broken free from any metaphysical soundings on what good or evil might entail towards that end.

2.5.6 Summary of Hobbes and Evil

As I conclude this chapter, I want to return to our Augustinian map and see how Hobbes compares with the options I have been working with. It seems clear that Hobbes shows few signs of a Platonist conceptualization of evil. He is not concerned with

[308] Tom Sorell, "Hobbes' Scheme of the Sciences," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 56.
[309] Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis : The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, University of Chicago Press ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 195.
[310] Gillespie, 237.

identifying a metaphysical source of good nor does he explain evil as some sort of deprivation of that ultimate truth. Hobbes instead locates evil within the competing interests of personal pursuits. Evil manifests in an unpredictable manner, contingent entirely upon circumstantial social dynamics where two or more disagree about what is best. To do so, Hobbes treats cognition and its related desires as suspect, especially when it comes to societal peace.

When thinking about the Manichaean tradition, it is also apparent that Hobbes does not locate the tendency towards conflict in physical existence *de facto*. Evil instead rises up from disparaging mental conclusions held by various members of a group. But there is a phenomenological parallel with Manichaeism, I would argue, because for Hobbes a sovereign is essential for stability. When society is deprived of that controlling figure, people can only expect a brutish and violent existence. Thus evil is always present in a sense. It is either kept in check through the exercise of power or proliferated by the masses as desires wreak social havoc. This commitment in Hobbes can be understood as a turn towards a subjective epistemology grounded in the volatility of a world of constant motion.

This view of Hobbesian evil, when set alongside our Platonist tradition of evil, helps us to identify Traherne's Platonist commitments more clearly. We can see how Traherne's confidence in human cognition is connected to his understanding of divine love. Whereas in Hobbes individual desires lead to social fragmentation, in Traherne divine desire, reaching towards humanity, creates the possibility of social unity. The experience of Trahernian evil is primarily a misapprehension of that transcendent activity. Life becomes less when love is not perceived in the universe. Yet even then, insatiable desire for the Good overcomes any clouded understandings. Creation, for Traherne, can once again become a playground for finding echoes of infinite divine desire able to reorient the soul

towards God. In Hobbes, life is always under some sort of external threat and love, no matter how grand in scale, cannot alter that dynamism.

In the next chapter I will look at the soul within the Platonic tradition as well as in Hobbes and analyze how Traherne explains this part of his anthropology as a Christian Platonist against the emerging mechanical worldview of his day. This essential Trahernian confidence in human cognition will appear again as I examine that mental faculty.

Chapter 3 – The Concept of Soul

So far in my presentation a picture of Traherne has emerged which places confidence in human cognition. I have identified this disposition as characteristically Platonist through a discussion of evil and have shown how misguided understandings of reality are not native to the mind's abilities in that tradition. Recall that for Traherne, evil comes about when personal freedom is exercised poorly. So what I want to explore now is how this proper use of freedom creates an aligned way of thinking. The construct of soul is Platonist parlance for describing the functions of those higher mental faculties.

By way of foreground to this chapter's argument, it is useful to point out that in the early modern period soul as an aspect of human identity undergoes significant contestation. With the emergence of a mechanical worldview alongside the rise of modern Protestantism, the concept of soul is reconstituted, by some, for divergent philosophical and theological aims. For example, if reason is only applicable to observed material phenomena in a mechanical universe, then any form of spiritual experience outside a perceived chain of physical causality becomes disconnected epistemically from life in the body.[311] Or to take another example, if divine grace is irresistible in the Calvinist sense, then proactive human intellectual participation in divine work via the soul's capacities becomes fairly existentially irrelevant.[312] For my purposes here, it is not necessary to present all of the options and configurations of soul during Traherne's time. I am instead suggesting only that there is a lot of noise around this topic and that Traherne configures his philosophy with some awareness of those tones.

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[311] Harrison offers a careful tracing of the nuances of the epistemological shift. See Harrison, 186-244.

[312] Placher surfaces a useful intellectual history around this. See William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence : How Modern Thinking About God Went Wrong* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 88-107.

We can also appeal to the Cambridge Platonists as we anticipate how Traherne might enter into this debate over the soul. They offer something of a middle way. For them, reason leads to God and so inhabits a particular anthropology for that illumination. As Patrides remarks, "Primal Reason has imparted to the created order a religion at once 'rational, accountable, and intelligible.'"[313] Creation inevitably leads the mind to the divine and is a necessary place for discovering God. To sever the connection between sensual experiences and divine knowledge is to redefine what it means to think intelligibly for the Cambridge movement. That is why the soul and its thinking capacities are crucial components in the philosophy espoused by Whichcote, More, Cudworth, and others. In this discussion Traherne will show himself in league with these Cambridge concerns.

This chapter will sketch out a Platonist understanding of soul through Plotinus, Ficino, and Traherne. This is structured along four major themes: *logos*; cognitive transformation; the embodied soul; the irrational soul. These areas are also ordered with a certain metaphysical arc. The examination begins with principles higher up in the chain of being and the analysis gradually moves downward to realms where those ideas experience confusion.

Logos comes first because it serves as the organizing principle for self-reflection in Platonic philosophy. Traherne speaks of this in terms of divine love.

> That Love was the Original of things is Manifest by their Beauty: but more cleerly proved by the Nature of Working. Love certainly to it self, or to somthing Else, must begin to produce, when its objects are taken out of Nothing.[314]

With *logos* in view, I will then examine how human thinking expands when the soul is properly tuned. Here I will talk about particular faculties of the soul and the relationship to cognition, abilities Traherne regularly celebrates. "So strangely glorious Hast thou made

[313] *The Cambridge Platonists*, 10.
[314] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 310.

my Soul: That even Yesterday is present To mine inward eye."[315] The third section on the embodied soul is where I will review the essential disposition each thinker has regarding life in the flesh in light of the soul's abilities. Here we will discover an affirmation from Traherne that composite existence is a divine calling. "Thou hast Given Him Dominion over the Works of thy Hands, that in Works of a more Divine and Transcendent Nature, in Righteousness and True Holiness He might be pleasing to Thee."[316] I will then end the chapter with commentary on how a soul, though endowed with transformative powers, can become irrational in the composite state, "for man without Employment is a restless Creature."[317]

Finally, Hobbes will take on a clarifying role for us throughout this chapter. His nascent empiricism will be on display in connection with his views on the corporeal soul. I will incorporate the Hobbesian perspective in each theme exploration in an effort to show how the Platonist paradigm ultimately has a broader purview of human cognition. Hobbes's attempt to present a causality chain from motion carries with it a cognitive winnowing, one where the broad range of human reflection is narrowed down to a utilitarian, verifiable subset. Highlighting this mental truncation in different ways helps us to see Traherne's commitments more clearly and the persuasive power of his position in light of the Hobbesian alternative.

3.1.1 Logos as Organizing Principle in Plotinus

Plotinus is careful to orient the soul towards the Good. Since the individual soul contains potentially conflicting faculties for knowledge, it is necessary for Plotinus to offer some sort of guiding principle that shows why regression to the One is the preferable

[315] *Aserious and patheticalContemplation Of the Mercies of God* in ibid., IV: 337.
[316] *Church's Year-Book* in ibid., IV: 71.
[317] *Inducements to Retirednes* in ibid., I: 27.

state. Claims of origin are insufficient by themselves to speak meaningfully about the human experience of knowledge. Thus Plotinus turns to the idea of *logos* to explain the relationships between the world of forms and the world of matter and why the human soul acts preferentially towards contemplating the One. This starts with the fullness of the universal soul as it interacts with the realm of Intellect.

> It must be that the Soul of the All contemplates the best, always aspiring to the intelligible nature and to God, and that when it is full, filled right up to the brim, its trace, its last and lowest expression, is this productive principle that we are discussing… as long as the sun exists, the forming principles (*logoi*) will flow into this lower form of soul.[318]

Logos is the dynamic principle where lower realities evolve under the governance of higher ones.[319] This hierarchy makes it impossible for matter to determine its own direction. Matter relies upon the particular soul for growth, which in turn looks to the universal soul for the forms.

It is important here to connect the *logos* function in Plotinus' metaphysics with the activity of love. As Pierre Hadot comments, it is not enough to understand the elements in play in a discursive manner. "Knowledge, for Plotinus, is always experience, or rather it is an inner metamorphosis."[320] Love describes the transformation process. Love proceeds from the One through the chain of being and enkindles desire in the human soul to return. It vivifies the self via *logos* and causes the individual soul to reach responsively. Plotinus describes it this way: "But there comes to be the intense kind of love for them not when they are what they are but when, being already what they are, they receive something else from there beyond."[321] *Logos* provides cohesion in Plotinian metaphysics.

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[318] *Ennead* II:3:18.
[319] Wallis, 68-72. Wallis also shows how Plotinus moves away from the Stoic tradition regarding *logos*.
[320] Hadot, 48.
[321] *Ennead* VI.7.21.

Plotinus offers us a view of the individual soul in communication with bodily existence. The sensory world engages the spiritual faculties and allows a person to choose a life of distraction or dedication. *Logos* ensures that those greater realities influence from above in the chain of being. *Logos* activates human desire to return to the Good. The journey of contemplation is marked by experiences of loving transformation. As I turn attention to Ficino now, I will surface some of these same essential related to *logos* and show some ways Ficino Christianizes the philosophy in his writings.

3.1.2 The Rational Principle as Logos in Ficino

In *Platonic Theology*, the rational principle is portrayed in a Plotinian manner.

> … the art creating the world is without a doubt a sort of reason that is both one and universal, uniform one might say and omniform: it is the whole world's rational principle embracing in itself all the rational principles of all the world's parts.[322]

God is the fount of truth, making possible the artful reason humanity perceives. The rational principle pervades all creation, uniting everything in its non-discursive simplicity. Materiality, even though it may be tempting towards mental distraction, cannot ultimately divorce itself from this permeating logic. Humanity, as the image bearers of God, can always detect this transcendent reasoning and is burdened to respond to its claim.

Ficino calls the rational principle the "intelligible light." This divine illumination is perceived by the eyes of the understanding. But this communication first requires a washing away of "corporeal stains," those cogitative cataracts that blind the soul's eye to truth. Once this purgation occurs, the intelligible light can transform the sensory realm for the soul so that the "sensibles shine in the intelligible light as in the primal fountain." [323] Ficino's *logos* reveals itself to the seeking person willing to shed these sensory illusions.

[322] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, VI: 243.
[323] Ibid., VI: 257.

In terms of Christianization of Platonic *logos*, this reliance upon illumination echoes Johannine theology and Ficino acknowledges the connection. The refulgent mind is a daily discipline for the Christian. "According to John, theologians are children of God because they are reformed daily through the divine ideas."[324] The rational principle guides the soul towards a fruitful existence while in the body. It leads the mind towards God in all things. The embodied journey towards the divine is only possible because of God's generosity.

The *logos* is also incarnated in Christ, again in line with a Johannine theology. "Ficino thinks of the act of Incarnation as the descent of the pre-existent Logos into the sensible world."[325] This movement by Christ is redemptive. The return to God precipitated by an awareness of *logos* in the soul is a cosmic process of elevating the secular world, not negating it. [326]

At this point we are starting to see a couple of key characteristics in our Platonist stream. First, *logos* has an agency distinct from direct, divine action. *Logos* expresses God's ideas but that communication does not mean entail an unmediated experience of the divine. This helps us see another layer to the illumination process employed by Platonists. Second, *logos* organizes reality through relationality. The human mind detects an embedded logic in all things. This realization then helps create the possibility for a transformative encounter with God. These characteristics show themselves in Traherne's theology, as I will now show.

3.1.3 Traherne's Logos

[324] Ibid., IV: 23-25.
[325] Lauster, in *Marsilio Ficino : His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, 56.
[326] Ibid., 57. Lauster also observes that Ficino's Christology neglects basic elements like the cross of Christ, the atonement, and the resurrection. See ibid., 58.

Before I engage Traherne on this topic though, I want to briefly survey some additional intellectual history around *logos* as it relates to human flourishing. This will help ground my discussion of Trahernian happiness in a long standing Platonic tradition. It will also help us avoid the temptation to label Traherne as a Romantic whenever he enthusiastically speaks of felicity in the corpus. *Logos* is first seen in the writings of Zeno and the Stoic way. Zeno described the goal of life as "living in accord with a single rational principle (*logos*)"[327] so that one might experience happiness. This principle finds a new articulation into Christian Platonism through Philo (and others). Philo modifies the Stoic concept where it "becomes a mediator between the transcendent God and the world, and has both transcendent and immanent aspects."[328] And of course there is the prologue to the gospel of John that identifies *logos* with Christ.[329] So one might say, based on this small tracing here, that a happy life is one that is in spiritual accordance with the principle of *logos*, regardless of whether the tradition is pagan or Christian.

Happiness, of course, is a primary concern for Traherne. Felicity appears pervasively in his writings and serves philosophically as the primary indicator of a life fully actualized. In *Christian Ethicks* he says "I speak as I am inspired by Felicity. God is the Cause, but the knowledge of a Mans self the Foundation of Magnanimity."[330] This magnanimity is discovered when one is united to God. "His Omnipresence and Eternity fill the Soul, and make it able to contain all Heights and Depths, and Lengths and Breadths whatsoever."[331] The soul allows the body to perceive the infinite nature of God's wisdom and personhood. Felicity flows out of this spiritual awareness.

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[327] Lloyd P. Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 100-01.
[328] Louth, 26. For Louth's larger discussion of Philo, see ibid., 17-34.
[329] John 1:1-18.
[330] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 446.
[331] Ibid., 448.

I think a different matrix is needed to identify *logos* in Traherne from what we utilized with Plotinus and Ficino. Rather than searching for an articulated organizing principle that descends into the human mind as some sort of ontological emanation, it is more helpful to think about Traherne's *logos* as a divine phenomenon that grounds all ideas in God's infinite nature. *Logos* is known experientially through the body in partnership with the soul, not dogmatically within a necessary cosmology. This text from *Seeds of Eternity* shows that Trahernian preference for personal experience.

> Humanity being thus excellent, and thus esteemed by all, Heathens and Christians, fathers and Philosophers; we shall not think either time, or Labor lost, in the Persuit of it. Bec. that light which we bring into the hidden Recesses of it, will fill even Caves with Glory, and make the darkest prisons shine with Celestial Brightness. we will visit the remotest Corners, and deepest Abysses of the same for the face of an Angel appeareth in evry meanest Particle that can concerne it. In doing this, bec. the Body is but the Case of the Soul, we shall as such pass over it in the beginning, tho perhaps afterward we shall repell that opinion as a vulgar Error, that maketh it the impediment and prison of the mind, and looking on it as a glorious Instrument and Companion of the soul, utter things more advantagious concerning it.[332]

When one learns to cultivate the soul's vision, the sensory semantics of embodied existence experience a radical opening towards the non-discursive realm, here spoken of as "the face of an Angel." Semantic limits are no longer felt, time becomes fluid, and space is easily traversed in the mind.[333]

This seems to be more than imaginative play or proto-Romanticism in Traherne. It is instead like an acknowledgement in one's being that discursive particularity within the mind is fraught with possibilities for misdirection and misapprehension. The real truth of any object first held in sensual perception always originates in the divine. This means that each thought can undergo an expansion of meaning and significance when the mind learns to surrender the initial limitations it placed upon an impression when first perceived. This

[332] *Seeds of Eternity* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 240.
[333] I will explore this in depth in chapter 5 in my discussion of memory.

possibility of transformation helps us to better understand why Traherne commends the soul to know its identity and to become a Temple once again.

> The infusion of a Soul so divine and everlasting into the Body of a Man is an act of love transcendently greater than all the Aquaeducts and Trophies in the World. For such a Celestial presence, such a sublime and illimited power, such a vast and noble Workmanship, as that is, which can see and comprehend all Eternity and Time together, extend to all Objects in all Worlds, and fill Immensity with life and joy, and love and knowledge, with light, and beauty, and glory, with adorations and praises."[334]

With this ground of being established by God's love, life yields contentment in all things. The mind encounters a sense of completeness as divine ideas express themselves in both discursive and non-discursive ways.

We can look at the opening words of *Seeds of Eternity* for an example of Trahernian *logos* at work.

> Humanity, which is the Handmaid of true Divinity, is a noble Part of Learning, opening the best and rarest Cabinet in nature to us, that of our Selvs: Which it doth either by discovering the Excellencies of our Bodies, or the faculties of our Souls. together with the Graces and vices of either. It is highly desirable, not only for the Benefits which flow from thence in conversation, but because it unfoldeth infinit Mysteries, (in the most precious Repository of Divine Secrets, Humane Nature) and by the Demonstration of a most clear Reason, maketh manifest the Highest Articles of Christian Faith in our retirements. It enableth, and inclineth us also to live the most Glorious life, and to spend our Time in the most Blessed Employments; to wit in Praises and Thanksgivings, as well as in Adorations and Contemplations and fruitions and Enjoyments of all the Treasures of Divine Wisdom and Bounty: Which because they pleas us are Delightfull, and bec: they promote us Eternaly are most truly Profitable.[335]

"Humane Nature" is opened like a cabinet full of treasures. These contemplative insights into the nature of reality instruct a person on how to "spend our Time." This is enjoyment in its purest form. *Logos* is the substratum of the contemplative experience Traherne is describing here. *Logos* supports the conditions for transformative encounter and then empowers the human heart to align itself to divine intention. This instruction of the mind

[334] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 491.
[335] *Seeds of Eternity* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 233.

embraces learning from both discursive ("conversation") and non-discursive ("Mysteries") approaches.

When we look back to Plotinus and Ficino, there is clearly much continuity with how this philosophical device of *logos* functions. Traherne, though, inserts a tone of relationality into the human endeavor. Pursuing God is more than locating oneself on a path towards a greater Good. Contemplative expansion of the mind is an encounter with transcendent love. The particulars of a person's life become the laboratory in which she can discover the soul's powers. Traherne seems to encourage a subjective appreciation of this knowledge. Each individual journey has a unique cabinet of mysteries available for consideration. That element of individuality is a point of celebration in Trahernian logic because it attests to the infinite reach of God's desire for all creation.

3.1.4 Logos in Hobbes

I now will turn to Hobbes and examine how his mechanical epistemology organizes itself around a centering principle akin to *logos*. This is useful because he is a contemporary of Traherne's and because he attempts to replicate features of the Platonic tradition with thinner ideological resources. I think we will need to put on a different set of glasses to detect this philosophically. We looked at Plotinus and saw *logos* there as an organizing principle that structures the world of forms. When *logos* is Christianized, it becomes the intellect of the Christ incarnated in the created realm. In a Christian Platonist cognitive model, the human soul discovers this organizing logic from the divine ideas and then turns to shape materiality from that higher knowledge. Creation is imbued with Christ's divine imprint and Christians live out their lives in service to that ontology.

Of course, Hobbes does not allow for any metaphysical condescension along these lines. But there is a parallel line of thinking in his philosophy. *Logos* is, functionally, a consolidation of independent truths towards a center of power, or a stable higher principle

that orients the lower methods of discernment. For the Platonist, *logos* resides in a non-discursive realm and manifests to the discursive. So here is where we need that different set of glasses to detect the Hobbesian move by way of poetic analogy.

For Hobbes, the consolidation of truth occurs within the role of the sovereign. Sharon Lloyd identifies this centralization as a principle of political obligation. "What Hobbes has in mind when he speaks of developing a science of politics is the discovery of a set of certain rules of commonwealth-rules such that, *if followed*, would ensure perpetual peace and domestic stability."[336] Hobbesian society is stable when structured towards that central vision of domestic peace. The competing individual interests are consolidated into a sovereign's discernment via the social contract. Thus, a 'one' represents the many who are now in deferment. This is a type of simplification where disparaging particularities are drawn up into a 'higher' wisdom. The sovereign orients individual desires into a collective will, a phenomenon which partially resembles the Platonic role of *logos* we have been looking at.

Hobbes in *Leviathan* even associates the sovereign with the image of God.[337] This image helps society to conceptualize and even 'interact' with the divine via that representation. "An Image in the largest sense, is either the Resemblance, or the Representation of some thing Visible"[338] and "to pray to a King for such things, as hee is able to doe for us, though we prostrate our selves before him, is but Civill Worship; because we acknowledge no other power in him, but humane."[339] While Hobbes allows for civil disobedience whenever a sovereign contradicts the rules of God one believes, this 'image of God' association forcefully positions the ruler as final voice for societal direction

[336] Lloyd, 58.
[337] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLV.
[338] ibid.
[339] ibid.

and truth. With the elimination of non-discursive truths in the realm of public discourse, all that remains are the extant words of the chosen representative.

Hobbes advocates this consolidation because "security requires direction by a *single judgment*."[340] It is this singularity of discernment and the movement of divergent local interests into a sole decree resembles that most resembles the *logos* phenomenon. It is dynamically inverted, though, as the Hobbesian version moves from the realm of individuality to a collective sovereign purview. Which is to say, there is nothing of value for the individual to discover and act upon in Hobbes's society unless it is acknowledged by a central authority.

This type of *logos* in Hobbes helps us to see a few things more clearly in Traherne. First, our Platonist stream contains a much broader realm of inquiry about reality. Indeed, for Traherne all things can reveal something of the mystery of our existence and what orientation that provides. In Hobbes, the spectrum of what is useful to know is always mitigated by sovereign consent. The social contract becomes the best expression of collective truths gathered up and ultimately this arrangement mutes any single voice. Secondly, the centralization of power in Hobbes reveals an essential distrust of the individual to chart his or her own course. People in contact with one another end up generating conflict, whereas in Traherne there is great confidence that the *logos* is discernible and that its influence can be trusted as a guide at the individual level. The Trahernian vision then is one of participation with the divine with the self intact, not a form of political subjection that mutes particularity.

In the next section, I will examine the relationship between cognition and transformation. To do so, I will discuss the higher faculties of the soul and see how our

[340] Lloyd, 62.

Platonists portray illumination of the mind by the divine. Once we surface that tradition and see how Traherne lands within it, I will turn to Hobbes and review the impact his corporeal soul has upon these higher faculties.

3.2.1 Cognition and Transformation in Plotinus

Cognition in Plotinus, according to Lloyd Gerson, cannot be reduced to sense-perception or other physical processes.[341] The soul, with its position between the realm of Intellect and the realm of matter, plays a primary role epistemologically, taking particular sensory experiences and connecting them with intellectual forms. The Plotinian faculties of *noesis* and *dianoia* helpfully illustrate how this transcendent activity occurs.

Noesis and *dianoia* are both aspects of a thinking individual soul. *Noesis* communicates with the world of forms and *dianoia* with the world of matter.[342] Plotinus explains this distinction.

> Does the soul use discursive reasoning before it comes and again after it goes out of the body? No, discursive reasoning comes into it here below, when it is already in perplexity and full of care, and in a state of greater weakness; for feeling the need of reasoning is a lessening of the intellect in respect of its self-sufficiency; just as in the crafts reasoning occurs when the craftsmen are in perplexity, but, when there is no difficulty, the craft dominates and does its work.[343]

We see here that the object of reflection helps determine the faculty at work in the soul. When the soul turns its attention to the world of matter, it is a downward movement of distracted forgetfulness. The faculty of *dianoia* exists to reason the way amongst those sensory experiences in that lower gaze. When the soul performs *noesis*, the contact with

[341] Gerson posits that Plotinus is trying to make knowledge a belief, philosophically speaking. See Gerson, 150.
[342] Ibid., 91.
[343] IV.3.18

the Intelligibles is upwards. *Noesis* relegates the sensory life to a secondary status in its contemplations. The non-discursive world of forms is what caters to noetic activity.

A. C. Lloyd describes this disparaging dynamic within the soul as a triad of remaining, proceeding, and reverting. Looking towards matter means a soul is ignoring the One, while reversion means a soul is referencing back towards its original and greater Light.[344] A focus upon materiality is understood to be a diffusion towards infinite particularities. Since the world of forms derives from the One as source of all forms, matter is quantifiably and qualitatively antithetical to the ontic simplicity of Good. When the soul attends to that material direction (*dianoia*), it is potentially diluted energetically into the infinite regressions of the sensory realm. Gazing inversely at the infinite material embodiments in creation brings humanity to the boundaries of non-being. *Dianoia*, then, describes the reasoning process used where procession from the One reaches its limits in the emanation paradigm.

The conclusions wrought by these two faculties create an internal need for discernment. Ultimately, the habits and conclusions obtained from the senses via *dianoia* must be shed like garments.[345] The soul can only ascend or descend within the limits of time. There is no scenario in Plotinus where both faculties are simultaneously employed. This means one must choose how to think in any given moment.

[344] See Lloyd, 126-30.

[345] "When descending through the heavenly spheres in order to go creating, the souls have adopted knowledge about a multitude of things, and developed interest in the habits and needs of the body. This knowledge and the concern about it is what Plotinus calls "additions" to the essential being of soul (προσθηκαι) (I 6 [1] 3). They are no more than a garment, though our souls consider those garments as vital and necessary. In order to return to her essential being, soul must put off whatever dress she has put on in the descent (I 6 [1] 7, 5), because only then she is just only soul (ib. 6,18)." See Theo Gerard Sinnige, "Plotinus on the Human Person and Its Cosmic Identity," *Vigiliae christianae* 56, no. 3 (2002): 293.

With these divergent capacities at work in the soul, I think some accounting of how this duality came about is helpful. Arthur Armstrong's discussion of *tolma* speaks to this.

> This is the idea which appears in a few passages, that the original giving-out of the indeterminate vitality, the 'indefinite dyad' which is the basis of Intellect, from the One, and the giving-out of Soul from Intellect which is the next stage in the 'unfolding' of derived being and depends upon the first, are acts of illegitimate self-assertion (*tolma*). All existence, in this way of looking at it, depends on a kind of radical original sin, a wish for separation and independence, of which Plotinus says explicitly in one passage that it would have been better if it had never been.[346]

This inherent power of self-assertion by the soul helps explain the opposing tension amongst the Plotinian faculties.[347] The soul does not cease thinking when encountering matter in the body. It is, however, confronted with the choice to assert itself in some direction, one that either honors its origins (remembrance) or ignores the genesis for the sake of material fascination (forgetfulness).[348]

Tolma also places emphasis on human agency, not cosmic drama, *contra* the Gnostics. Plotinus' philosophy does not portray a world where "souls had fallen into the sensible universe as a result of a drama beyond their control."[349] The soul is not reactive to the embodied place it finds itself. It is rather proactively sharing what it knows from higher realities. It is driven by an ethical commitment to transformation. "No doubt, Soul often

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[346] A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy.*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967. *Cambridge Histories Online.* Web. 19 March 2014. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521040549), 242.

[347] Despite the directional language I am using to show metaphysical attenuations, it is not meant to convey some sort of moral categorization, particularly descent as evil. "The soul descends by the eternal and necessary law of its own nature (IV.8.4.)." When reading Plotinus, it is more accurately described as distraction, a further proceeding away from the unity of the One. See John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One; a Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 38-42.

[348] Lloyd remarks "and it could be suggested that the notions of procession and reversion, with their implication of desire and regret, stand for this paradox. They explain in cosmic terms what is meant by 'all things desire the good'." Lloyd, 133.

[349] Hadot, 24.

abandons this contemplation (of forms) for discursive reasoning, for investigation, and for action, but in the last analysis, it does so out of love for contemplation."[350]

In summary then we can draw out a few keys elements when it comes to a Platonist cognition and the process of transformation. First, the soul is simultaneously complex and directional. A person must choose to look in a certain direction and the mind will engage a cognitive capacity appropriate to that choice. Second, choice is bound by time. Plotinus is offering a philosophy of the "here and now," not the "there and then." Contemplation of the divine is pursued within time with what is experienced in the body in the present moment. Finally, Plotinian thought holds up the individual identity above a cosmic reality because of how it values personal freedom. The mind has its own agency to pursue transformation. As we look forward to Traherne, this connection between freedom and transformation will become more pronounced.

3.2.2 Cognition and Transformation in Traherne

The soul is pivotal to Traherne's theology because it enables a profound awareness of the divine, setting humanity in a position of honor.

> By this Endowment a Man is made a privy Counsellor of God. For he is able to Examine the Original and End of all his Ways, the Measure, and Perfection of all his Works, the Beauty and Integrity of all his proceedings. He is admitted to the Counsel Table of the most High, and hath a Liberty of Inspection into the Secrets of his Bosom. By this Endowment a Man is made the friend of God.[351]

The relationship of God and humanity is unequaled in the created world for Traherne. The ability to apprehend the secrets of the material life is a privileged task.[352] Humanity, as

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[350] Ibid., 43.
[351] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 275.
[352] Salter conveys it this way: "Traherne's vision of the world and of man sustains the idea of a spiritual reality shining through the concealing veil of the so-called material world. But the sense of humanity as the quintessence of dust is absent. There is, in Traherne, no sense of forbidden knowledge or of the dangers of trespassing into unlawful fields of experience. The whole world of thought and sense is open to us, to be explored and enjoyed." See Salter, 77.

composite beings, experiences both the wonder of sensuality and the expansiveness of the disembodied realm.[353] God, as the source of love, designs humankind to receive infinite expressions of that outpouring charity. No other creature possesses this kind of reciprocity with the divine.

In *The Preparative*,[354] Traherne explores the soul's power before composited existence begins. Before his "Sinews did my Members join" the soul was touching the divine infinity. This, of course, reminds us of Ficino's estimation of humanity in the center of the chain of being. Traherne goes further though, grounding the human experience upon the purity of perception possible before the embodied journey begins. The soul is "a *vital* Sun that shed its Rays: All Life, all Sense, A naked, simple, pure Intelligence." Createdness is defined and then illuminated by that ontology. The soul's capacity to engage the infinite becomes a point of reference for sensory perceptions. Without the soul's communications to the body, material existence is reduced to the pursuit of "vain Affections." The Trahernian soul is an active temple of the infinite that orchestrates the body's desires towards God.[355]

The soul is also reliable in its mechanizations before the composite state begins. Traherne compares it to a watch where, once wound up, "is apt to go of it self." If left in its pure estate, the soul would follow the end instilled in it by God. It would create delight for humanity and "point out the Hours of Eternitie." When the soul is refused those natural

[353] By disembodied I mean the realm beyond the limits of space and time. Traherne writes "Hence it is that the Soul can wholly be present with evry Object out of the Body, as well as in; that it can wholly turn to evry Object in Gods Omnipresence; that as in the Body it can at once attend to what it hears, and sees, and feels; in Heaven it Shall do more, attend innumerable Objects." See *Commentaries of Heaven* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, III: 13.
[354] *Poems of Felicity* in ibid., VI: 99-101.
[355] "For as nothing can be more Deformed, then leightly to forsake infinit Beauty, and to go a Whoring from it after other Vanities: so neither can any thing be more Advantagious, then to abide unmovable in that Centre wherin the Soul is a Temple of infinit Glory." *Inducements to Retirednes* in ibid., I: 9.

inclinations, it "can feel the Absence." It "cannot be Satisfyed with any limited, or finit thing. Its Expectations are Infinit, so are Its Desires."[356]

Just as the body employs the corporeal senses for knowledge, so too does the soul utilize its faculties for understanding. This spiritual apparatus is usually described in Traherne as the 'Ey of the Soul', a specific mode of seeing reality. Here I want to point back to my earlier discussion on *noesis* to help explain this spiritual faculty.

According to Gerson, *noesis* is where the soul receives understanding from *nous*, the world of forms.[357] Keeping in view the three hypostases of Plotinus (One, Intellect, and Soul),[358] *noesis* is how forms 'outside' the individual soul enter the consciousness of a person. This knowledge is received from a higher state and as it iterates downward, what is simple from 'above' becomes less so. The soul then takes these principles of truth and 'applies' them to images it is receiving from discursive thinking derived from sensory experience.[359]

Traherne does not labor to explain the philosophical nuances of his cognition process as Plotinus might. But he does modify the paradigm in a significant way, collapsing some of the distinctions between the mind of God and the soul of humanity.[360] The most striking language is around the idea of 'Centre.'

> Those Rays which scatter and forsake me, enlighten the world with Glory, and having don their Office return unto me alone. for they reunite in the Centre of mine Ey and bring all the Parts of the World to my understanding and make me more the Enjoyer of the Sun in all Things, then in it self, without them… Men are but centres through which all Blessings come, and Praises returne. Whether a Man be a Centre or a Sphere he is still alone.[361]

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[356] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 270-76.
[357] Gerson, 146.
[358] Louth, 36-37.
[359] Gerson identifies this second movement as recollection. Gerson, 147.
[360] It could be argued that Plotinus has the same framework in mind. But the *Enneads* show greater concern on the directionality of spiritual experience, whether it is ascending towards the One or descending towards non-being.
[361] *Commentaries of Heaven* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, II: 422-23.

This description of Centre has emanationist tones, but there is a reorganization of the scheme when it comes to humanity's role. Where Good proceeds from the One to lower levels of being, humanity, for Traherne, is first to receive love and then return praise.[362] With Plotinus, the Good emanates successively to the edge of non-existence. Humanity arises in that regressing chain of being as Good achieves its purposes. With Traherne, humanity is, by ontological vocation, the intended beginning and end of God's dynamic love. Created species below humanity as well as the angelic above exist only to highlight the importance of humankind.

This is why Traherne can claim "all the world is mine" because regardless of where he looks, he experiences the reach of God towards his soul. This kind of participation requires an infinite capacity in humankind so that no consideration is left unexplored. This is because the soul is created by God to specifically satisfy Godself's infinite desires for communication in all things.[363] And so Traherne claims that "By this Endowment a Man is Exalted to be a Lord and King in Communion with God."[364]

When Traherne speaks of his soul's "Ey," we are really hearing about noetic activity in line with Platonist metaphysics. "Ey" is the most common analogy he employs to explain illuminated thinking. As Carol Johnston points out, Traherne's language[365] is visual, "neither metaphoric nor descriptive in the ways we have traditionally discussed visual language in seventeenth-century lyrical works."[366] Johnston contextualizes those

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[362] Kenneth John Ames, *The Religious Language of Thomas Traherne's Centuries* (New York: Revisionist Press, 1978), 28.

[363] "For the use of the Soul being to see God and delight in his Perfection, the Infinit severity of its Expectation contributeth to its Glory, becaus it Augmenteth its Satisfaction, in Gods Existence; and meeteth him with Infinit Honor, and Affection, with Ardent fervor, and Delight, with a real Transcendent perfect Adoration, an Immeasurable pleasure, an inward ineffable complacency which makes him our Happiness and our Infinit Treasure." See *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 275.

[364] Ibid., I: 276.

[365] This analysis pertains to Lambeth MS. 1360, though Johnston expands the discussion to the broader corpus.

[366] Carol Ann Johnston, "Masquing/Un-Masquing: Lambeth Ms. 1360 and a Reconsideration of Traherne's "Curious" Visual Language " in *Re-Reading Thomas Traherne : A Collection of New Critical*

perspectival and decentered linguistic stances, but I think this misses some of the philosophical import which Platonism attends to through this device. The soul's eye also helps to explain how non-discursive and discursive thoughts interact and how the thoughts of God become our own in a transformative manner. Traherne repeatedly attends to this process in his writings.

The connection between one's soul and God is intimate and steadfast. Traherne calls this a circuit of heaven.

> … against which there is no Inchantment: this the communion between God and us, this the Cause and End of all… his Kingdom is Infinit, and Infinitly ours… For God himself is in it, and a part of it! Would he giv us all his Kingdom, and withhold himself, it would be Dross and Dung, Matter without Spirit, a Carcase without a Soul.[367]

The eye of the soul facilitates this communication and circulation of the infinite. Indeed, it is only the soul that contains this ability. "All things are penetrable to the Soul of Man. All things open and naked to it."[368] Traherne celebrates this capacity repeatedly.[369]

The soul's vision is passive with an unadulterated ability to receive noetic transmissions from the divine. Passive illumination produces gratitude in the recipient because the initiative is from outside the self. The love of God alters the consciousness of humanity via the soul's faculties and then enables an active reconstitution of perception in all things. Creation becomes sacramental. It is imbued with divine gift in all things material. Everything awaits noetic discovery because it is "fraught with Treasure Eternally

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Essays, ed. Jacob Blevins, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007), 137.

[367] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 279.

[368] *Aserious and pathetical Contemplation Of the Mercies of God* in ibid., IV: 340.

[369] Day claims that transformation of the Mind is a primary aim behind Traherne's writings. With the emergence of larger corpus since then, this claim seems to have even more support now. See Malcolm M. Day, ""Naked Truth" and the Language of Thomas Traherne," *Studies in Philology* 68, no. 3 (July 1 1971): 309.

to be seen."[370] To Traherne, this gift of perception calls humanity to live in "similitude of thy Wisdom, Goodness, Holiness towards all Creatures."[371]

To illustrate how the soul's eye can transform perception, I want to turn to a text that is somewhat controversial in its provenance, *Meditations on the Six Days of Creation.*[372] In this piece Traherne is reflecting on the wonders of the Genesis creation story. In the third day, where land and water are separated in the story, Traherne commends his soul "with the Eye of thy Understanding" to consider the hiddenness of rivers and how they cannot be accounted for by what we see on the surface of the earth. He also considers the use of water for human and beast and how all creation cannot survive without. There is an echo of circularity in these observations, too.

> Their Perpetuity and Continuance running always, and never failing of new and fresh Water, is both my Wonder and matter of Thankfulness, too. When I taste the Sweetness of these Waters, even of those that come from the brackish Sea, I adore thee, my Creator… shewing thy omnipotent Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, that thus can change one contrary to another for our Benefit. Even so can my good God change Sorrow into Joy, Vice into Virtue, Afflictions into Consolations.[373]

Here Traherne is celebrating what the senses encounter in water. The soul's vision provides a weightier significance for the natural water cycles. The soul sees the attributes of God (Wisdom, Power, and Goodness) and wants the body to know these things are created for it. This transformation of sensual perceptions then presents the world as full of "rich Jewels, Treasures, Benefits, Uses, and Pleasures by them."[374]

This divine reciprocity is the great secret the soul's eye allows the embodied mind to see. In the culminating reflection of Day Six, Traherne makes it clear that this ability started with God's in-breathing.

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[370] *Aserious and pathetical Contemplation Of the Mercies of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, IV: 341.
[371] Ibid.
[372] For a review of the controversy around this piece per Ross, see ibid., IV: xlviii-liii. For my purposes here, I am attributing it to Traherne in part because of the Trahernian logic it contains. But this is far from a definitive stance on the authorship issue.
[373] *Meditations on the Six Days of Creation* in ibid., IV: 457-58.
[374] Ibid., IV: 458.

> Man's Soul is the very Breath of God, an Inspiration of Power supported by him for ever, the Soul's immortality being founded upon God's Immutability, who upholdeth the same, and will do so for ever. So that the Soul is a Power inspired into the Body of Man by Almighty God, whereby he is able to see Eternity, to enjoy Infinity, to contain his Omnipresence, to apprehend his Omniscience, to behold his Omnipotence, and to be his Temple.[375]

Whether in the end this text is ultimately attributable to Traherne, it nevertheless captures his portrayal of the soul well and the infinite visions it sustains about the presence of God in all things.

3.2.3 Hobbes's Version of the Soul's Eye

I will now examine our materialist Hobbes to show some parallel structures in his philosophy. Here, once again, he seems to mimic certain projects we see in our Platonist tradition, but ultimately upholds processes that have detrimental effects on a person's confidence to think. The exercise below will help us to see how his insistence upon a corporeal soul eliminates certain spectrums of human thought which Traherne argues should be preserved. That reduction, in Hobbesian logic, must occur so that a vision for social stability can emerge that is free from disruptive transcendent claims. But, as I shall show, that same parsing of cognitive activity devalues much of what occurs in the mind since Hobbes only advocates meaning making when it is aligned with the collective aspirations of the state.

As I discussed earlier, Platonist faculties of the soul have a collective quality to them. They take individual sensory impressions and correlate them with the divine ideas. It is a type of 'common sense' that sheds temporal particularities. This ability enables a person to understand something though a broader intellectual vision connected to the world of forms. With Hobbes, there is no realm of higher consciousness accessible or even needed for human learning. In *De Cive*, he lists his essential faculties utilized by humanity:

[375] Ibid., IV: 491.

bodily strength, experience, reason, and passion.[376] I want to focus on experience and reason from this list to show how the Hobbesian epistemology addresses the idea of a Platonist common sense.

Hobbes is clearly concerned with what is good in life. But with an unknowable God and a physical world in constant motion, he turns to the rational powers of the material mind to make sense of the information received by the senses. Reasoning has two spheres of concern in human existence, the physical body and the collective commonwealth. In view of these concerns, his philosophy bifurcates into the natural and the civil. As Yves Zarka points out, there is a discontinuity between those two realms.[377] The good for the physical self does not simply iterate into a larger good desired by the body civil. Rather, individual interests fragment society for Hobbes, which is why a sovereign must arise to mitigate the disparities.

Remember that in our Platonist cosmology, Good is emanating downward from a higher reality. But with Hobbes, Good is pursued from below by the actions of a sovereign. His role is to respond to the chaos of competing interests. Thus Good is ultimately discerned through negotiation and the exercise of power. Sovereign reasoning does not awaken to an internal transcendent identity or respond to a cosmic grace. Instead, Hobbes sees a world where individual reasoning runs amuck because a common good does not inherently reside in the collective human species, for "there is no such *Finis Ultimus*, (utmost ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good,) as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers."[378] Humanity lacks a "teleological natural sociability which

[376] Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, I, 1.
[377] Yves Charles Zarka, "First Philosophy and the Foundations of Knowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 76.
[378] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XI.

determines their social relations."[379] It is restless desire within each person that is the true driver of human decision, one which needs to defer to a power greater than itself if peace is desired.

So there is no justification in Hobbes to acknowledge a cognitive capacity in humanity that encounters a good outside of the self. But there is still a need to explain discernment on the individual plane. I would suggest that *naturall witt* takes on a similar function as it synthesizes sensual experiences into a direction for life.

> By Naturall, I mean not, that which a man hath from his Birth: for that is nothing else but Sense; wherein men differ so little one from another, and from brute Beasts, as it is not to be reckoned amongst Vertues. But I mean, that *Wit*, which is gotten by Use onely, and Experience; without Method, Culture, or Instruction. This NATURALL WITT, consisteth principally in two things; *Celerity Of Imagining*, (that is, swift succession of one thought to another;) and *steddy direction* to some approved end.[380]

This reasoning power is normative in that everyone should act rationally[381] and Hobbes provides a virtuous progression of this faculty in *Leviathan*.[382] Not only do we see a collective sense at work in the mind, but there are also paths of deterioration and improvement in its usage. This is reminiscent of the Platonist soul's faculty as well, where an object of attention determines the quality of thought being experienced.

With Hobbes, though, desire drives the thoughts[383] towards a different process for satisfaction, one which is inconsistently achieved on the individual level. A person may want an external object, but if she is to join a stable society, that pursuit soon surrenders

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[379] M. M. Goldsmith, "Hobbes: Ancient and Modern," in *The Rise of Modern Philosophy : The Tension between the New and Traditional Philosophies from Machiavelli to Leibniz*, ed. Tom Sorell (New York: Clarendon Press, 1993), 334.
[380] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII.
[381] Bernard Gert, "Hobbes on Reason," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 82, no. 3-4 (2001): 245, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-0114.00127.
[382] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, VIII.
[383] "For the Thoughts, are to the Desires, as Scouts, and Spies, to range abroad, and find the way to the things Desired." ibid.

to a collective means of allocating resources which may or may not grant access to the desired thing. More times than not, I think, an individual is left wanting in the Hobbesian system simply because there is not enough to go around.

Compare this to what we see in Traherne, where desire reveals opportunities for understanding the world outside the self. In Trahernian logic, one experiences satisfaction within through reflection and participation in a greater reality. Any object can be transformed because the soul recognizes a transcendent possibility within it given by God. It is impossible, in Traherne's world, to compete for the same external object if minds in a society realize the divine dynamics undergirding that object's presentation to the senses. The corporeal soul of Hobbes does not allow for that multi-layered perception and consequently offers a more limited state of existence where dissatisfaction is the expected norm.

This cognitive scheme affords Hobbes the leverage he needs to support his political theory. He "wants to show that things that appear to be very different from each other are at bottom very similar; and things that look as if they have to be categorized as nonphysical or nonmaterial in fact are physical and bodily."[384] The religious and scholastic authority embedded in metaphysical paradigms is consequently undermined when human capacities for learning rest solely in the sensory realm.[385] It is interesting, I think, that Hobbes espouses a moral epistemological scheme while severing any authoritative claims made by the Christian tradition on the ultimate source of knowledge. This move effectively locates the moral center within the individual. Yet whatever personal value system emerges must, at some point, surrender its freedom to the sovereign's will as this is the only recourse for accomplishing a personal pursuit in a Hobbesian world.

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[384] Aloysius Martinich, *Hobbes : A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 134.
[385] It is important to remember what a novelty this system was during Hobbes's day. See Toulmin, 77.

So without a faculty for regressing back to God nor a universal vision that nurtures human development, attention can turn almost exclusively towards the formulation of the social contract. The soul can still exist in Hobbes, but it cannot lead a person to a good outside of the societal agreement. As Jonathan Kramnick makes clear, "There is no space outside of matter that belongs to the soul or the will or the passions or anything else one might want to use as a platform for autonomy."[386]

Looking back then to Traherne's "Ey" in light of Hobbesian "natural witte," it is striking how reductive the mechanical epistemology can be. Traherne consistently invites his reader to explore the infinite possibilities of thought. But in the philosophy of Hobbes, open-ended ideas require settlement and distillation. Traherne's view of the soul allows for greater creativity, imagination, and expression. But with Hobbes those kinds of ideas are suspect whenever they manifest intellectual independence from the state. This difference between these two thinkers helps us better appreciate some of the reasons why Platonists in Hobbes's day took great issue with his anthropology.

3.3.1 Plotinus and Embodiment

Thus far in this chapter I have reviewed *logos* as that organizing higher principle and then those faculties of the soul which orient the mind towards the realm of intellect. As we continue our descent in the chain of being, I will now focus on the relationship between body and soul in our Platonist stream and discuss how cognition is affected when encountering these lower things. Embodiment presents the soul with new dilemmas. I will examine what those are and the strategies Plotinus, Ficino, and Traherne suggest to live well in the composite state.

[386] Kramnick, 34.

It is important here to remember that Plotinus declares the sense-world good. It is a necessary tenet that supports his paradigm of emanation.[387] Matter awaits divine agency for its transformation.[388] Since lower states can only be affected by higher ones, matter looks to the human soul for movement towards Reality.

> Soul has a particular place in the chain of hypostases. "It is the last of the intelligible reasons and of the reasons which are in the intelligible world. It is the first of those which are in the sensible universe. That is why it is related to both" (iv. 6.31). "It occupies an intermediate rank among beings. Part of it is divine. But placed at the lower end of intelligible reality and on the border of sensible nature, it imparts to sensible nature something of itself " (iv. 8.7).[389]

Since the human soul[390] is situated between matter and intellect, Plotinus develops a cognitive apparatus suited to connect the two realms. These abilities are described as faculties of the soul, which I described earlier.

It is also helpful to briefly review the concept of universal soul in Plotinus because that serves as an important backdrop in his metaphysics. This will provide additional insight into the dynamics of embodiment. According to Plotinus, the human soul proceeds from the universal soul in an act of free will and particularity. The universal soul then provides the closest context for upward movement[391] when individual souls contemplate their ontological identity. This tendency towards self-reflection gives rise to two basic laws in Neoplatonism, according to Richard Wallis. "First, every being seeks to its cause …

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[387] See Armstrong, 83.
[388] This concept has broad agreement in the Platonic tradition according to Plotinus in II.iv: "What is called matter is said to be some sort of substrate and receptacle of forms; this account is common to all those who have arrived at a conception of the nature of this kind, and as far as this they all go the same way."
[389] Emile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 53-54.
[390] For the purposes of my overall treatment, I will contain the term 'soul' to that which resides in man. The concept of World Soul and the role it plays in the Plotinian system falls outside the scope of my analysis.
[391] Or 'regression back to the One,' to employ emanationist terms.

secondly, since this is achieved through introversion, reversion upon one's cause coincides with reversion in contemplation upon oneself." [392]

Since the soul leaves the universal soul to engage the material world, each human soul will look back to that origin to understand how good can come about in creation through the forms. The body is a necessary resting place for the individual soul to perform this work. A composited existence consequently involves spiritual perception in communion with the universal soul as well as sensual perception in material experiences as human beings attempt to bring a greater reality to the world of chaotic matter.

The composite state also wrestles with a dilemma not experienced by the universal soul. It can become fixated with material diffusion. Matter, as I have discussed in chapter two, can ensnare a person and darken their soul's contemplative capacities. Plotinus describes the trapped soul as "departed to the depths; or rather, a great part of them has been dragged down and has dragged them with it by their thoughts to the lower existence … but some men may unify themselves."[393] The body, as residence of the soul, is not the culprit. The occasion for distraction offered by matter is.[394] Yet it is this same engagement with materiality allows the soul to perform good. The individual soul becomes a critical device, philosophically speaking, to unify human thought between material particularities and the ideological constructs of an elevated reality.[395]

The question then arises about the value of body over soul. Is the body simply a 'mistake' for the soul to enter into or does composite existence actualize something

[392] Wallis, 66.
[393] *Ennead* IV.3.6.
[394] Llyod calls this 'inhabiting the borderland.' "Inhabiting the borderland meant the possibility of further decline or a return, as it were, to a superior life." Lloyd, 123.
[395] Armstrong calls human beings "bridge beings" in light of this paradigm. Armstrong, 101.

needed and good? If it were simply a dilemma of cleaving body from soul, then Plotinus might advocate suicide or some form or aloof ascetism. He rejects both of these.

> This would be like two people living in the same fine house, one of who reviles the structure and the builder, but stays there none the less, while the other does not revile, but says the builder has built it with the upmost skill, and waits for the time to come in which he will go away, when he will not need a house any longer … While we have bodies we must stay in our houses, which have been built for us by a good sister soul which has great power to work without any toil or trouble.[396]

It is this 'work' to do with a contemplative awareness of primal Good that defines the productive life in Plotinus' philosophy. The body is valuable because it provides the 'house' for the living out of that practice. To prefer a bodiless philosophy is to relegate the substance of human experience to the periphery. This would fracture the emanationist schemata and turn embodied existence into an abstraction of little importance.[397]

So we see here a positive evaluation of embodiment in Plotinus. His philosophical project in many ways plays to the conditions of the composite state and provides a way of life in the material world that honors the capacities a soul possesses to pursue a transformative journey. Ficino will put forth a similar assessment, as I will now show.

3.3.2.1 Ficino and the Orthodox Soul

One difficulty of reading the *Enneads* for Christian appropriation is that the Plotinian soul is uncreated. While it may have emanated from the One, it has never been 'created' in the same way as described in the Genesis account. This tenet is clearly not compatible with Christian creation theology. So in *Platonic Theology*, Ficino affirms the creation of the soul by God. He says it is formed *ex nihilo* and is immortal and immaterial.

[396] *Ennead* II:9:18

[397] For a discussion of how Plotinus and Aristotle compare regarding the soul, see Lloyd P. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 135-37.

Ficino leans on Augustine's authority for defense of these tenets.[398] Once he grounds the soul's origin in orthodox expectations, it becomes a primary focus of his philosophical project.

A second observation concerns his process of illumination. It greatly resembles what one sees in the Greek Church Fathers. As Jörg Lauster remarks, "he thinks of the transformation and deification of the soul as a process in which its identity is preserved even as it extends into the immense infinity of God."[399] Ficino's paradigm shares significant similarities with the doctrine of theosis. The cognition of God through the divine ideas is a type of deification. This, according to Lauster, is "one of the most productive combinations of Platonic and Christian theories."[400]

Finally, Ficino frames progress of the soul under the auspices of orthodox Christian eschatology. He gives attention to Hell, Heaven, Resurrection, and divine judgment at the end of *Platonic Theology*. These elements anchor his philosophy within Christian soteriology and fuse Platonic spirituality to the Christian narrative.[401] So while he freely employs the pagan philosophers under the umbrella of *prisca theologia*, their ideas are also accommodated into the story of Scripture.

I have shared these three examples in order to demonstrate how Ficino is not simply syncretizing ideas he finds particularly appealing in his *Platonic Theology*. He attends to the Christian tradition first and seems to find Platonic methods useful for his purposes. I think this same kind of logic appears in Traherne. He is willing to think

[398] Anthony Levi, "Ficino, Augustine, and the Pagans," in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, ed. Michael J. B. and Rees Allen, Valery, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 105.
[399] Lauster, in *Marsilio Ficino : His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, 63.
[400] Ibid., 60.
[401] Ibid., 64-67.

Platonically with Christian commitments. His Christianity is the defining lens for his work and the participation in the Platonic tradition seems to be in service to that identity.

3.3.2.2 The Relationship Between Body and Soul in Ficino

Similar to Plotinus, the individual soul in Ficino expresses humanity's unique place in the chain of being, a position of fluidity. Because it sits in the middle of the universal order by divine providence,[402] it is capable of looking downward toward materiality as well as upward towards the light of God. These divergent capacities are not shared by angels or even God.[403] The soul also possesses *appetitus naturalis,* [404] which inclines it towards enjoyment of the divine. The soul is free to choose its means for satisfying that desire, but the soul's infinite capacity can only be filled by the infinite truth of God.[405]

The soul also exists before entering the body. Ficino believes souls emanate from God[406] and then are clothed with flesh. Before the composite state begins, the soul enjoys an infinite reception of the ideas of God. This state of passivity is how the soul naturally relates to the divine. Once the soul becomes embodied, it is now tasked with control of both soul-centered and corporeal activities.[407] This may seem like devolution, but Ficino interprets this as a great advantage.

> For if the soul remains outside the body as soon as it is born, it will certainly know universals; but it will not discern particulars … in this body, and because of the

[402] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, V: 247.
[403] "Hence, with regard to understanding, God will only act, the angel will both act and be receptive, and the soul will only receive via the nature of its mind but will not act." Ibid., V: 245.
[404] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. Virginia Lanphear Conant, *Columbia Studies in Philosophy, Ed under the Dept of Philosophy, Columbia University No 6* (New York,: Columbia University Press, 1943), 171-95.
[405] Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, *Chicago Editions* (Chicago,: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1948), 191.
[406] For more on this somewhat unorthodox view, see James Hankins, "Marsilio Ficino on Reminiscentia and the Transmigration of Souls," *Rinascimento* 45 (2005), accessed March 31, 2014, http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:2961227.
[407] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, V: 247.

> senses, the reason is accustomed to discoursing through particulars, to applying particulars to universals, and to drawing universals down into particulars.[408]

This knowledge of particulars becomes a blessing to the soul because it acts a necessary compass on the more valuable things to contemplate.[409]

Ficino's faith in the innate abilities of the soul to seek God relegates evil's potency to near non-existence. Evil is a state of entrenched forgetfulness, where the soul is fixated on the corporeal life's concerns. But this amnesic condition is easily enlightened by the Good's pervasive call towards God. The soul, when it is without a body, lacks this potential for distraction.

> Since each of us throughout our entire life is called "man", at any age, then surely this name seems to signify something that remains fixed. The body is perpetually in flux … the soul always remains the same, which its search for truth clearly shows us, and its never-changing will for the Good, and its firm preservation of memory. Who, therefore, will be so foolish as to attribute the appellation of *Man*, which is firmly fixed in us, to the body, which is always flowing and everywhere changed, rather than to the most stable soul?[410]

Soul is ontologically stable and immutable in its capacity to seek the Good. It can, however, become enmeshed within the flesh by virtue of the body's temporality.[411] The composite existence ushers in a multiplicity of distractions. This diffusion of being leads one to spiritual confusion in Ficino.[412] The flight of the soul via the Beatific Vision restores

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[408] Ibid., V: 251.
[409] "Man's soul, being more obtuse than all minds, needs this comparison in order to make the most comprehensive judgment about the weightiest matters." Ibid., V: 261.
[410] Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. Sears Reynolds Jayne, 2nd rev. ed. (Dallas, Tex.: Spring Publications, 1985), 75.
[411] Kristeller offers a contemporary contrast to this clarity in Ficino: "If we look at the confusing multiplicity of opinions and insights, or cultures, and traditions, we are impelled to admit that the desire to transform this multiplicity into unity, the conflict into harmony or synthesis, is as natural and inevitable as it is difficult or impossible to achieve. The unity of truth is in my view a regulative idea in the Kantian sense. It imposes on us the task of bringing together into a single system the scattered and apparently irreconcilable insights we derive from different sources, but this task is never ending not only because the elements on knowledge now given to us cannot be reconciled, but because the quest and discovery of new insights will always continue as long as there will be human beings." See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 197.
[412] The digression into corporeal distraction is termed passive in Ficino's system. See Mahoney, in *Humanism and Creativity in the Renaissance : Essays in Honor of Ronald G. Witt*, 237-39.

primal unity and satisfies the soul's desire for Good. Ficino is far more concerned to explain the dynamics of illumination rather than detailing the realm of moral denigration.

Yet life in the body is full of tension and confusion.[413] The body itself is not to blame, but the created world it inhabits bombards the soul with sensory experiences that can inhibit a focused life. Desires arise and lead the mind in conflicting directions. Yet humanity, while enfleshed, remains God's representative on earth to shape creation according to Godself's goodness. The divine soul within does not ultimately wither from the confusion. It labors on to "shine forth into its own body and that, in this condition alone, the highest blessedness of man is indeed perfected."[414] "Nor can it ever fail because it is abandoned by something supporting it, for this essence (the soul) has no need of a body's foundation, being though its own nature the mistress of bodies."[415]

When it comes to naming specific faculties of the soul, Ficino describes only one. It is a convergence of the five senses into a power that ascertains the relationship of sensory impressions to the world of forms. This is a "common sense,"[416] an inner vision that provides the intellectual foundation for particular experiences of embodiment. Ficino calls this power the "mistress of the senses"[417] because it comprehends unity via the forms amidst the infinite digressions portrayed by sense perception. The soul's one faculty is also vitally connected to all sensory experiences. Thus nothing that happens in the composite state is exempt from intellectual and spiritual discernment.[418]

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[413] Ficino portrays this internal battle as an elemental conflict between earth, water, air, and fire. See Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, V: 287-311.
[414] According to Ficino, this commitment to shine by the soul is tied to the recognition that a resurrected existence is the ultimate end. See *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 210-12.
[415] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, II: 33.
[416] Ibid., II: 221.
[417] Ibid., II: 219.
[418] Ficino points at Augustine to affirm this Platonic doctrine. See ibid., II: 229.

Now that we have Ficino's estimation of embodiment in view, our Platonist stream seems to offer a positive appraisal of the potential for good while living in the flesh. This is primarily due to the soul's influence which is able to overcome potential obstacles as it focuses on divine vocation. I will now turn to Traherne and show how he shows continuity with this affirmation of createdness as well as transforms some aspects of the Platonic tradition in this area.

3.3.3.1 Embodiment in Traherne

Platonism, in a broad sense, is often portrayed as a gradual devaluation of embodied experience as cognitive enlightenment increases as one emerges from the 'cave.' Plato in the *Phaedo* famously compares the body to a prison, and as we have seen in Plotinus and Ficino a similar impulse exists which portrays the body as the primary locus of confusion as it senses the world around it. If it were not for the soul's activity, corporeal existence would be utter darkness. The question I now want to raise is whether Traherne present any antagonism within the self that one might expect to see from a Platonist philosophy. This inquiry is particularly apropos in light of some of Traherne's reception as a proto-Romantic.

Mark Wynn, as he discusses various critiques of Christian spirituality, captures the basic issue well.

> So this kind of objection to Christian ideals of the spiritual life turns on the thought that those ideals postulate an unwholesome 'dualism' between God and human beings (and in turn between soul and body, intellect and emotion, reason and imagination, male and female, and so on-where in each case the first is valued at the expense of the second).[419]

Traherne, while conscious of the phenomenon of spiritual confusion, does not denigrate the body's worth nor elevate the spiritual against the carnal. Instead he celebrates the

[419] Mark Wynn, *Renewing the Senses a Study of the Philosophy and Theology of the Spiritual Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

union of the two, a wonder that opens up the mystery of human existence. The embodied state transcends temporal and spatial barriers as the soul's vision brings divine light to perception. Thus Traherne claims in *Centuries of Meditations* "and thus all angels and the Eternity and Infinity of GOD are in me forevermore. I being the Living TEMPLE and Comprehensor of them… Let Heaven and Earth Men and Angels, God and his Creatures be always within us. that is in our Sight, in our Sence, in our Lov and Esteem."[420]

What is key here is the 'living TEMPLE.' Traherne, via knowledge provided by the soul's eye, connects his createdness with the eternal. He understands the body as a deified temple, the place where God dwells and an experience of the infinite is possible. He also alludes to Luke 17:21 in this particular meditation where Christ proclaims the kingdom of God to be within. 'Within' becomes 'without' as Traherne reaches across all limitations to participate in the Divine Mind. None of this is possible outside the body, though the language tends to carry the reader beyond it. Seeling picks up on this. "For Traherne, who makes no distinctions, self-discovery and the correlative discovery of God's infinity and goodness hinge on two points-the movement of man's mind and man's position as the crown of creation."[421] Traherne's philosophy thus requires a positive estimation of embodiment because it entails habitation by the soul and by God.

3.3.3.2 Traherne's Christianization of the Platonist Soul

Before moving into my final section on the irrational soul, I want to show a few ways Traherne Christianizes his idea of the soul. Remember that it is problematic for Christianity to adopt the idea of the Platonic soul and its associated philosophical paradigms without some compatible explanation of how divine communications to the mind occur given the nature of God and the soteriological narrative found in Scripture. In

[420] *Centuries of Meditations* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 49.
[421] Seelig, 121.

Christian Platonism, Trinitarian theology can address this concern and clearly makes accommodations for a divine intercession of grace. Traherne employs a similar approach.

In *A Sober View*, Traherne quotes the passage from Ephesians 3:14-15, a Pauline text that specifically speaks of interior illumination. He then goes on to say "The Gift of Illumination also is a Grace distinct from External Providences, which as it may be prayed for, and be received through faith so may it freely and Graciously be bestowed. for the Spirit bloweth where it listeth." It should be noted that this declaration is situated in a larger argument over Calvinist predestination. Traherne contends that God can open the eyes of any soul regardless of one's disposition because Godself is sovereign. What is key for the discussion here is that the Spirit creates the openness in the soul. This act is necessary because without it "Glorious Objects are not discerned."[422]

In *Centuries of Meditations* one can find numerous Trinitarian communications. For example, Jesus is the great soul possessing the "Image of thine Eternal Father" who purchased humanity through the cross. Jesus then "Communicatest thy self to evry Soul in all kingdoms, and art seen in evry saint and wholy fed upon by evry Christian." By casting the soul's eye upon Christ, one is transformed into that likeness. The human soul becomes a "Mirror[423] of thy Brightness, an Habitation of thy Lov and a Temple of thy Glory." This unification of perception then enables Traherne to "enter with Thee into evry Soul, and in evry Living Temple of thy Manhood and thy Godhead, behold again, and Enjoy thy Glory." [424]

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[422] *A Sober View* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 108.
[423] DeNeef provides an interesting treatment on mirrors and desire in Traherne, with a Lacanian overlay. See DeNeef, 93-115. DeNeef points out that for Lacan, "there is no need … to suppose any Platonic or Christian universal seer in order for this (*stade du miroir*) to be so: it is the structural condition of our existence." Ibid., 103. This premise may prove adequate for the structuralist's aims, but it also seems in this case to atomize Traherne's words from his philosophical milieu and theological tendencies.
[424] *Centuries of Meditations* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 42.

The cross is significant to Traherne as well. There are numerous indications in his writings that purification is needed before divine light can appear in the soul. In a meditation on Jesus' death, he compares the rending of the Temple curtain to the cleansing of his own pride.

> I beseech Thee enter into my Soul, and rent my Rocky Stony Heart, and tear the vail of my flesh that I may see into the Holy of Holies! O Darken the Sun of Pride and Vain Glory… And open the Grave of my flesh, that my Soul may arise to Prais Thee.[425]

Traherne ascribes the same sort of purifying effect via the presence of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit is not there, the soul's perceptions are "a chaos, a Dark Obscure Heap of Empty faculties: Ignorant of it self, unsensible of thy Goodness, Blind to thy Glory."[426] The Spirit is able to "awaken all the Powers of my Soul, that Night and day the same Mind may be in me that was in Christ Jesus."[427]

There are also angelic mediations. With what seems like Ficinian echoes, Traherne speaks of the saints as "Heavenly lovers" that "will Exchange Souls with you." These saints bring comfort, wisdom, and honor to one's mind and can drive away "divels and Evil men" because they are secure in their goodness. He parallels this activity to Jesus himself, "who imparted his own Soul unto us."[428] This divine attending to humanity by the angels further emphasizes how Traherne views the unique position human beings hold in the great chain of being.

It is useful to point out that Traherne does not always attend to Trinitarian communications in a precise manner. More often than not, he simply celebrates the love pouring out from the Godhead.

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[425] Ibid., V: 43.
[426] Ibid., V: 45.
[427] Ibid., V: 47.
[428] Ibid., V: 40-41.

> "In all Lov the Trinity is Clear. By secret Passages without Stirring it proceedeth to its Object, and is as Powerfully present as if it not proceed at all. The Lov that lieth in the Bosom of the Lover, being the Lov that is perceived in the Spirit of the Beloved… Yet are all three, one and the self-same Lov: though three loves."[429]

Love compels God to manifest the glory of all things to the eyes of the soul. Once the Spirit of Truth indwells the soul, Traherne sees himself as "Beloved of the Father: when I know the Perfection of thy Love, when the Father and the Son loveth me, and both manifest themselvs unto me."[430] The Trinity moves about in the soul in an elevating dance of transformation.

Not only is the soul loved, but it becomes capable of love in a like manner. The image of a mirror is once again employed. "A Mirror returneth the very self-same Beams it receiveth from the Sun, so the Soul returneth those Beams of Lov that shine upon it from God."[431] God enables the soul to respond fully to the gift received, for the sake of God's enjoyment as well as the benefit of creation. Traherne sees the soul's illumination as precursor to a life of generosity. Thus in his entry *Affairs* he writes,

> Let all my Work and business be to see
> Obey and love and serv the Deitie.
> To meditat and imitate thy Love
> And shed it (as the Angels do abov)
> On all thy Creatures, that a life like thine
> Exprest in flesh might alwais shine in mine.[432]

This kind of reciprocation to creature and creation as the soul experiences the dynamism of the Trinitarian light is strikingly benevolent in light of some critical appraisals of Trahernian mysticism.[433] Felicity for Traherne is tied both to an inner experience of soul identity as well as an outer outpouring of that same divine love into all aspects of life.

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[429] Ibid., V: 67.
[430] Ibid., V: 49.
[431] Ibid., V: 177.
[432] Ibid., II: 272.
[433] For example, Balakier points out that Marks labeled Traherne as "radically positive" when it comes to felicity. Balakier posits otherwise, locating happiness within a Baconian epistemology.

In this comparison we see that Traherne, like Ficino, theologizes through his Christian identity and then draws resources from Platonism in various ways. Acknowledging this tendency gives greater weight to Traherne as a theologian in service to Christianity rather than a philosopher employing Christian language from outside the tradition.

We have now arrived at the lowest link in our chain of being for this chapter, the irrational soul. This is a state where some sort of cognitive separation occurs within regarding one's transcendent identity. I am including it because it fills in a necessary component of the Platonist cognition model we have been looking at. The discussion will also reach towards the realm of sensation, which is the primary topic of the next chapter. Ficino and Traherne will both help us understand how irrationality is described in our Platonic tradition. Hobbes is also concerned with irrationality. But as I shall show, he commends a different and more problematic corrective when this condition appears.

3.4.1 Ficino and the Irrational Soul

While in Plotinus specific faculties are at work in the soul (*dianoia* and *noesis*) towards divergent ends, Ficino instead demarcates activities between the irrational and rational soul. The irrational component attends exclusively to corporeal experiences, while the rational side correlates materiality with the realm of Intellect.[434]

The irrational soul originates from the rational soul in response to the composite existence. As it emerges, it is bound by time and temporary in its existence.[435] Since the material world is diffusively chaotic, the irrational soul, as it engages sensory experiences,

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See James J. Balakier, *Thomas Traherne and the Felicities of the Mind* (Amherst, N.Y.: Cambria Press, 2010), 63.

[434] Paul Richard Blum, "The Immortality of the Soul," in *The Cambridge Guide to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 213-17.

[435] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, II: 91.

has a corresponding characteristic of mutability. Ficino goes even further, declaring the irrational soul to not be a "true soul."[436] This is because it does not possess a true essence. The irrational soul always relies upon the body's "instruments" and cannot exercise freedom of thought apart from them.

Parsing the soul in this way by Ficino provides a means to explain why the forms do not automatically yield greater manifestations of good in the world. The irrational soul becomes an epistemological device for divergence in the metaphysical chain. This is akin to what I discussed in Plotinus regarding *tolma*. The irrational soul can direct its reflective gaze at the wonders of material existence, generating confusion over the source and sustenance of its abilities and vitality. Ficino understands this temptation and connects it to corporeal existence.

> Corporeal objects, because they are born through propagation, aim at perpetual being through propagation and justly so. But the mind aims at the perpetual being of its own substance, because each mind subsists in itself and is made by God… But all of us yearn always for everlasting life even when we do not realize what we are yearning.[437]

This internal gaze towards matter is consequential because it constitutes a loss of wisdom.[438] This is also why it is termed 'irrational.'

Compare this to Ficino's elevation of the rational soul. It is a higher function because it can perceive truth. The rational soul is seeking eternity differently. It does not acknowledge the path of propagation offered by material embodiment. It locates the eternal within itself, which is derived from God. Ficino employs the analogy of inheritance to explain this.

> Moreoever, if the rational soul ascends to God, why would God not descend in a way into the soul? If the mind claims from God all that is just when it asks for its

[436] Ibid., II: 99.
[437] Ibid., IV: 261.
[438] "But since it (the soul) acquires wisdom by turning towards its source of being, so by turning away it can lose wisdom." Ibid., IV: 109.

> paternal inheritance, then why would God not listen to it? What does this dutiful son ask for from his most indulgent parent? Eternity. Will he obtain it? Certainly he will. For eternal God can bestow it, and the life of the mind can lay hold of that eternity.[439]

The rational soul has a certainty about where to look and how to ascend.[440] This attribute is tied to God's opening up of the eternal to the perceptive capacity within the soul.[441] It is also immutable because the rational soul is not tied to composite existence.

The irrational soul, then, accounts for human failure connected to poor discernment. Despite whatever mediation God provides to humanity, there is still a need to account for deviation from the Good in Ficino. I will now turn to Traherne and show his response to this same concern.

3.4.2 Traherne and Irrationality

Traherne predominantly views irrationality as something to be shed from one's thinking. Under Christ's mediation, the cleansing of misdirected and misconstrued perceptions enables one to once again pursue felicity.

> I will not deny, but that there are many Disorders and Evils in the World, many Deformities, Sins, and Miseries: but I say two things; first that in the Estate of innocency, wherein all things proceeded purely from GOD, there was no Sin, nor sickness, nor Death, nor Occasion of Complaint or Calamity. Secondly, that all the Evils that are now in the world, men brought on them selves by the Fall: And there is great need of distinguishing between the works of GOD, and the works of men.[442]

Evil, for Traherne, results from a lack of discernment and subsequent pursuit of objects outside of their intended purpose in creation. Understanding how to enjoy the world

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[439] Ibid., IV: 287.
[440] Albertini posits the vocation of the soul to be restoration of the beautiful. See Tamara Albertini, "Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499): The Aesthetic of the One in the Soul," in *Philosophers of the Renaissance* (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ of America Pr, 2010), 90.
[441] "He provides the rational soul and the whole of mankind with the most important things, with those that are absolutely necessary for our good." Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, IV: 299.
[442] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 90.

rightly via illumination nullifies the proliferation of evil. The battleground for this transformative thinking primarily rests in the soul and its affections.

Rather than use the construct of a split soul as Ficino does, Traherne classifies objects as inferior or superior based upon how one's love is directed. When love leads towards enjoyment of God, it is superior. When love distracts the soul towards the accidental qualities of matter, then it is inferior.[443] Traherne even goes so far as to say love becomes a vice when it is misdirected. "LOVE is *then* a vice, when it is irrational and illegal, rebellious and Sensual, Blind, Defective, Unjust, Absurd. When Evil things are beloved, when Good things are preferred above the Better, and the Best neglected." [444]

The distracted soul becomes blind, unable to value objects properly. It is only through diligent reasoning and willful action that these blinders are removed.[445] When love is apprehended rightly, humanity is burdened to respond in praise and to will the

[443] "THE Inclinations and affections of the Soul may be Defective or excessive in their exercise towards Objects. In relation to the Highest Object there is no danger of excess." See ibid., 36-37.
[444] Ibid., 81.
[445] Traherne provides a useful illustration of this in *The Kingdom of God*: "Clouds and Darkness are round about him, Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne. Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne, yet Clouds and Darkness go before his face, because the Beauty of it is unknown. In this very Particular it fareth with us, as with Men that find a Crown long Since buried in the Earth, which at first is mistaken for a Clod, but after a little Tumbling, when the Brightness begins to appear, and Eying it more Curiously, they perceiv more in the Lump of Clay then they Expected: but being unable to Value it, they Sell it for a Small Matter, which is Worth a Million, by Reason of the Richness of the Jewels. for such is the Estate of Trial, which Angels and Men were placed in; it is a long Time Since first it was prepared, it is Soyld in the Ruines of our fall, Esteemed a Dirty Object by the vulgar, because of the Miseries Ensuing therupon: but by the Art, and Labor of Holy Men being well examined, it is purged from all those Aspersions under which it lies, and found to be Solid Gold in It self, enchasd with inestimable Gems, Adornd and enrichd with Embellishments innumerable, and truly found to be (upon Mature Search and Disquisition) wholy Incomprehensible: for those Actions which God doth more Prize then Worlds, those Affections which he more Esteemeth then Sabean Spices, those Graces, and vertues that Exceed in Value all corruptible Things whatsoever, with all those Circumstances of Endowment, and Beauty, that breed delight, and occasion Glory spring, and arise from this Original, with Somthing more then we hav yet been able to Imagine: For his Essence dependeth upon the Perfection of his Will, and So doth the Glory of all his Kingdom." See Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 495-96.

appropriate actions. When aligned in this manner, love becomes the "Powerful Parent of all Kind of Vertues."[446]

So the soul does not have two sides nor contain a volatile nature in Traherne's view, but it can become distracted. In *Inducements to Retirednes*, he portrays a soul in proper orientation as resting. Conversely, one enmeshed in the particularity of embodiment is restless. Rest is connected with the expansive nature of illuminated thinking.

> Becaus Eternity is contained in the Soul, a Man in finding Him self findeth Eternity; and becaus in finding Him self he findeth Eternity, in finding Him self he findeth All Things. For All Things are contained in Eternitie. Since therfore in Retirement alone a Man findeth Him self, in Retirement alone he findeth All Things. Nor can there be any Rest, till he findeth All Things his Delights and Treasures.[447]

The reason a person can 'rest' when discerning life this way is that all things become accounted for. Everything is unified both by their shared origin from God as well as their shared purpose for existence, which is to create enjoyment for humanity. To see the world in this manner is to experience a permanent satisfaction where the truth of existence is known in the core of one's being.

Everything becomes a delight once the soul learns to recognize God's hiddenness. Before this can happen, one must study one's soul and discover the truth about oneself. This path for awareness involves discrimination about one's desires. In his discussion of Aristotle, Michael Davis identifies the same sort of journey. "As ensouled beings, we are defined by our ability to go outside ourselves in order to complete ourselves; we look for things to complete us – objects to consume. We then discover that it is not really the thing

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[446] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 81.
[447] *Inducements to Retirednes* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 6.

we want but rather the activity in ourselves that results from appropriating the thing."[448] This same type of awareness by activity appears in Traherne.[449]

In summary then, when it comes to irrationality in life, how one holds an object in the mind determines the quality and usefulness of that knowing. The soul can choose illusions and enter a restless and disingenuous kind of reflection that fixates on material things. Or one can perceive the desires behind any object and allow the soul to reveal the end for which it was intended. As I turn now to Hobbes, I will show how his alternative definition of "real good" contributes to a distrust of human desire. This contrast will help us see how Traherne's emphasis on the soul's ability to reframe an experience might regulate desire in a more constructive manner.

3.4.3 Hobbes and Irrational Desires

Recall that Hobbes does not consider the mind to have spiritual reflectivity. This absence within places a greater onus on the mind to determine harmful possibilities in light of any desire experienced. Discernment over what things may actually be good for you requires a long view of their consequences.

> Moreover, good (like evil) is divided into *real* and *apparent*. Not because any apparent good may not truly be good in itself, without considering the other things that follow from it; but in many things, whereof part is good and part is evil, there is sometimes a necessary connection between the parts that they cannot be separated. Therefore, though in each one of them there be so much good, or so much evil; nevertheless the chain as a whole is partly good and partly evil… Whence it happens that inexperienced men that do not look closely enough at the

[448] Michael Davis, *The Soul of the Greeks : An Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 70-71.
[449] "Whereas no man can know him self unless he contemplates the Nature and Excellency of his own Soul." *Seeds of Eternity* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 237. Traherne here is also discussing Aristotle.

> long term consequences of things, accept what appears good, not seeing the evil annexed to it; afterwards they experience damage.[450]

Evil in this text results from imperfect reasoning over life's desires and a failure to identify the potential dangers involved in a particular pursuit. This is a type of fixation that is similar, I think, to the irrationality we see in our Platonists. But here the advice from Hobbes seems to be 'take greater care to know how things are connected.' In Traherne, the advice would be more like 'hold the object you desire in a different manner.' Hobbes cannot go the way of Traherne because his view of the mind does not see that repositioning as a viable option to change one's circumstance. He instead places more priority on the refinement of reason to eliminate scenarios where a choice could lead to pain.

Desire in this Hobbesian irrationality is also interesting to consider. In Hobbes, the motion for those faulty decisions comes from the passions. "The passions are the mainspring of human actions. But the passions in turn take their character from, and exist in integral relationship to, the phenomena of pleasure and pain."[451] Compare this to Traherne, who uses desire for reorientation to the divine. It is a resource for finding truth, whereas in Hobbes it is a liability to be managed.

Finally, in Hobbes the mind becomes instrumental in the satisfactions of those desires. The mind itself is a neutral device. It may be slow or fast in its mannerisms, but the mechanics of the thinking process are not altered even when a desire leads to a destructive consequence. This instrumentality of the mind is, perhaps surprisingly, fairly parallel to how the Platonic soul functions with its noetic ability. The soul is instrumental

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[450] Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen: Thomas Hobbes's De Homine and De Cive*, ed. Bernard Gert, trans. Bernard Gert, T. S. K. Scott-Craig, and Charles T. Wood (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), *De Homine*, IV.

[451] Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, *The Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes. With Special Reference to His Contribution to the Psychological Approach in English Literary Criticism* (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1964), 119.

as well as it connects the higher ideals with the lower states. Evil cannot corrupt the processes of Platonic cognition. And with Hobbes, pain does not alter the reasoning power of the mind. The passions may run wild, but the mind itself simply does what it does, collecting material experiences and directing the body towards a desired end. It is a very mathematical organ.

> When a man *Reasoneth*, hee does nothing els but conceive a summe totall, from *Addition* of parcels; or conceive a Remainder, from *Substraction* of one summe from another: which (if it be done by Words,) is conceiving of the consequence of the names of all the parts, to the name of the whole; or from the names of the whole and one part, to the name of the other part.[452]

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have used our four thinkers to explore the notion of soul and how it factors into cognition. This has followed the Platonic chain of being, with discussions of *logos,* cognition and transformation, the embodied soul, and the irrational soul. Traherne once again shows great affinity with Platonist understandings of these intellectual capacities and how the soul interacts with a life in the flesh. We have seen particular continuity in Trahernian *logos* and his employment of the soul's faculties to better understand divine immanence. We have also seen ways Traherne transforms this tradition by introducing a relationality in the experience of transcendence as well as a Christology which mediates towards a restored spiritual perception. Hobbes, in contrast, attempts many of the same projects as Traherne, but with his commitment to a corporeal soul and a material causality for cognition, introduces instabilities in human knowing which Traherne's philosophy avoids.

When we incorporate Traherne's understanding of evil from chapter two with this analysis here, the case becomes more compelling that he supports much of his theology

[452] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.

with various influences from our Platonist stream. In the next chapter, I will examine the senses to further explore that Platonist anthropology and show how Traherne continues along that trajectory.

Chapter 4 – The Role of the Senses

In this chapter I will discuss the senses and how they function within our developing Platonist anthropology. As I shall show, Traherne once again fits comfortably within that tradition and offers, I think, a developed understanding of sensory experiences and how they can contribute to the illumination of the mind.[453] I shall also show how Hobbes's philosophy of sensation shifts the focus of human learning to a truncated analysis of physical processes for meaning. This definition divorces bodily existence from any self-concept reliant upon reflectivity outside identifiable physical phenomena. As we examine the Trahernian view of sensation, that contrast will help us to see in what respects Traherne's theology exegetes the larger shift going on in the early modern turn towards a more empirical worldview.

Similar to the last chapter, I will compare our four thinkers' perspectives thematically. I will focus on three particular aspects of the senses: estimation, mechanics, and service. Under the category of estimation I will talk about the inherent worth each thinker attributes to sensation. I will also highlight the level of significance given to the senses in light of other human faculties. With mechanics I will look at the actual cognitive processes that occur when the senses are activated. Under the category of service I will take up more of a teleological analysis where I will focus on what contribution sensory experiences make to the enterprise of human knowing. In each of these aspects I will progress through all four of our thinkers to further highlight places of variation, congruence, and departure.

[453] Traherne's valuation of the senses is akin to the overall argument Wynn makes about Platonism that "the spiritual life does not have its beginnings in a turning away from, or shunning of, the realm of the senses … but instead in a willingness to appreciate, and indeed to love, particular examples of sensory beauty." See Wynn, *Renewing the Senses a Study of the Philosophy and Theology of the Spiritual Life*, 4.

I am adding this analysis of sensation to my broader discussion for three reasons. First, it helps us better understand another important cognitive layer in Traherne's philosophy. I will show how Traherne should not be considered a dualist who commends a separation of the mind's contemplations from normal experiences in the body.[454] The Platonism stream we have been tracing thus far has a conciliatory view of the ensouled body, as the last chapter has shown. While there is a chain of being philosophically in view for our Platonists, this does not translate to a substantive antagonism which pits things intellectual against things corporeal. Matter, body, soul, and God are instead interconnected when it comes to cognition. I think this is helpful to keep in mind when we explore the senses as part of a broader interpretative framework for Traherne because that insight can reorient a reader on texts like the one below.

> Adams weak Estate had all the Marks of perfection in it. He was the Image of GOD and in that the Best of all possible Creatures. He had a Body superadded to that Image which made Him Possessor of another Nature. He had two Natures in one Person, which made Him more perfect then the Angels. Either of them was Admirable but their union ineffable. That union was the Golden Tie of all Visible and Invisible Things.[455]

Second, when Trahernian senses are connected with an emanationist metaphysical scheme, it becomes less tenable that his contemplative philosophy sounds out any proto-Romantic tones. If Traherne affiliates with Romanticism, then we would expect (following McCalman's definition) some sort of disconnect to appear where an elevated ideal within is given preferential treatment over the mundane or chaotic realities of bodily existence.[456]

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[454] When I refer to dualism, I am particularly thinking about the mind/body problem. Gerson captures the essential nature of the ancient dilemma in his discussion of Plotinus: "The One is beyond cognition because of its unqualified simplicity. One of the central problems Plotinus inherits from Aristotle and Plato is how the paradigmatic or highest type of cognitive activity – intellection – is related to the other lower types of cognition, including belief, sense-perception, knowledge, discursive reasoning and so on. The problem can be expressed in several ways… Why is the supposed activity of our intellects not just irrelevant to our cognitive engagement with the sensible or embodied world in which we operate?" See Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology*, 136.
[455] *Commentaries of Heaven* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, II: 222.
[456] McCalman, 2.

As the argument progresses, it will be clear that Traherne rejects any sort of mental rift by upholding the sacramentality of a sensual createdness.

Finally, sensation is an important point of inquiry in light of the early modern rise of empirical science. Uncovering Traherne's perspective in this area will also situate him in the historical moment, particularly in view of the Hobbesian move to elevate sensory processes. As Inge has noted, Traherne is amenable to modern science. "For him all scientific discovery was a revelation of divine truth."[457]

> It is the Glory of God to giv all Things to us in the Best of all possible maners. To Study Things therfore under the Double Notion of Interest and Treasure, is to study all Things in the Best of all possible Maners. Becaus in Studying so we Enquire after GODs Glory and our own Happiness.[458]

An investigation of sensation will reveal how he is engaged with experimentalism and to what end as a Christian Platonist.

4.1.1 Plotinus and his Estimation of the Senses

Plotinus clearly holds a high view of the soul's vision received from intellection. One might then quickly conclude that the sensual engagement with matter cannot contain any useful purpose. If the soul diffuses its energy via *dianoia*, why would Plotinus still affirm the inherent goodness of the material world? It is because createdness continually echoes the beauty of the One.

> So let us go back to the beginning and state what the primary beauty of bodies really is. It is something which we become aware of even at the first glance; the soul speaks of it as if it understood it, recognises and welcomes it and as it were adapts itself to it. But when it encounters the ugly it shrinks back and rejects it and turns away from it and is out of tune and alienated from it. Our explanation of this is that the soul, since it is by nature what it is and is related to the higher kind of reality in the realm of being, when it sees something akin to it or a trace of its

[457] Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, 17.
[458] *Centuries of Meditations* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 112.

> kindred reality, is delighted and thrilled and returns to itself and remembers itself and its own possessions.[459]

The recognition of beauty is essential to the emanation paradigm of Plotinus. It serves as a primary motivator to redirect the faculties of the soul. Beauty's echoes in matter are plentiful, a fecund manifestation of the Good. The forms continually express higher realities in creation. This aesthetic activity, initially detectable through sensory perception, is what resonates with the innate intellectual knowledge within.[460] Senses create opportunity for intellectual connection. Once an external object is considered, the soul is presented with a choice to receive the form. Without the senses, the soul cannot contact that extended special phenomena.[461] This communication ability between soul and sense is what allows sustains aesthetic transmission.

> Beauty is mostly in sight, but it is to be found too in things we hear, in combinations of words and also in music, and in all music (not only in songs); for tunes and rhythms are certainly beautiful: and for those who are advancing upwards from sense-perception ways of life and actions and characters and intellectual activities are beautiful, and there is beauty of virtue. If there is any beauty prior to these, it itself will reveal it.[462]

"At its best, to be sure, the mind provides, in Plotinus's words, a kind of 'partnership' between the inner and the outer, but discursive thinking is always inherently directed toward some object."[463] The senses occupy a unique position in learning because of this ability to obtain a particular focus. Remembering that materiality is categorized by Plotinus as diffusion, the senses then become the only mechanism to experience the

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[459] *Ennead* I.6.2.
[460] In his explanatory notes for *Ennead* V.3, Armstrong describes this as "the birth-pangs of the soul: utter inadequacy of thought and discursive reason to satisfy its longing or express what it experiences in the union with the One. The ultimate sudden illumination, when we see God by his own light, if we let everything go. See Arthur Hilary Armstrong, *Plotinus. With an English Translation by A. H. Armstrong* (London: William Heinemann, 1967), Volume V, 71.
[461] See Eyjólfur Emilsson, *Cognition and its object,* in in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 218.
[462] *Ennead* I.6.1.
[463] Sara Rappe, "Self-Knowledge and Subjectivity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 256.

infinite physical details of composite being. The soul, in contrast, only detects the impressions of the forms embedded within a finite material object.

Plotinus, of course, lauds the unified One as the highest reality qualitatively. But this is always situated within a dialectical tension where material diffusion resides at the other end of the being spectrum. So humanity only encounters pure simplicity as it navigates materiality's pure diffusion. The human experience is significantly defined by this practice of discerning the good in everything that exists. Plotinus describes this as the science of dialectic.

> It is the science which can speak about everything in a reasoned and orderly way, and say what it is and how it differs from other things and what it has in common with those among which it is and where each of these stands, and if it really is what it is, and how many really existing things there are, and again how many non-existing things there are, different from real things. It discusses good and not good, and the things that are classed under good and its opposite, and what is eternal and what not eternal, with certain knowledge about everything.[464]

As the above excerpt shows, all things are subject to a certain scrutiny only made possible by the One's illumination. This is not a casting away of embodiment but rather a proper naming of its truth. Armstrong points out that "it is the principle of unity and wholeness which prevents the material world from falling apart into anarchy, and it is this because it is the one life and life-giver."[465] This metaphysical binding of reality requires an ability in humans to perceive both the One as well as the many. Consequently things like belief, understanding, and knowledge cannot be reduced to the realm of sense-perception alone or some other purely physical response to corporeality.[466]

So when it comes to valuation of the senses, Plotinus casts them in a positive light by necessity. Disparaging their usefulness would also create a problematic gap in the

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[464] *Ennead* I:3:4.
[465] Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus. An Analytical and Historical Study*, 6.
[466] This irreducibility requires a hierarchal inversion, according to Gerson. See Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology*, 150.

epistemological paradigm available in *The Enneads*. I will now turn to Ficino and compare his appraisal of the senses to this Plotinian scheme.

4.1.2 Ficino and the Estimation of the Senses

While the senses can only capture impressions from the instability of material existence, they still remain connected to a larger understanding of contemplative vision for Ficino. Perhaps more importantly, it is impossible for the soul to relish the forms without the comparative instance provided by the composited state. He describes it this way: "And for this reason at the same time that the soul is perceiving a certain man in sensation, and conceiving him in the imagination, it can contemplate, by means of the intellect, the reason and definition common to all men through its innate Idea of humanity; and what it contemplated, it preserves."[467] There are clear lines of demarcation in how ideas form in the mind. The senses play a minor role in the discovery of truth. Ficino does not disparage the everyday experiences of corporeality though these sensory impressions, but they ultimately defer to humanity's nobler purpose of contemplating God.[468]

The senses also sit at the bottom of his cognitive framework because of their unreliability. In contrast to the innate purity of the soul's intellectual activity, the senses can deceive the mind. They are ungodly tutors enlivened by the vices.[469] This is because they do not have access to the world of forms. As a kind of a case study, he investigates his adolescence and sees how it was shaped by the senses towards bodily existence, to his own spiritual detriment. From that analysis he concludes "our wretched adolescence, nurtured by these ignorant tutors, compels us to think about the soul our whole life like

[467] Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, 115.
[468] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, *Storia E Letteratura* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1969), 269.
[469] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, II: 133.

fools as long as we believe the soul is corporeal-we who have been schooled by these teachers who perceive corporeal things alone."[470]

Ficino considers the senses to be limited in capacity and compares this to the unlimited reach of the mind. "The senses get tired when they work for a long time, but never the mind. The longer you look at something, the less distinctly you see it. The longer you study something with your intellect, the more clearly you understand it."[471] The senses lose focus with prolonged usage while the mind sharpens with similar effort. Ficino correlates that durability with where each faculty is seated. As the body deteriorates, the senses likewise take on a deteriorating quality. Since the soul is eternal, exercise of the mind strengthens in an infinite manner, for "what is never wearied is also immortal."[472]

This is a slight departure from the more static view of the senses Plotinus seems to hold. Plotinian cognition attends more neutrally to the relationship between soul and sense. Whereas in Plotinus the main concern towards the senses is focused on their innate inability to know the forms, sensory faculties in Ficino somehow absorb the temporal frailty of the body itself. This introduces a subtle change in tone about the corporeal life. But, as Christopher Celenza remarks, "Ficino's Platonism was not, in short, the Platonism of the nineteenth century: mentalistic, divorced from the body, with ethics and the realities of everyday life decidedly in second place to metaphysics."[473] This disparagement may also be due, in part, to Ficino's view that the soul must eventually find and enjoy God eternally. This final union can only happen in the after-life since the soul is eternal in nature.[474] Thus it seems plausible for Ficino to undervalue the passing sensory life in light of his teleology.

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[470] Ibid., II: 130-31.
[471] Ibid., III: 89.
[472] Ibid.
[473] Christopher S. Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 84.
[474] From Burrough's summary in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 188-89.

The disparity between sense and soul in Ficino also translates to a lower view of the composite existence on the whole. When the soul descends to the flesh, the body comes under its authority. Collins describes this composition as the "mark of dependence."[475] The embodied dynamic is often portrayed in Ficino as a contestation, in part because he consistently seeks to defend the independent otherness of the soul, even while enfleshed.[476] When the authority of the soul effectively impresses its essence into the body, all is well. When the soul encounters fragmentation via sensory experiences, suffering ensues. This leads Ficino to conclude that "the more the mind is immersed in this body the more it is enfeebled, and the more distant it is the more it is perfect, then the mind will be most perfect when it has soared completely beyond this body."[477]

So we see a noticeable shift in Ficino when it comes to valuation of the senses. While there are functional similarities, he also introduces a stronger tone of liability as sensory experiences take place. This volatility in sensual perception then elicits a broader indictment on the body itself and bolsters a more pejorative stance towards material existence.

As I turn now to Traherne, let me summarize what has emerged so far. Our Platonist stream requires the senses to complete its model of cognition. The soul encounters the senses because of the embodied state and then is faced with the task of directing those interactions. While Ficino finds sensation to be problematic in some areas, it nonetheless remains essential to human learning as these lower faculties present the material world for contemplative engagement. In the next section, I will show how

[475] Collins, 56.
[476] "The soul opposes and fights against our body, or rather all bodies. Therefore it does not originate from any body." Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, III: 17.
[477] Ibid.

Traherne holds to the Platonist paradigm with a much stronger affirmation of the senses and the part they play in createdness.

4.1.3 Traherne and his Estimation of the Senses

While Traherne explicates extensively on interior dynamics of transformation, it is not at the expense of embodied experiences. The senses remain integral to the enjoyment of creation.[478] He does not diminish their ongoing role in pursuing felicity.

> I Bless Thee for my Creation
> The Wideness of my Comprehension
> The Distinctness of my Reason
> A Good Understanding
> Sound Sences, and a Well composed Body
> Manifold Affections, Memory, and Conscience.[479]

The senses provide a first line of contact with the gifts latent in creation. The wonder of physical perception leads the soul into reflection on the glory of God.[480] Once this glory is understood, humanity responds with praise.[481] Praise, in turn, whets the appetite for more experiences of the same.[482] Thus sense is never abandoned for the sake of interiority. It is instead coupled to the overall dynamic of an ongoing participation in God's love.

> In Man, as there are two Natures united in one person, so are there two kinds of Abilities following from, and pertaining to them. Accordingly therfore His Abilities are fitly Distributed into Bodily and Spiritual. The Ability of the Ear is a Sacred Treasure, and that of the Ey and Inestimable Joy, But as his Soul is infinitly more

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[478] "Yet though God's excellence exceeds all sense, the senses are not antithetical to the workings of the spirit, for it seems to be through the senses that we learn of his glory." See Seelig, 133.
[479] From *Church's Year-Book* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, IV: 73.
[480] Kuchar sees the body as sacramental in nature in Traherne's thinking. Gary Kuchar, ""Organs of Thy Praise": The Function and Rhetoric of the Body in Thomas Traherne," in *Religion in the Age of Reason* (New York: AMS Press, 2009).
[481] For a discussion on the connection between thinking and thankfulness, see DeNeef, 38-56.
[482] McIntosh captures this well: "What Traherne is so eager to unveil before his readers is precisely the *greater* bounty available to them by understanding everything in this more contemplative way – that by feeding not only the body's hunger for food but the mind's keenness for truth and the spirit's yearning for communion, the greater good deep down within all things becomes all the more available." See McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth : The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge*, 243.

> Excellent then his Body, so are its Abilities; in Nature, Extent, Use, service, Sovereignty and Delight.[483]

The senses are bound by temporality and can only grasp things at a momentary discursive level. This limitedness establishes their value within a composite being. The soul's eye, in comparison, transcends time and space, able to see all at once. This spiritual vision extends from the corporeal one. Traherne calls this guidance by the soul illumination.[484] Without the lower corporeal faculties, divine illumination cannot occur amidst humanity's bodily explorations and the ability to enjoy createdness would be lost.

When soul and sense are bound together in perception and rightly aligned, the world is interpreted as a place of delight. "That all the World is yours, your very Senses and the Inclinations of your Mind declare… Delight in God as your Father and Friend and Benefactor, in your Self as his Heir Child and Bride, in the Whole WORLD, as the Gift and Token of his Lov."[485] The harmony between physical and spiritual thinking reminds a person on the relationality of life and that creation itself is to be celebrated in the context of God's love.[486]

One way Traherne explores this glory of being human is through the imagined experiences of Adam. The prelapsarian garden of Eden is portrayed as all sufficient. Adam is "Lord and Possessor of the Univers" at a moment when the earth had not yet yielded distractions. Nature was pure innocence at the beginning.

> Crowns and Scepters, which are but Emblemes and Badges of Authority he needed not, Wines and Sawces and the Nicer Arts of Cookery Emflamers of Riot and Gluttony were unknown; Coaches and Attendants, Heaps of Gold and Silver, Palaces and Parlours, Beds of Crimson, and velvet Couches, Ermines Purples and

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[483] *Commentaries of Heaven* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, II: 22.
[484] "The Powers of the Soul are far more Glorious then those of the Body, for in these as in a Mirror the Face of GOD is seen. In these His Image is seated. In these all the seeds of our Happiness are contained, and by these is it Enjoyed. By these also are all Inferior Abilities Illuminated Exalted Directed and Guided." Ibid., II: 23.
[485] *Centuries of Meditations* in ibid., V: 11.
[486] Traherne celebrates the individual senses in a similar manner. See ibid., V: 13.

> fine Attires, Rings, precious Stones, and Golden Chains, with all the other furniture of Stages and Theatres.[487]

Adam experiences the true nature of his identity through sensuality. "He did Eat Herbs and Drank Water, but saw him self Advanced above the Skies."[488] He understood himself as a friend of God because of his infinite reflexive capacity as a created being. The senses of the body thus became a treasure when functioning in harmony with the contemplative powers of the soul. Traherne says Adam "had other Wealth, the Lims and Members of his Body with all their Senses and other Endowments of Beauty Health Strength and Motion, and with these the Powers of an Immortal Soul, wherby he was meet to Enjoy the Delights of GOD, and to live in his Image."[489]

This kind of Edenic discussion is commonplace in Traherne's time, and the broader topic of human identity and accurate knowing in a postlapsarian world is a noticeable concern in early modern philosophy. Harrison describes a standard method manifested in early modern epistemological schemes as "self-examination, assessment of the extent of the wound caused by sin, determination of what traces of the divine image remain."[490] *A Sober View of Dr. Twisse* offers an extended glimpse into that same debate. In this polemical work Twisse, according to Traherne, "putteth the Life of Sense and the Life of God in Opposition; his Grand supposition, or the Basis of his Discours being, that we all ought to hav walked in the Life of God from which by Ignorance we are faln into Sensuality and Pleasure, and to which, being held and ensnared in Lasciviousness we cannot easily returne."[491] This hostility towards embodiment is a theological concern for Traherne.

A separation of sense and soul does not honor the cognitive aptitude in human beings. The world, by God's intention, is inherently good and "no Exaltation can befall a

[487] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 214.
[488] Ibid., II: 215.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Harrison, 99.
[491] *A Sober View* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 148.

Creature greater then a Capacity and Power enabling him to live the Life of God."[492] To proclaim a person permanently ensnared is to portray God as irresponsible, both as Creator and Redeemer. Traherne bolsters this point by claiming that deviations are under God's sovereign intentions. "But the very Deviations and Rebellions of Men are his too: even as the Winds are the Marriners, who rules them by his Art, and captivats their Power, making them Contrary to their Intent, even while some times they blow another Way, to promote his Voyage."[493] This perspective puts the emphasis back on individual freedom over and even against some sort of destructive cosmic reality that disqualifies human learning.

> Righteousness of Esteem is that wherby we do Right to things in our Apprehensions; or that wherby we render them their Due Esteem. And it is in truth incorporated in the former. for what we prefer in Choice we more Esteem then another thing: and the Ground of our Choice is the Esteem we bear, as our Esteem is the fountain of all our Actions.[494]

In Traherne's theology the senses are to be tuned appropriately in order to rightly perceive the latent gifts of God in all things. Creation, perhaps more than any other realm, offers opportunity to see God's love for any person willing to properly esteem objects in the midst of sensual experiences. For example, Traherne writes "How many Thousand Insects flie in the Meadows, that we never dream of the Glory of whose lives and uses are unknown; How many Millions of Fishes are in the seas, and how many strange Varieties of Birds in the Air, I need not Mention; Evry Man's Memory, and Experience Witnessing Enough to Convince him of the Infinit Plenty of lives God hath Created."[495] Frederick Aquino, in his discussion of Maximus the Confessor, sounds out something amenable to Trahernian anthropology: "Spiritual perception, then, has a transformative dimension. Now the point is not that one must be epistemically virtuous to perceive basic things (e.g.

[492] Ibid.
[493] Ibid.
[494] Ibid., I: 150.
[495] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 421.

to perceive that there is a bird in the back yard). However, pursuing God does call for the aligning of knowledge with evaluative qualities precisely because conforming to the goodness of God presupposes maturation of the epistemic agent." [496] The senses are not to be ignored or maligned. They are to be celebrated because they offer everyone an immediate means to validate the *imago dei* within.

Traherne's optimism about the unity of reality resonates with some of the oldest insights of the Platonic tradition. With all reality ultimately attributed to divine initiative, there is a "basic unity of the three different aspects of nature: the physical, the theonomic, and the anthropic."[497] And as Dupré notes, this is also the point on which modern philosophy radically departs from the ancient Greeks. So in Traherne we see a conscious effort, I think, to once again explain this essential unity in life central to Platonist thinking, with the senses becoming a valuable tool in affirming the transformative transcendance hidden in plain sight.

This unity requires a certain responsiveness in the body. Traherne, in speaking of the light depicted in John 1:4, explains the communicative connection between the divine and the corporeal.

> An Allusion of Infinit Depth; a Divine and eternal Mysterie, being painted out in a Temporal, and Visible, Created Wonder. For that which is Light in the open Air, is Life in Organized Bodies. The Same Spirits which affect the Ey, inform the Soul, and are the Material Causes of its Senses and Affections. Why is it an Universal Canon, and Rule of Nature that all Bodies Should be porous: But that they may receiv the Influences of Heaven. [498]

The light of God permeates all things in order to influence humanity. When the eye engages an object, multiple connections are experienced. Physical sensation is always

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[496] Frederick D. Aquino, "Maximus the Confessor," in *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, ed. Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 115.
[497] Dupré, 24.
[498] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 350.

accompanied by spiritual communication. The senses cannot by themselves perceive all this. But they are integrated into a larger epistemological process, "for the office of sence is not to judg of first and last, but simply to judg of immediat Appearances."[499] Trahernian knowing is a simultaneous, multi-phasic experience where sense, reason, and the soul all encounter the truth of God.

Before leaving this discussion on Traherne and the senses, I do want to point out a text where the senses are 'removed' from a person and yet the capacity to know God still manifests. Here Traherne elevates the soul's sight, but this is not a dualistic cleaving of sense and soul. It is instead an articulation of the intellectual affinities between angels and humans in the chain of being.

> We see the Heavens with our Eys, and Know the World with our Sences. But had we no Eys, nor Sences, we should see Infinitie like the H. Angels. The Place wherin the World standeth, were it all annihilated would still remain, the Endless Extent of which we feel so realy and palpably, that we do not more certainly know the Distinctions and figures and Bounds and Distances of what we see, then the Everlasting Expansion of what we feel and behold within us.[500]

What is real always lies within. Even if all sensation is lost, humanity can still feel the expansiveness of God's love through the exploration of the infinite self, a place where "Evry Man is alone the Centre and Circumference of it." This is because infinity is the "Bosom of God, the Soul and Securitie of evry Creature."[501] If the senses fail, knowing truth is still possible through this self-reflexive ability. Unlike Ficino though, Traherne keeps confidence in the senses and affirms their value in explaining reality. Engaging the world through the senses enriches interior awareness of the divine.

4.1.4 Hobbes and His Valuation of the Senses

[499] Ibid., I: 354.
[500] *Centuries of Meditations* in ibid., V: 188.
[501] Ibid.

Since Hobbes is a contemporary of Traherne, we will turn attention now to his estimation of the senses and see how it compares to our Platonist tradition. As discussed earlier concerning the soul, there is no other form of knowing in Hobbes aside from what develops out of the senses. They are the only gateway for new information via external forces and without them humanity cannot experience reality. "Consciousness is not, for Hobbes, an inner, spiritual substance. It is not a faculty of mind. Rather, it is the determinate relation between different *conatus*."[502] "Ideas cannot spring spontaneously into consciousness."[503] Ideas arise from a phenomenal engagement of the sensory organs, the brain, and the heart. Humanity is distinct from the beasts only because these ideas then take on the objects of language.

"Sense perception, by its very nature, is selective."[504] The senses comparatively assess external motions until they can be correlated and focused into a particular judgment. Remember that in Hobbesian epistemology, matter does not await movement from elevated states of being, nor is there a corresponding form that ushers the natural world towards fullness. According to Howard Bernstein, "it was his (Hobbes's) purpose to account for reality within the limits of an ontology defined completely by matter in motion, with a decided emphasis on the latter."[505] Corporeal bodies, which include the sensory organs, can only be moved by other corporeal bodies.[506] His process of sensual

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[502] Gary B. Herbert, *Thomas Hobbes: The Unity of Scientific and Moral Wisdom* (Vancouver: Univ of British Columbia Pr, 1989), 56.
[503] John W. N. Watkins, "Philosophy and Politics in Hobbes," in *Hobbes Studies*, ed. K. C. Brown (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 251.
[504]Herbert calls this a "dynamic assertion of self." Herbert, 57.
[505] Howard R. Bernstein, "Conatus, Hobbes, and the Young Leibniz," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 11, no. 1 (1980): 25, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681(80)90003-5. It is a contentious debate on the motivations Hobbes may have had in moving away from the Aristotelian metaphysics. For a treatment on interpretative options on Hobbes's reasoning, see Matthew F. Rose, "Hobbes as Political Theologian," *Political Theology* 14, no. 1 (2013).
[506] Tuck, *Hobbes*, 45.

discernment consequently rejects any truth claims outside of deductions drawn from discernible material interactions.

Compare this to what we have seen in the Platonists where universal categories are evidence of the divine mind's generativity. For Traherne specifically, material experiences reveal grander collective truths about createdness and God's love. Hobbes sees these kinds of broader conclusions on life as unreliable because it is impossible for one person to perfectly express the unique material experience of one's life with another. An individual's thoughts are imperfectly communicated and a "civil society is an artificial aggregate of distinct individuals."[507] Therefore, a common ideal must be instructed from without, and not accepted as arising from within the self.

> Hobbes' belief that people can be taught properly to conceive their moral and religious interests, and to regard these interests as overriding … accounts for his optimism about the prospect of securing a stable social order… the most important goal of this attempt is to get people to *teach* his principle of civic duty … and to develop in them a *transcendent* interest in acting on it.[508]

Stability is only possible through a publicly negotiated social contract. *Sui generis* principles attributed to divine intentions are effectively nonsense when it comes to the formation of society and culture.

Clearly, then, the physical senses must become a central learning faculty in Hobbes's epistemology. They are also, it seems, intentionally divorced from a larger scheme of knowledge found in the Platonist tradition I have been reviewing.[509] Even

[507] Watkins, in *Hobbes Studies*, 255.
[508] Lloyd, 163.
[509] Bunce says "scholastic philosophy, according to Hobbes, was rooted in pious attempts to defend Christianity. At first, Hobbes argued, Christians defended their faith by appealing directly to natural reason, but as time went by they began using texts of Greek philosophers. When the apologists mixed theology with the philosophy of Aristotle, they corrupted true religion with vain philosophy." See Bunce, 21.

activities like imagination, dreams, and visions are just vestiges of sensual activities.[510] Despite this, Hobbes does not strike a laudatory tone for sensory activity. The senses exist *de facto* and offer simply an immediate reception of the world in motion. To show how distinct this is from Traherne, I want to briefly compare two texts.

The first comes from *Leviathan* where Hobbes is acknowledging the eternal yet keeping it inaccessible to the human mind.

> Curiosity, or love of the knowledge of causes, draws a man from consideration of the effect, to seek the cause; and again, the cause of that cause; till of necessity he must come to this thought at last, that there is some cause, whereof there is no former cause, but is eternall; which is it men call God. So that it is impossible to make any profound enquiry into naturall causes, without being enclined thereby to believe there is one God Eternall; though they cannot have any Idea of him in their mind, answerable to his nature.[511]

Here Hobbes shows something of a parallel with the Platonist understanding of primary causality. The word "God" is a term of convenience more than proclamation, though. "God" explains the end point of deductive reasoning under a more skeptical worldview. Hobbes employs a metaphor involving a blind person to explain how people conceive of God.

> For as a man that is born blind, hearing men talk of warming themselves by the fire, and being brought to warm himself by the same, may easily conceive, and assure himselfe, there is somewhat there, which men call *Fire*, and is the cause of the heat he feeles; but cannot imagine what it is like; nor have an Idea of it in his mind, such as they have that see it: so also, by the visible things of this world, and their admirable order, a man may conceive there is a cause of them, which men call God; and yet not have an Idea, or Image of him in his mind.[512]

The blind man concludes there is fire because he feels it, but this conclusion cannot be corroborated with other discursive evidence. Fire becomes a thing to the blind person by willing the concept into an idea rather than presenting the mind with a visible image to

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[510] "But the Greeks call it *Fancy*; which signifies *apparence*, and is as proper to one sense, as to another. IMAGINATION therefore is nothing but *decaying sense*; and is found in men, and many other living Creatures, as well sleeping, as waking." See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, II.
[511] Ibid., XI.
[512] Ibid.

consider. So the idea of fire, for the blind man, is chosen by intuition rather than authoritatively obtained through sight in Hobbesian logic.

Hobbes is critical of this kind of supernatural thinking. Conclusions reached without connection to a sensory experience lack validity in a Hobbesian epistemology. So, in this example of the blind person, it is not viable for him to say "I know what fire is." Hobbes would prefer him to say "I have felt fire but I will never know what fire is." Unsupported imaginations are superstitions in the end, driven by emotion-laden anxieties. "By which means it hath come to passe, that from the innumerable variety of Fancy, men have created in the world innumerable sorts of Gods. And this Feare of things invisible, is the naturall Seed of that, which every one in himself calleth Religion."[513]

Now I want to compare the above section to another passage where Traherne talks about the limits of senses. Despite sensual impairment, knowledge of the infinite is still discernible.

> A man born Blind or Deaf would see in His understanding Illimited Space, and a Dark Eternity round about Him. We can Annihilate all other Things in our minds, but these two will remain behind, The Space wherin the world stood will remain behind nor can we imagine it so Confined, but our Souls will imediately Exceed the bounds, and See into Spaces Still beyond; which we cannot supposed abolished. No object can be removed From the understanding.[514]

Traherne attributes this non-sensory thinking to the soul, as expected. What is more interesting is the relationship between the senses and soul. Beginning life without sight or hearing does not eliminate realizations about the eternal. There is a basic epistemological unity in human consciousness for Traherne, whereas Hobbes would attribute this kind of existential reflection on "space" to superstition when it is not confirmed by other sensory observation.

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[513] ibid.

[514] *Being a Lover of the world* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 452.

In summary, Hobbes considers the senses primary to knowledge. While they are limited in their abilities, they nonetheless provide the only meaningful physical contact with the external world. They are also independent from other thought processes. Value is determined from a correlation of similar physical experiences through reasoning. Value cannot be imposed upon the senses before a physical sensation occurs. Thus Hobbes grounds all valid knowledge upon the detection of physical phenomena.

When we compare this to Traherne, we can see a contestation between the two thinkers regarding the ground of knowing and confidence in reasoning. While both value the senses, Traherne's commitment to locate meaning beyond the immediacy of sensitive encounters allows a relationality to emerge within cognition. With Hobbes, all physical phenomena engaging the body are inherently meaningless until internal reasoning endows value. The Hobbesian alternative creates a type of cognitive fragmentation, I think, in a couple of ways. First, immediate experiences offer nothing but their impressions without a metaphysical backdrop and the empirical faculty above them, in the Hobbesian mind, then creates meaning out of essentially meaningless things. This process seems to be a functional nihilism. Second, there is no social transferability of sensory information since one person's reasoning can never match another's. Without a shared intellectual framework to situate particular experiences, the senses report a randomness within each person that ultimately cannot be shared in a collaborative search for truth.

Now it is time to discuss the processes involved with the senses. As I shall show, Platonist philosophy presents the human mind within a larger epistemological continuum responsive to transcendence. Hobbes's philosophy in this area will further illuminate that tradition by way of contrast, revealing a way of knowing that disregards self-reflective claims.

4.2.1 Plotinus and the Function of the Senses

The *Enneads* contain a few texts with expanded details on how the senses work. Plotinus does not seem to be overly concerned to account for sensual processes. His philosophy spends much more time validating the soul's capacities and their relationship to divine reality. The senses are acknowledged in as much as they account for what is not of the soul. He portrays sensuality as functionally unaware, "for the activity of sense-perception is that of a soul asleep; for it is the part of the soul that is in the body that sleeps; but the true wakening is a true getting up from the body, not with the body."[515]

The senses are not a thinking faculty according to Plotinus. They instead make the mind aware of external objects by offering a representation of the phenomenon. True thinking is self-reflective, coming from within the soul. As Gerson points out regarding this tradition, "thinking is not equivalent to a behavioral response to a representation such as an image, even though a response may follow from thinking… The opposing view that all thinking is representational is the source of the fundamental divide between the ancient and the modern conceptions of knowledge and belief."[516]

Plotinian senses serve as a beginning point for knowledge but lack the ability to perceive the forms undergirding external objects.[517] Lloyd explains that in Neoplatonism "what we perceive through the sense are first the qualities which physical objects possess and then the objects as types; but each of these are images, the first being images of the inseparable forms in matter, the second being these forms themselves, which are in turn

[515] *Ennead* III.6.6.
[516] Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology*, 142.
[517] "Sense-perception is an image of a thing, and sense-perception does not apprehend the thing itself." See *Ennead* V.5.1.

images of the separate forms (or Platonic Ideas)."[518] Thus sensory detection lies at the bottom of the hierarchy of cognitive processes.

The epistemology is also directional because the soul cannot be 'activated' by the senses. Plotinus explores the sense of sight to help distinguish how the distinct faculties work.

> But in general, just as it is said that it is not possible to look at a visible object if one puts it on the pupil of the eye, but one must move it away to see it, so, much more, one should transfer this to the soul. For if we placed in it the impression of the visible object, that in which the impression was stamped could not see the sight: for that which sees and that which is seen must be two [distinct things].[519]

The senses offer a representation to the soul, but the soul must take a comprehensive view of any object to ascertain its true nature. The impression left upon the senses is formally assessed by a higher functioning faculty. Plotinus delineates the other senses in a similar manner: "where taste and smell are concerned, there are some affections, but all [tasting and smelling] that are perceptions of them and judgments are acts of knowledge of the affections distinct from the affections themselves."[520] This deferment of judgment by the senses is necessary for an integration of composited experiences considerate of any ontological claim. The senses cannot 'understand' ideas outside of their immediate expressions in physical terms.

Before leaving Plotinus, I want to briefly touch on desire and its relationship to sensory activity. This will be helpful to have in view as we compare things with Ficino and Traherne. In a Plotinian cosmology, "soulless things are directed towards soul, and soul to the Good through intellect."[521] This direction is ultimately sustained by the One. The sense realm is where humanity encounters matter without agency. But "soulless things,

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[518] Lloyd, 152.
[519] *Ennead* IV.6.1
[520] *Ennead* IV.6.2
[521] *Ennead* I.7.2.

too, share in form; and as they share in unity, existence and form so they share in the Good."[522] External objects encountered by the senses can convey a predilection for transformation because of the forms. The function of sensual perception "is to pass on the image resulting from the desire of nature, the conscious formulation of the desire, to the higher soul, which is alone responsible for deciding whether the desire is to be satisfied or not."[523]

The engagement of external objects can also generate confusion when desires fixate on bodies themselves rather than the Good that has enabled their existence. Plotinus discusses procreation to show how this can happen.

> But if anyone delights in something and is akin to it, he has an affinity also with its images. But if anyone rejects this cause, he will be unable to say how and for what reasons the emotion of love occurs even in those lovers who aim at sexual intercourse… It is true, certainly, that those who are moved to generation here below are content to have the beauty here below, the beauty which is present in the images and bodies, since the archetype is not present to them which is responsible for their loving even this beauty here below. And if they come from this beauty here to the recollection of that archetype, this earthly beauty still satisfies them as an image; but if they do not recollect, then, because they do not know what is happening to them, they fancy this is true beauty.[524]

We see here, in the case of the lovers, that they can enjoy bodily beauty because of the senses. But their desire to generate more beauty will end in frustration if the contemplative connection with ultimate Good has been lost. Whatever they do create cannot satisfy their desires fully because bodies are insufficient in their natures. It is only with a turn within the soul towards the One that satisfaction is found in the midst of procreation.

Thus Plotinian spirituality puts noticeable weight upon the proper discernment of desires as they arise in human sensation. Hadot summarizes this commitment: "Dispersed

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[522] Ibid.
[523] Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus. An Analytical and Historical Study*, 94-95.
[524] *Ennead* III.5.1.

amongst the cares and preoccupations of daily life, we can, first of all, concentrate ourselves inwardly, direct our attention towards the things up above, and regain consciousness of ourselves."[525] Plotinus does not fault the senses as progenitors of confusion nor can they mislead humanity by creating desire. Desire already exists because of the One's beckoning. The journey through sensuality is only problematic when those desires align to the wrong end.

4.2.2.1 Ficino and the Function of the Senses

Ficino offers a little more detail on the operation of the senses than what we see in Plotinus. For him, knowledge through corporeal experience happens successively through sensation, phantasy, imagination,[526] and understanding.[527] To explain this progression, Ficino talks about how Socrates sees Plato. In the first occasion of sensation, Socrates uses his eyes to look at an image of Plato. When that image is gone, Socrates can still bring it into the mind by imagination. "Imagination rises above matter higher than sensation does, both because in order to think about bodies it does not need their presence, and also because as one faculty it can do whatever all five senses do."[528]

Next, Socrates uses his phantasy to make judgments about the general nature of Plato based on characteristics like a "noble body, ample brow, broad shoulders, (and) fair complexion."[529] Phantasy can identify semblances of incorporeal substances, or as Ficino calls it, "bodiless intentions of bodies."[530] Finally, the understanding is able to identify a "common nature (that) seems to transcend bodies' individual conditions."[531] So in the case

[525] Hadot, 35.
[526] Imagination replaces the faculty of memory here. See footnote 13 in Blum, in *The Cambridge Guide to Renaissance Philosophy*.
[527]Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, II: 263.
[528] Ibid.
[529] Ibid., II: 265.
[530] Ibid.
[531] Ibid., II: 267.

of Plato, Socrates is able to understand a common humanity in which Plato, Antisthenes, and Xenophon all share. "In this way we ascend to the divine idea, which must be above all individuals in order for it to act on them all alike and to reconcile them by means of a common nature."[532]

In this thinking process, the irrational soul takes what the senses are encountering and makes a reasoned judgment. The drawing down of the soul towards sensual distraction is constantly mitigated by the soul's awareness of the divine. Reasoning steps in as a reminder to contemplate the things of God. Sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell converge into a mental center where the internal rationale of the soul reconciles the disparaging accounts each sense might offer. Ficino understands each sense to be in isolation from the others. No one sense is able to correlate the entirety of the collective impressions received from all the senses. For example, the eye cannot account for a smell nor harmonize that input with whatever it is detecting. Reason has a fuller capacity to process multiple sensory experiences. This is partly why it is situated as a higher power outside the bodily activities.[533]

As the example above shows, powers[534] in Ficinian cognition are situated hierarchically according to their capacity to engage an ideological horizon. A power is 'higher' when it is able to reason generalizations from a range of thoughts produced by a 'lower' faculty. This framework is in harmony with the basic Plotinian movement from fragmentation to unity in the emanation paradigm of reality.

> A higher power should know all that a lower power knows and more. This is clear in the case of our own souls. What each of our five senses perceives separately our phantasy discerns in a summary fashion and to some extent more excellently. What the phantasy sees in many images, the intellect sees in a single image and

[532] Ibid., II: 269.
[533] Ibid., II: 217-19.
[534] This term is synonymous with 'faculties' as I have used it elsewhere.

> more clearly: it sees that the phantasy sees, but in addition it sees the universal rational principles which the phantasy is unaware of.[535]

Senses are the most limited because they deal with particular moments in time through a particular means. They are only necessary because of the composite state.[536] They possess a very diminished capacity for truth due to their interactions with chaotic base matter. As John Hendrix points out about Ficino, "sensible objects have no connections with each other. Without the ordering process of reason and perception… the sensible world would not exist."[537] The senses only deliver information to reasoning and cannot influence the interpretation of any sensation they receive.

4.2.2.2 Ficino and the Seeds of Desire

While sensory functions carries little epistemological import overall, they do quantitatively expose the mind to the "seeds" in creation that nature propagates. Hiroshi Hirai explains this connection.

> In Ficino, Ideas, reasons, seeds and forms are all 'species'. The Ideas are the intermediary between God and the mind… In the same manner, the reasons have their existence between the mind and the soul, seeds between the soul and nature, and forms between nature and matter... the corporeal forms do not, however, disclose the divine. 'The Ideas, the reasons and the seeds are the realities, while the corporeal forms are rather the shadows of the real things.'[538]

The senses, by offering external objects containing these divine seeds, indirectly exposes the soul to the desire of God, for "love, which creates and sustains all things,

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[535] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, I: 155.
[536] "Sensibility begins at birth." Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness : Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 470.
[537] John Hendrix, "Perception as a Function of Desire," in *Renaissance Theories of Vision*, ed. John Hendrix (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010), 90.
[538] Hiroshi Hirai, "Concepts of Seeds and Nature in Marsilio Ficino," in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, ed. Michael J. B. and Rees Allen, Valery (Boston, MA: Brill, 2002), 261. For a discussion on the five hypostases of Ficino, see Michael J. B. Allen, "Ficino's Theory of the Five Substances and the Neoplatonists '*Parmenides*'," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 12 (1982): 19-44.

communicates to all beings the 'desire to multiply'."[539] Sensual fecundity ever reminds the soul of its deepest longings.

> Every single moment we wish for the true and the good… Our eyes are always wide open to gaze upon all that comes into their field of vision… Our ears are always alert to hear everything… [while] the desire for sex can be mastered and the greed for eating lessened, the will for the true and the good is never mastered or diminished; or rather, while the former wane with age, the latter increases.[540]

So while senses are held in low esteem and decay with age, they nonetheless provide an infinite number of invitations for illumination within. Reasoning must then take up these opportunities afforded by sensory experiences. A fruitful embodied existence in Ficino involves a coherent relationship between the sensitive faculties and the abilities of the mind as they together help a person pursue her desire for God. As we turn towards Traherne and see his explanation of the senses, I will show how his elevation of the senses connects with these Ficinian seeds and the broader Platonist penchant for divine discovery.

4.2.3.1 Traherne and the Sensory Process

Traherne connects embodiment with God's creative intentions, "for our Bodies therefore, O Lord, for our earthly Bodies, hast thou made the world."[541] Human beings are so highly esteemed by God that the created world primarily exists as an instrument in service to human perception. The end of creation is humanity's fulfillment and God has given capacities to each person to understand this undergirding reality. The senses provide an important function in that awareness but ultimately, in Traherne's epistemology, the body's abilities cannot by themselves provide a full apprehension of God's love for "GOD HIMSELF, Come not within the sphere of Sense."[542] So whatever the

[539] Hirai, in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, 261.
[540] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, IV: 233.
[541] *Aserious and patheticalContemplation Of the Mercies of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, IV: 326. The Ross edition of this manuscript title preserves the unusual spacing.
[542] Ibid., IV: 340.

body detects about the universe through the senses, it is not a direct contact with God *per se*.

Clements touches upon this delineation in his explanation of 'extrovertive' and 'introvertive' mystical experiences in Traherne.[543] 'Extrovertive' in Clements means that perceptions of God can occur through the physical senses. 'Introvertive' in Clements is the *via negativa,* a way of encountering God through the invisible "inner essential man, pneuma, or of the 'invisible' Godhead or God."[544] Traherne manifests both techniques, according to Clements, and one can observe his textual tendencies to see which means Traherne has in view. When his words are more literal in usage, the voice leans towards sensory affirmation of the divine. When his words are more symbolic in usage, it leans towards a negation of immanence in the external world. Since I am arguing that Traherne is a more sophisticated thinker than generally perceived, I want to take this insight from Clements and explore it a bit more under the traditions of apophatic (*via negativa*) and cataphatic (*via positiva*) theologies.

Via positiva or "the cataphatic is, we might say, the verbose element in theology, it is the Christian mind deploying all the resources of language in the effort to express something about God, and in that straining to speak, theology uses as many voices as it can."[545] This affirmative posture assumes a translatable value of human perception with external objects. Because God is immanent to Traherne, any physical object may be placed into sensory detection and is able to transmit something to the mind of God's presence. When all objects become viable for contemplation in this manner, then language itself necessarily runs in infinite directions in an attempt to convey the infinite nature of a disclosing God. Or, as Traherne phrases it, "The root being beautified by all its branches,

[543] Clements, 57-59.
[544] Ibid., 58.
[545] Turner, 20.

The fountain enriched, and made famous by its streams."[546] This way of encountering God is seen in texts like this.

> Nature never gav an Abilitie in Vain. Since therfore Mans Ability extends to all Objects in Heaven and in Earth, we may hereby see the Beauty of His Soul, the Glory of Religion, the Nature of Blessedness, and the Truth of the Scriptures.[547]

Words become an instrument to describe this transcendent reality, but only serve a useful purpose when someone discerns the divinity objects help reveal.

> Words are many times made Useless by being applied to vile or insignificant Objects. But if you will Draw an Abstract of all Beings Possible or Imaginable, and see the Confines of all Existence, penetrat the Centre and survey the Excellencies of Things; Discern your Interest and the Beauty of them; you shall find Abridgement a Glorious Essence, and sing Praises Eternaly for so Divine a Being.[548]

The *via positiva* is marked by this type of broad engagement with the physical world. It is not the objects themselves that cataphatic theology upholds, but rather those sacramental glimpses of God through humanity's createdness. These are initially encountered through the senses. Language about what God is flows out of those normal experience and exhausts itself in an attempt to capture something of the infinite in finite symbols.

When it comes to *via negativa*, we are considering the ways one describes God outside the confines of language. Dionysius the Areopagite explains apophatic theology this way.

> It eludes all reasoning, all nomenclature, all knowing; that it is neither darkness nor light, neither error not truth; that absolutely nothing can be asserted of it and absolutely nothing denied; that when we formulate affirmations or negations applying to realities that are inferior to it, we are not affirming or denying anything about the Cause itself: because all affirmation remains on this side of the transcendence of him who is divested of everything and stands beyond everything.[549]

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[546] *Aserious and patheticalContemplation Of the Mercies of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, IV: 394.
[547] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 29.
[548] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 35.
[549] Clément, 31.

In the text above, there is a clear boundary between those states of reality we find in the chain of being. Humanity and her language can never grasp the fullness of God's nature. Words are thus abandoned, or negated, so that all that is left to describe God is absence. Turner describes apophaticism as "the name of that theology which is done against the background of human ignorance of the nature of God."[550]

Traherne reflects on the limitedness of human perception as it interacts with the infinite nature of God. "O Lord, I admire the perfection of thy Presence, the incomprehensible excellency of thine Omnipresence, wholly every where."[551] Traherne is aware of God's manifestations in the physical universe in every direction, but it is veiled in mystery. Only the illuminating gaze of God upon creation enables transformation of learning. This restless divine initiative opens up the means for a circulation of affection between God and humanity. Thus Traherne remarks "In my self I am finite, but the infinity of thy Glory maketh every thing infinite upon which thou lookest."[552] While Traherne preserves God's distinctiveness theologically, it is a not an impersonal ontology. Instead, these separate states are more of a philosophical canvas upon which Traherne paints his relational spirituality. Whatever ignorance a person has is ultimately overcome by the penetration of divine light into all things created. The *via negativa* meets the *via positiva*, in a sense, because Traherne finds the chasm between God and humanity bridgeable as divine action and contemplative spirituality partner with one another in the transformation of the soul.

Going back to Clements then, Traherne's extrovertive and introvertive tendencies in his writings help us to see more substantive theological frameworks being appropriated.

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[550] Turner, 19.
[551] *Aserious and patheticalContemplation Of the Mercies of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, IV: 415.
[552] Ibid., IV: 416.

If Traherne is proto-Romantic in his orientation as a thinker, then language itself would be in service to the subjective experience of God within. This would be akin to some sort of contemporary experientialism. But I think Traherne is leaning elsewhere, tapping into those apophatic and cataphatic traditions which are indicative of the Christian Platonism we have been reviewing. Acknowledging that philosophical connection may have a disruptive effect upon attempts to receive Traherne as ahead of his time, but it seems to me to be a more accurate interpretive choice in order to understand his theological project writ large.[553]

4.2.3.2 The Choice to be Sensual

Since God does not enter the world of sense and yet manifests love in all created things, the senses are always presented with the opportunity to acknowledge that reality or to ignore it. In *Commentaries of Heaven*, Traherne describes this as being 'awake.'

> To be Awake Bodily, is to feel ones Bodie, and to use ones Sences Actualy: to see all Colors and figures before us, to hear all Sounds that are neer us, to Smell and feel and Taste all sensible objects, as they are capable: at least to be immediatly ready therunto when they are offerd unto us.[554]

It is possible in Traherne's thinking to be alive in body and yet asleep in perception. This clouded state can apply both to one's spiritual identity as well as one's physical existence. To exercise the senses properly (or 'actualy') is to situate them towards an apprehension of the divine. To be sensual without this attention is to live the life of a beast.

> THE more perfect his Bliss is, the greater is the Crime of despising it. To pursue an infinite and Eternal Happiness is Divine and Angelical; to pursue a Terrene and Sensual Felicity, is Brutish…
>
> TO live by Accident, and never to pursue any Felicity at all, is neither Angelical, nor Brutish, nor Diabolical: but Worse then any Thing in some respect in the World: It

[553] Turner sounds a similar note of disruption in his study of *via negativa*. In speaking of his selected medieval mystics, he says "for as read adequately, they challenge much in contemporary thought and spirituality, in particular they challenge a certain positivism of religious experience." See Turner, 5.
[554] *Commentaries of Heaven* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, III: 433.

> is to act against our own Principles, and to wage war with our very Selves. They that place their Ease in such a Carelessness, are of all others, the greatest Enemies and Disturbers of themselves…
>
> HASTINESS in catching at an unexamined Felicity, is the great Occasion of all the Error about it, among the Vulgar: who are led, like Beasts, by their Sense and Appetite, without discerning or improving any other faculty.[555]

Sensuousness for and by itself is brutish. Happiness, for Traherne, resides in the intentional life, a proactive engagement with whatever enters one's sensual consciousness.

This is a striking contrast against the Hobbesian declaration that life is 'brutish and short.' In Hobbes, 'brutish' is a summative declaration of human experience. Existence for him is indelibly colored by the conflicts surrounding competing interests. This reality, of course, drives the Hobbesian logic for the sovereign's need to keep the lid on the violence. Traherne, I think, finds that sort of conclusion anemic in light of human powers and potential. In his view, society should pursue the illuminated life animated by God-given abilities. Functioning solely in the realm of physical needs is to reduce humankind to a beastly state.

> And therfore to live in the Sphere of Sensible Things, to weigh the less and Greater of those, and to aspire no higher then the Better Choyce among such is wholy Brutish. A Man is distinguished from a Beast by this. He seeth the secret Properties, uses and Relations of Evry being, which are retired from the Light and obscurely buried from evry Ey, but are apparent only to the Soul of Man, together with all objects Intelligible, Infinit, and Spiritual, we have lately Named. The Depth, and Extent of his Perception, being Infinitly Greater then that of Beasts, and infinitly more Excellent.[556]

Sensible things have an end in mind according to divine intention. To misuse corporeal things requires either an ignorance or willfulness that rejects their inherent purpose. Human integrity is experienced when the objects of soul and sense share a common trajectory in life.

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[555] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 4-5.
[556] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 424.

> By Confining our selvs to inferior Things, that are Acted upon this little Globe of Earth, we lose the Divinest Instances of Happiness and Wisdom: and becaus we study not Divine, understand not the Nature of Human Access. In its full Perfection it is both Bodily and Spiritual. But as there is a Soul in the Body, so is Spiritual the Soul of Bodily Access. Full, Compleat Satisfaction is Attained only by the Union of both. Our Appetite must be pleased, and our Senses fed, with the Vision and fruition of Sensible Things. Therfore does Nature Desire in Man a Corporeal Access.[557]

When we consider Traherne under the larger Platonist stream I have been discussing, the possibility of attending to corporeal objects in exclusion from any potential they may possess for interior illumination sounds much like Plotinus. Where in Ficino we see a disparagement of the body and thus a passive indictment on the senses' abilities, Plotinus instead portrays the senses more statically. Plotinian sensuality becomes problematic only when the objects themselves ensnare the mind into endless distractions. Traherne describes that ensnarement as limitedness, where one's interests fixate upon objects in a narrow, material fashion until reality closes in on itself. This, again, is a beastly existence.

> They (beasts) are Still limited to few objects, confined within Narrow Bounds, stirred up by sleight Causes, and guided but to feeble Ends. The Reason of Beasts is actuated only within the Sphere of their Perception, which is terminated within the compass of the Material World; it is allwayes Conversant about Matters of Sense, or objects of fancy; the Beauty of the Heavens, and lov of their Masters; the thoughts of their Companions, the Concernments of their Bodies, and Minds, for the Present. Their Interests are Shut up within the Compass of their lives.[558]

For Traherne, life according to a closed system of sensual pursuits is a gross distortion of identity and cognitive powers. It is the basest level of consciousness in creation.

So we see in Traherne that the senses have two directions of employment, towards the needs of the body or towards the enjoyment of the soul. He is not averse to attending to the body, but is clear that these functions are "Dead and Mechanical Operations,"[559] meaning they are the most meager part of human existence. This is not

[557] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 100-01.
[558] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 424.
[559] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 23.

purely derogatory because "It is a Miracle therfore that we are alive."[560] Traherne calls embodied existence a "Curious fabric"[561] where the nutritive processes hidden within combine together to support life. This mystery stirs a response of praise because it is wondrous that all things work physically together as they do. But even physiology is intricately intended to allow a person to perceive God's love everywhere. When the senses are used properly and in a balanced way between soul and self, there is an elevation of one's consciousness. Life becomes a reasoned state of gratitude. Creation offers the mind an infinite realm to both express that gratefulness as well as discover how pervasive divine affection is no matter what one senses.

4.2.3.3 Causation and Sensation in Traherne

Traherne does not provide a detailed casual discussion of the sensory process as I will discuss in Hobbes momentarily. It seems more important to him to situate the senses within a larger epistemology and to prioritize their functions. The senses are regularly portrayed as reliable and reliant upon reasoning. As an example of this, in his discussion of light Traherne is careful to separate the detection of it from the understanding of its causes.

> An Illiterat person thinks the Air Nothing. The Brightness and Gory (sic)[562] of illuminated Objects seems their own, becaus the Light Immediatly comes from them, and the Eye discernes not the Mysterie of its Reflexion. It is the Work of Reason to correct the Ey, that thinks the last Body from whence Light comes the Fountain of its Beams. for Reason finds out the Mistake of sence, or rather makes up its Omission. The Ey is not mistaken. It judges the object illuminated to be the fountain of its Beams, but not the last fountain. The Error is in the understanding which conceivs it the first fountain; tho occasioned by the sence, that apprehends it to be the fountain. for the office of sence is not to judg of first and last, but simply to judg of immediate Appearances.[563]

[560] Ibid.
[561] Ibid.
[562] "Gory" is likely "Glory."
[563] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 353-54.

The body becomes locative for divine illumination *de facto* due to its unique composited state. The senses pass along physical phenomenon to the reasoning, but they are not involved in the reflexive activity peculiar to the mind. Gary Kuchar picks up on the significance of this. "By understanding the body as the medium of experience rather than the object of scrutiny, Traherne grants the body an integral role in the constitution of an ideal subject who coordinates being and knowing."[564] There is no need to treat information as suspect when it is provided by the senses as they are in a deferent relationship with the higher faculties of knowing. Thought is a fluid exchange between the corporeal and the incorporeal in Traherne. When properly ordered, it creates a certain expansive dynamic. Thus "Life is an Abilitie to Apprehend, and Move… They that would by meer Mechnical Operations Solv all the Phænomena of Life, are all as absurd in their Attempt, as it is possible for men to be."[565] To sense harmoniously with the mind's noetic reflections is an act of cognitive integration.

4.2.3.4 Desire and Sense in Traherne

As I conclude this section, I want to comment on the relationship between the senses and desire in his anthropology. Desire has often been recognized as a central concern in the Traherne corpus. Inge considers it to be the "backbone of his writing"[566] thematically. DeNeef offers an intriguing comparison between Trahernian desire and Lacanian want in an effort to surface some structural similarities.[567] Lane remarks that "Traherne found his greatest joy, his highest felicity, in this endless longing for God."[568] For

[564] Kuchar, in *Religion in the Age of Reason*, 63.
[565] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 409.
[566] Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, 4.
[567] "Lacan argues that the aim of psychoanalysis is to provide the verbal pathways for the human subject to recognize and speak his unsayable desire." DeNeef, 4.
[568] Belden C. Lane, "Thomas Traherne and the Awakening of Want," *Anglican Theological Review* 81, no. 4 (1999): 653.

the argument here, I want to consider desire in light of the Platonist tradition around the senses and to identify peculiarities Traherne may have in that regard.

In his entry on "Attainment"[569] Traherne provides some important scaffolding on how desire functions in his theology. He starts off with a clarifying distinction, that there are secular and divine attainments. One can discern a type by its lasting quality. Secular pursuits are meager and temporary, while sacred ones have value "worthy of our Studies."[570] This higher type of attainment involves an integrated reasoning, as I have discussed previously. If this reasoning is abandoned, then true attainment is impossible. The desired object may be acquired, but participation in its innate nature does not occur.[571]

Traherne uses the lion as an illustration. "A Lion is very scurvily said to Attain his Prey, bec. tho he catcheth it, he is carried with a bruitish Appetite unto it, and tho he desires it he doth not proceed with Reason and Counsel."[572] The lion's physical needs motivate the acquisition of prey. That goal is achieved, but the desire is effectively extinguished with each kill. If higher reasoning were employed, the desire for prey can be transformed beyond the object itself. A lion cannot discover this truth due to its brutish nature. But humanity is confronted with a choice to pursue objects with divine reasoning due to her place in the chain of being.

Traherne goes even further and suggests that attainment does not actually occur if proper reasoning is not employed. "Whatsoever is attained must be in high Esteem. It seemeth, as if it should be confessed implicitely, to be above the person that aspires

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[569] *Commentaries of Heaven* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, III: 376-84.
[570] *Commentaries of Heaven* ibid., III: 376.
[571] Hawkes offers an interesting reading of Traherne's political economy in light of the emergence of modern market theory during this time. See David Hawkes, "Thomas Traherne: A Critique of Political Economy," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 62, no. 3/4 (1999), http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/4621648.
[572] Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, III: 377.

therunto, till he attaineth it. For he that desires exalts his Object abov himself, and by his Desire goeth out of himself therunto."[573] Desire for objects here implies a lack within, therefore reaching for some new thing is an admittance of incompleteness. Traherne connects this acknowledged absence with an invitation into a life of felicity. Human beings begin in a low estate and desire their way into God's love through contact with created objects. When reasoning is in harmony with sensual experience, perception of the world transforms the person.

> By the Wisdom of GOD in making them so distant from their End, is Attainment it self with innumerable Divine and Beautiful Creatures, and Troops of Perfection following prepared. Had it not been for this, Glory might have Happened to us, but had never been attained by us. Perhaps we might have attained it by chance, as a thing without: i.e. it might hav dropt into our mouths; but we could never hav attained that Perfection within, which is the Soul and fountain of all our Happiness.[574]

Here we see the continuity needed between the senses (mouth) and the mind (soul). Grasping the divine reality at work in the world as objects are encountered amid one's desires is the true vocation of humankind. That calling is predicated on the Creator's intentions, "for GOD attained Himself in all Things. He created All Things that he might be the Creator of them, he governs them that he might be their Governor; he enjoyes them, that he might be their Enjoyer."[575]

When it comes to the senses and their interactions with desire, it seems they serve in a neutral role as well. Traherne places a greater weight upon the agency of the human mind. The senses do not force a direction of action nor shape intention within. The mind is what must exercise its preference to pursue objects according to their divine nature via

[573] Ibid.
[574] Ibid., III: 379.
[575] Ibid., III: 381.

illuminated reasoning because "He (God) desired a voluntary and free Obedience… for without freedom there can be no Willingness; and without Willingness no Obedience."[576]

To summarize what we are seeing in our Platonist stream, the senses function within a model of cognition where the mind can encounter divine desire. Embodiment necessitates the sensitive faculties but does not isolate them from other reflective abilities. Instead, sensuality can affirm other intuitions about the nature of reality and affords a person opportunities to test those inklings of transcendence amid the commonplace events of physicality.

I will now move into Hobbes to surface some defining characteristics he attaches to the senses. As I shall show, the portrait he provides carries with it an alternative understanding of physical phenomena and how that creates thought. His commitment to see the world in constant motion introduces a measure of instability within cognition itself.

4.3.1.1 Hobbes and the Function of the Senses

From his earliest writings, Hobbes makes a clear departure from Aristotelian physics and the notion of separated essences, so that "all motion results from the immediate influence of an agent acting on (touching) a patient."[577] There are no causal gaps in Hobbesian perception. Objects and the perceiver act upon one another in some sort of physical chain that yields human sensation.

This is an important initial distinction from the Platonist perspective on forms and materiality. In the Platonic tradition, immaterial forms act upon matter across the hypostatic boundary of physicality. Consequently observed forces can be explained by immaterial agents or vice versa. For Hobbes, this explanatory move to the spiritual offered

[576] Ibid., III: 382.
[577] Herbert, 34.

authoritative institutions like the church illegitimate power over civil governance. The Schoolmen tradition, in his view, is a false philosophy which "compounds old errors, introduces new ones, and insulates both from detection."[578] Concepts such as the "attribution of appetite to inanimate bodies, a doctrine of incorporeal substance and of spirits, and a false account of quantity" all contributed to an unlawful authority.[579] His epistemology patently rejects any metaphysical referent. As I discuss the function of Hobbesian senses, this presupposition is helpful to keep in mind.[580]

Hobbes states "all which qualities called *Sensible*, are in the object that causeth them, but so many several motions of the matter, by which it presseth our organs diversly."[581] And once motions of objects are activated, they remain eternally dynamic.[582] The internal organs of humans interpret the external world of objects exclusively through these unending motions. The heart also plays a central role in the process. Through its pumping, the sensory organs are 'pushed' outward in reaction to whatever motions may be exerting force upon them inwardly. This back and forth activity is the first mechanism for knowledge about the outside world. "Normally, a man's eyes, ears, and other sense-organs are subjected to great variety of pressures; and, according to Hobbes, phantasms

[578] Lloyd, 184.
[579] Simon Schaffer, "Wallifaction: Thomas Hobbes on School Divinity and Experimental Pneumatics," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 19, no. 3 (1988): 276-77, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681(88)90001-5.
[580] In a discussion of Hobbes's corporeal soul, Johnston echoes a similar sentiment: "The ultimate root of Hobbes's argument lies in his recognition that men can be moved by imaginary rewards and punishments, and that these imaginary sanctions can exercise even greater power over men's actions than the real benefits of life or the real evil of death." David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan : Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation*, *Studies in Moral, Political, and Legal Philosophy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 149. For the larger treatment on corporeal soul, see ibid., 142-50.
[581] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I.
[582] ibid., II.

are generated, not by every tiny reaction to each of these, but by the heart's *predominant* reaction."[583]

As the heart controls the cognitive reception of external stimuli, it converts a pressure into an image for consideration and reasoning. The heart becomes the 'prime mover' for any knowing experience. When we think back to the Platonist tenet that truth is ultimately received from the metaphysical realm, the Hobbesian alternative takes a pronounced turn towards a subjective type of empiricism where nothing external can make a claim upon the human mind.[584] Instead, the heart serves as a controller of experience, with the senses positioned as collectors of input.

The only thing Hobbes considers stable in the world is the dynamic of motion, not objects themselves. Everything experiences motion on a fundamental level.

> And from hence also it followeth, that whatsoever Accidents or Qualities our Senses make us think there be in the World, they be not there, but are Seeming and Apparitions only: the Things that really are in the World without us, are those Motions by which these Seemings are caused. And this is the Great Deception of Sense, which is also to be by Sense corrected.[585]

Hobbes also finds sensual conclusions to be discrepant between persons. No two people can exactly sense the same object in the same way. Hobbes uses this indeterminacy to mitigate any external truth claims that might alter the mind's freedom to reason. Motion, on the other hand, is a defining force in the world. As Gary Herbert points out, "one motion becomes determinate because of its relation to other motions, and the relationship

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[583] John W. N. Watkins, *Hobbes's System of Ideas: A Study in the Political Significance of Philosophical Theories*, 2 ed., *Hutchinson University Library* (London: Hutchinson & Company LTD, 1973), 75-76.

[584] This logic extends to the existence of God. Hobbes allows for God by hypothetical means, not by direct affirmation in the ontological sense. Arrigo Pacchi, "Hobbes and the Problem of God," in *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes*, ed. G. A. J. and Ryan Rogers, Alan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 180.

[585] Hobbes, *Humane Nature, or, the Fundamental Elements of Policy Being a Discovery of the Faculties, Acts, and Passions of the Soul of Man from Their Original Causes, According to Such Philosophical Principles as Are Not Commonly Known or Asserted*, 10.

takes the form of resistance and opposition. What Hobbes suggests is a dynamic concept of difference. Externality does not disappear from Hobbes's philosophy … but the simple self-identity of externally related objects does."[586] This focus on motion places the onus on internal cognitive processes to navigate any stimuli encountered. Objects by themselves provide no direction on whether they are beneficial or not and do not contain any innate value *per se*. When we compare this to Traherne, Hobbesian sensuality can detect objects but cannot integrate those impressions with broader concepts of truth. Indeed, the world is, at its basest level, chaotic with motion and uncertainty. The senses register the chaos and are left with indeterminancy. In Trahernian cognition, objects introduce an awareness of stabilizing love.

4.3.1.2 Desire and the Senses in Hobbes

Out of this essential physiology arises the passions. For my purposes here, I principally want to highlight that desire in Hobbes only comes from sensory reasoning. Hobbes bifurcates desire between the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, which means humanity largely reasons according to satisfaction or preservation.[587] It is interesting to note that "Hobbes is quite clear that introspection and experience, not a materialist philosophy, provide the key to understanding human behavior."[588] So while he shows concern to explain the science of sensation through motion, those phenomenological processes finally defer to an interior subjective rationale.

When the Hobbesian philosophy is expanded to the organization of society, it logically becomes necessary to raise up a mediating figure to handle the inevitable conflicts

[586] Herbert, 39. Herbert later on concludes that Hobbes's view of the body is entirely phenomenal. Ibid., 45.
[587] For a brief analysis of the passions in Hobbes, see Bernard Gert, "Hobbes's Psychology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 159-64.
[588] Ibid., 161.

stemming from individualized pursuits which can never be 'shared' given their indeterminate reliance upon motion. Hobbes reveals the logic of his philosophy in his autobiography.

> … of connecting into a whole the knowledge I had gained, so that the conclusions might shine bright in the light of the first principles and the whole argument might have the permanence of a strong chain. From the varieties of motion I passed to the different species of things and the subtleties of matter, to the inner motions of men and the secret places of the mind, and finally to the blessings of Government and Justice.[589]

Compare this with what we see in Traherne, where the innate desires of God in creation that serve to unify human experience. Humanity's passions align with what is already present in the external world and social order arises out of the harmony that illumination provides.

> All the Joys and Treasures of GOD, are evry ones Enjoyments. The Laws are the cement of the Soul and God, the Commentaries of Heaven, the Decrees of Lov, the Desires, and Delights of the Happy Subjects. Their Duties are the Necessary Operations of GOD and Blessedness, the Way to Glory, the fruition of Delights the Beautifying of the Soul, the Best Employment; Joys and Praises, Delights and Complacencies are in evry Soul, in evry Societie.[590]

This social logic is also indicative of the Platonist tradition I have been following. Traherne places even more weight on the shaping function of desire for the transformation of consciousness, though. His optimistic appraisal of human responsiveness to the pervasive Good hidden in all objects yields a collective contentment of another caliber, one where the beatific vision becomes a shared public reality in creation.

I now want to turn to a final discussion through our four voices regarding the service of the senses. I will be using the term 'end' to describe this as I think the discussion entails an understanding of teleological thinking. Concern for the end of things is quite evident in

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[589] Thomas Hobbes, *The Autobiography of Thomas Hobbes*, *The Rationalist Annual* (London: Rationalist Press Association, 1958), 26.
[590] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 430.

Traherne, so I think it will be helpful to trace that framework throughout our voices in an effort to elucidate Traherne's use of it within his theology.

4.4.1 Plotinus and the Service of the Senses

Plotinus's philosophy is largely concerned with personal happiness. He "agrees with the Stoics that happiness is possible on earth and, against Aristotle, that it is independent of external prosperity."[591] Plotinus advocates a self-reflective path because all that exists finds its origin in the One, including the human soul. God is not obligated to act upon humanity to somehow open the path towards felicity. That knowledge, discovered through contemplative practices, already resides within. "It is present whenever we turn within, away from our normal preoccupation with the world."[592]

The way to that illuminated felicity is not linear. A person does not begin at point 'A' and progressively end up at point 'B' through a philosophical adjustment. The process is instead circular. Point 'A' is a confused existence in the present composite state, but the eternal soul has already travelled some, as it were, before embodiment. Even though it digresses into a physical body, there still remains a lingering ontological identity available to the mind. Composite circumstances distort mental access to that claim. The soul's work is properly understood as a return to an original pure state.

One does not become more illuminated through contemplation. One restores illumination as that spiritual identity is recovered. Hadot describes it this way: "This true self-this self in God-is within ourselves. During certain privileged experiences, which raise the level of our inner tension, we can identify ourselves with it. We then become this eternal self."[593] Regaining this ontological simplicity involves a retracing of steps that led

[591] Wallis, 83.
[592] Ibid., 89.
[593] Hadot, 27.

away from the One. The 'end' of the spiritual journey (union with God) takes one back to where the soul's departure originally began.[594]

Plotinus, in his polemic against the Gnostics, identifies two distinct paths to the end of one's philosophical aims. "For there are two schools of thought about attaining the end, one which puts forward the pleasure of the body as the end, and another which chooses nobility and virtue, for whose members desire depends upon God and leads back to God."[595] Plotinus commends the virtuous way, of course. One could even say that the way of corporeal pleasure is linear in comparison. For those interested in the desires of the body, there is only a leading away into non-being. It starts with some bodily desire and as satisfaction is pursued, deeper forms of confusion about life ensue. The enmeshed soul, in Plotinus' view, is repetitiously looking and then acting in the wrong direction.

If one pursues the path of virtue, it becomes a journey of being led back. Embodiment is, by its temperament, a drifting away from true spiritual identity. The soul always remains anchored to the One, regardless of various expressions of forgetfulness.[596] Choosing to return to God requires a pulling up of that anchor rope until the soul is centered again. Once grounded in its origin, it becomes internally clear what journey has actually taken place. This process of recovery is noble, in Plotinus' view, because the energy exerted to return expresses itself by a virtuous life.

This is also a kind of theosis. John Dillon says "it is clear that for Plotinus any action must be evaluated primarily from the perspective of its capacity to assimilate us to the

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[594] Sinnige describes it this way: "The inward movement is specified as a voyage to a home-country, where we shall meet our Father. No carriage or horses or vessel are necessary, what is needed is the development of an apt and specific way of seeing (I 6 [1] 8, 26). This means coming in the presence of yourself in a purified way. Returning to our own self is the same as returning to the Origin." Sinnige, 294.

[595] *Ennead* II:9:15

[596] Forgetfulness is the dynamic converse of awareness in Platonism. As Gerson points out, "Awareness is true only in the ontological sense recognized by Plato and Aristotle; 'false' awareness, by contrast, is only the absence of awareness." Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology*, 144.

divine realm."[597] A person should be able to recognize the unitive regression to the One according to the manifestations of virtues in life. Composite existence evidences a gradual, ethical transformation as the soul ascends. "Plotinus concentrates on showing how virtue, born from this union, transforms one's entire being and becomes substantial wisdom."[598] This transformation is catalyzed and sustained by divine love. "As a gift of the Good, Plotinian love is immediately love of the Good. It is the invasion of the soul by a presence which leaves no room for anything but itself… Its terminus is the Good, not because this is the final point, but because it is the Absolute." The soul is infinitely enlarged once again as union with God occurs.

Surprisingly perhaps, the senses come along in this process of enlargement under the auspices of the soul's direction. Eyjólfur Emilsson, in his comparative review of non-discursive and discursive thought within Plotinus, draws out a useful distinction for my discussion here. "As in the things of the senses, what the eyewitness experiences is epistemically superior to any kind of indirect knowledge, so here the one who has experienced the intelligible object itself is privileged in comparison with anyone who is acquainted with it merely through imperfect representations."[599] The senses, if left in epistemic isolation, would gravitate solely towards these experiences of external objects through corporeal faculties. This, as Emilsson labels it, would be interpreted as the superior encounter with reality by the senses. But when the soul intervenes and actively directs learning, the senses become the deliverer of those direct objects for indirect contemplation. So when I speak of an end for humanity in light of a Platonist anthropology, it is obtained through this transformation of physical experiences into a

[597] John M. Dillon, "An Ethic for the Late Antique Sage," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 320.
[598] Hadot, 66.
[599] Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 182. Emilsson provides a fresh and useful analysis between soul and sense. Ibid., 176-213.

metaphysical identity. In Plotinus, at least, this seems to be the main concern of his philosophy. The integrated life is one where happiness grows as the soul returns to the realm of infinite thought, achieved in large part by the reconsideration of sensual experiences.

As we anticipate Traherne in light of Plotinus, this concept of end as beginning will find an important place in his theology. Before that discussion, I want to turn attention to Ficino and his employment of the 'infinite sphere' to help explain the journey of the soul and its relationship to the senses.

4.4.2 Ficino and the Service of the Senses

End, in Ficino, is always connected to primary causation. God, by nature and by action, is the center of all that is. "The world's true center is God as we discussed in the book *On Love*, because He is one, simple, unchanging, and in all things, whereas all other things are wholly many, composite, mobile, and through their natural desire for Him they revolve around Him perpetually."[600] God is the only being able to create from nothing. God is also responsible for the illumination that leads mind back to Godself whenever it progresses into confusion. "Creation is undoubtedly a more excellent activity than illumination; and thus the former befits God more than the latter. Continued illumination proceeds from God; hence creation is continuous too if God so decides."[601] For Ficino, God calls into being what will eventually become shadowed. God simultaneously sheds divine eternal light to beckon those same things back. Horowitz sees this illumination as a needed grace for spiritual progression. Ficino "interprets grace as abundantly available

[600] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, VI: 101.
[601] Ibid., VI: 99.

and places emphasis on human efforts, initiated by the indwelling light in the human soul, to ascend to the Divine."[602]

Dupré picks up on the Ficinian anthropocentric emphasis in his review of the humanist shift in Western culture. Ficino, in his view, developed "the first philosophy of the modern culture."[603] The philosophical turn of modernity relates, in part, to the location of meaning. "Ficino supplied a coherent theoretical frame for humanist thought when he subsumed the idea of nature under a spiritual form. Formal beauty thereby became a primary quality of nature."[604] Ficinian logic, according to Dupré, puts focus on the perfection of aesthetic form.[605]

This shift highlighted by Dupré would create a bit of schism in perception in the Platonist epistemology I have been looking at. From a sensual perspective, objects and their aesthetic perfection do seem to gain cultural weight and attention at the expense of transcendent correlatives. But it also seems to me, especially in light of Ficino's distrust of the senses over time, that the philosophical shift here in *Platonic Theology* is not so much on the loss of ascending intellection in the Plotinian manner, but rather the conflation of soul and sense and their capacities to encounter the Good. Dupré does not give adequate attention to Plotinian circularity in Ficino. Even if good be found in the aesthetics of material existence, it is there by emanation and exists to work upon the conscience of humanity as a call back to God. Thus Ficino claims "if the life of the world provides, guided certainly by God, it provides therefore, for God's end. Thus all things are

[602] Maryanne Cline Horowitz, *Seeds of Virtue and Knowledge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 85.
[603] Dupré, 43. Dupré caveats this by saying Ficino was articulating what was already present in culture, giving these ideas a more developed articulation.
[604] Ibid.
[605] Dupré sees this significantly in rhetoric of that time period and present in other mediums as well.

directed finally to God's goodness."[606] The end, for Ficino, is the soul's unity with God.[607]

4.4.2.2 Ficino and the Circle of God

The last topic I want to address is how Ficino employs the familiar Platonic image of a circle to show how all-encompassing and intertwined divine activity is.

> Thus God is the center of all, because He is so in all things that He is more internal to each thing than it is to itself. He is also the world's circumference because, in existing outside all excels the highest summit of each thing… As He is the center, He is in all, but as the circumference. He is outside all: in all, but not included because He is also the circumference; outside all too but not excluded because He is also the center. So what is God? One might call Him a spiritual circle whose center is everywhere, who circumference is nowhere.[608]

The purpose or end of humanity exists within this spiritual circle described above. Desire, divinely implanted by the act of creation, responds to the graceful illumination that promises a satisfaction of that same desire. Collins says Ficino describes this circularity as quintessential goodness. "Goodness diffuses itself, draws things to itself and perfects them. All of these are especially true of God who diffuses himself by producing things, draws them all back to himself, and perfects them by forming and reforming them."[609] This movement back to God is understood as the pursuit of love, the intended end for humanity set in motion by the innate desire implanted within. Paul Kristeller describes

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[606] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, I: 207. This section in *Platonic Theology* goes on to say "In any one of the world's parts we should not demand any and every perfection of that part, but rather that which is in harmony with the remaining parts and connects it to the whole." Ibid. This seems to be contradictory to argument Dupré makes concerning Ficino. Another passage is similarly helpful along these lines: "Because God, the universal moderator, preserves each thing, He does not retract its nature once He has given it. Thus, while He rules over all, He rules over individuals according to the nature of each, helping the ascending elements in their ascent, the descending elements in their ascent." Ibid., I: 209.

[607] "But I pray that as heavenly souls longing with desire for our heavenly home we may cast off the bonds of our terrestrial chains; cast them off as swiftly as possible, so that, uplifted on Platonic wings and with God as our guide, we may fly unhindered to our ethereal abode, where we will straightway look with joy on the excellence of our own human nature." Ibid., I: 15.

[608] Ibid., VI: 101.

[609] Collins, 91. This illumination occurs at every stage in the chain of being. See Sergius Kodera, "The Concept of Matter in Ficino," in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, ed. Michael J. B. and Rees Allen, Valery (Boston: Brill, 2002), 299.

love in Ficino as that which "moves the soul towards its object as it is in itself, and when this object is God, love will lift and enlarge the soul to the infinity of God."[610]

So the end of humanity is always discovered within the timeless reality of God. This encompassing of all things known also applies to desire. No matter how much humanity is enflamed with love for the divine, the circle envelops that passion and fulfills it through God's infinitely receptive nature. Ficino celebrates love specifically because it leads people to higher realms of consciousness. "True love is enjoyment of pleasure, and true pleasure is not rooted in the senses but the mind. The enjoyment of pleasure takes shape in the love of true beauty, a beauty that is beyond our world, and yet that process is begun by earthly love."[611] This teleological continuity from corporeal to incorporeal will also manifest in Traherne, to whom I will now turn.

4.4.3. Traherne and the Service of the Senses

The end of human endeavor is a critical concern for Traherne. The topic is attended to extensively in his corpus. In *Christian Ethicks*, his entire ethical system is predicated on a clear understanding of its importance for happiness.

> IT is the Prerogative of Humane Nature to understand it self, and guide its Operations to a Known End: which he doth wholly forfeit, that lives at random, without considering what is worthy of his Endeavors, or fit for his Desires. THE End is that which crowns the Work; that which inspires the Soul with Desire, and Desire with a quick and vigorous Industry. It is last attained, but first intended in every Operation.[612]

Before any task is taken up, Traherne commends a teleological alignment. Life in pursuit of felicity must be intentional. Self-awareness examines the work needed to achieve an end

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[610] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, vol. 3, 4 vols., *Storia E Letteratura* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1956), 154.
[611] Celenza, in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, 90.
[612] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 1-2.

and searches for a corresponding desire. Traherne goes on to explain this cognitive dynamic.

> SINCE the Consideration of the End is that alone, which does animate a Man, to the use of the Means, they that treat of Virtue do worthily propose the End in the beginning, and first shew the Excellency of Bliss before they open the Nature of Virtue. For it is a vain thing to discover the Means, unless the End be desired by those to whom the Nature and use of them, in their tendency to that End, is taught and commended; for if the End be despised, all endeavors are but fruitless, which instruct us in the Means; and the Knowledge of them vain, if they never be used or improved.[613]

It seems clear to Traherne that life can be an exercise in vanity if the proper end is not kept in mind. A functional pragmatism in life that abandons self-reflection creates an inner state of turmoil. Thus "TO live by Accident, and never to pursue any Felicity at all, is neither Angelical, nor Brutish, nor Diabolical: but *Worse* then any Thing in some respect in the World: It is to act against our *own* Principles, and to wage war with our very *Selves*."[614] Traherne has an unwavering faith in the ontological nature of the human soul that, with a restored proper reflection, opens up the 'way of blessedness.' The soul is made in the image of God and as such, restlessly pursues satisfaction of divine desire. It wants to love as God loves. "The very Sun is not more inclined to communicate its Beams, then the Soul to love. For the Soul being made in the Image of GOD, who is Love by his Essence, must needs be like him in Power and Inclination, and is made for nothing else but the Attainment of its perfection, so that it can never rest, till it actually love after his similitude."[615]

This gradual process of knowing one's end utilizes various faculties, including sensation, to ever expand its intellectual horizon, all of which are catalyzed by innate desire.

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[613] Ibid., 2-3.
[614] Ibid., 4.
[615] Ibid., 80.

> IT is as natural to Man to desire happiness, as to live and breath: Sence and Instinct carry him to Happyness, as well as Reason: onely *Reason* should rectifie and direct his *Instinct*, inform his *Sence*, and compleat his *Essence*, by inducing those perfections of which it is capable.[616]

This spiraling upwards only happens if a person exercises the freedom given by God to become authentic. This is illumination for Traherne, where the Holy Ghost transforms the meaning of external objects into the treasures God prepared for enjoyment. It is through repentance into the "invisible church" that humanity regains the image of God within and subsequently understands the deeper meaning of life and its direction.[617]

There are a few similarities here I want to briefly mention as I look back on my earlier discussion of end in Plotinus and Ficino. With Plotinus, origin and return relate to the same essential identity in the soul.

> One principle must make the universe a single complex living creature, one from all; and just as in individual organisms each member undertakes its own particular task, so the members of the All, each individual one of them, have their individual work to do … Soul, then, is set upon doing its own work-for soul, since it has the status of a principle, does everything-and it may keep to the straight path and it may also be led astray.[618]

Traherne thinks similarly. Soul is created by God, of course, but the innate desires and capacities reliably predict a turn towards its 'home' with God. Traherne's soteriology starts with the identity of God within a human being via *imago dei*. The process of repentance turns the mind back towards its creator and the outpouring of grace-filled illumination leads the soul towards union.

> This is a Lesson long enough: which you may be all your Life in Learning… *Be Sensible of your Wants, that you may be sensible of your Treasures.* He is most like GOD that is sensible of evry Thing. Did you not from all Eternity Want som one to give you a Being? Did you not from all Eternity Want one to give you a Glorious Being? … Let your Wants be present from Everlasting.[619]

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[616] Ibid., 6.
[617] Ibid., 261-63.
[618] *Ennead* II.3.8.
[619] *Centuries of Meditations* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 22-23.

With Christian theology, that union has not been experienced before repentance. But one might argue, with such a strong emphasis on innate predilection in Traherne, that these two presuppositions which drive teleological vision are quite akin.

In Ficino, the circle of God's activity seems to correspond well with the Trahernian vision of infinite human desire. The reciprocity between a God who can fully receive and a human who can restlessly desire is symbolized by the circle. "And of This Circle does the sphere of felicitie Consist. This is the Circuit of Heaven, against which there is no Inchantment: this the communion between God and us, this the Cause and End of all."[620] There is a symmetry present in that image, one where the pervasiveness of love allows human discovery to go unfettered once a soul trusts in the light of God. Traherne describes it this way in *Ethicks*.

> He made him free, that he might be capable of Loving, for it is impossible to love by constraint or necessity: and having made him free and left him to himself, infinitely desires to be beloved of him. All his own love unto him, and all the glories of Heaven and Earth which are prepared for him, are means for the obtaining of that end, Obligations, Motives, Allurements, Incentives of that Love which GOD desires. If he will not return Love, all are imbittered and made distastful. Infinite Love infinitely desires to be beloved, and is infinitely displeased if it be neglected. GOD desires to take Complacency in all, to see the beauty of his Bride, and the accomplishment of his design, in the Love of his Beloved.[621]

Ficino does not elevate human potential as often as Traherne does, but the panentheistic portrayal of divine desire awaiting the human soul's recognition and engagement seems to share a similar understanding.

Before leaving Traherne, I want to pick up on one more observation from Dupré regarding the modern turn towards rhetorical expression, also found in his discussion of Ficino.[622] The argument Dupré makes is that the humanist turn during the Renaissance

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[620] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 279.
[621] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 498-99.
[622] Dupré, 42-50.

began to identify rhetoric as an arena to perfect form. I bring this up because in Traherne's corpus there is a substantial and rather ambitious attempt to demonstrate the 'end' in rhetorical terms. His *Commentaries of Heaven* catalogs ninety-six words or phrases and of those entries, forty-eight have a subheading dedicated to 'original' or 'end.' There are another thirteen which contain both subheadings of 'original' and 'end.' I think this demonstrates a mode of thinking in Traherne that all objects and activities in the embodied life participate in that Plotinian circularity. Traherne says as much in a critique of Aristotle.

> I do not see that *Aristotle* made the End of Vertue any other then a finite and temporal Felicity, which is infinitely short of that felicity which is here begun, and enjoyed for ever. He did not make GOD the Object and End of the Soul, and if all Acts are distinguished into their Kinds by their Objects and their Ends, those Vertues must be infinitely base, that have no other Objects or Ends, but Creatures; and those only Divine and Noble, that flow from an infinite and Eternal Original, respect an infinite and Eternal Object, rest in an Infinite and Eternal End.[623]

This is also affirmed in some of the descriptors used under the 'end' subheading of several entries. Traherne speaks of the "end" as being "implanted," "ordained," "prepared," "seated," or from the "fountain" of God.[624] All these instances point at that circular paradigm.

Commentaries of Heaven also contains a couple of entries specific to Aristotle where the same sort of indictment is made.[625] Aristotle, by locating the work of philosophy within human reasoning, "rejected the more Sublime and Mystick Traditions, with almost all the parts of Divine Historie, bec. they were matters of pure Belief."[626] Traherne, in contrast, finds the "the Historie of God … of great Importance for our

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[623] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 100.
[624] See *Commentaries of Heaven* entries on *Abhorrence, Abilitie (in Creatures), Human Abilitie, Abundance, Acceptance, Accident, Activity, Admiration, Affection, Ages, Ambition, Anger, Apostle,* and *Appetite*.
[625] *Commentaries of Heaven* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, III: 188-207.
[626] Ibid., III: 199.

Illumination, yet (it) cannot be conveyed to us by any other Light, then that of Tradition."[627] That is to say, the soul's illumination can only actualize under the mediating grace of God within the confines of Christian history. It would be impossible to know the full extent of divine activity outside the confines of Christian awareness and participation in the Godhead. Thus Traherne ends his entry on Aristotle's philosophy with an invitation into something new for those of the skeptical 'Scholes' tradition.

> Com then Philosopher along with me,
> And let us trie a New Philosophie:
> As Old as Ages, but from Ages hid,
> Till JESUS CHRIST removd the Envious Lid,
> Which coverd that Abyss of Blessedness,
> Which we'el not only see, but will possess.[628]

So Traherne presents the senses teleologically, aligning the value of external objects with the goal of human happiness. This connectivity between sensation and human fulfillment encourages an exploration of the world with a spirit of optimism. As I turn to our final voice, I will show how the Hobbesian *telos* of political stability necessarily truncates human reflection on sensory information because the physical world lacks stability. The social contract replaces the metaphysical relationality we see in Traherne and reasoning itself becomes separated from any attempts to avow divine claim or influence in life.

4.4.4 Hobbes and the Service of the Senses

As Tom Sorrell points out, "Hobbes theory of the mind makes no firm distinction between sense and intellect."[629] This conflation of capacities also affects any value systems connected with teleological frameworks. This is a substantial move by Hobbes to, in part, shore up his political theory. "The controversial theology of *Leviathan*, notorious in

[627] Ibid., III: 203.
[628] Ibid., III: 207.
[629] Tom Sorell, *Hobbes* (London: Routledge, 1999), 58, accessed 4/30/2016.

Hobbes's later decades, particularly targeted those features of Christianity—the afterlife, the spiritual soul, the divinity of Christ—that most threatened the psychological mechanisms of his political theory."[630] By relocating spiritual constructs into the material realm, Hobbes finds a line of attack against the institutions, church and university, and their cultural power mechanisms. Stephen Finn comments on this agenda.

> Hobbes's censure of Aristotle's metaphysics, then, does not need to be interpreted as driven solely by a scientific or theoretical concern. Instead, Hobbes clearly recognizes the politically dangerous implications of Aristotle's metaphysics. The philosophical critique of Aristotelian metaphysics is a political attack on the dangerous ideas that inspire religious seducers.[631]

This necessitates a revised anthropology where metaphysical claims do not interact with the production of knowledge. And knowledge itself cannot attach itself to ethereal dynamics outside of the body's sensual detection.

I think it is helpful to turn to Taylor for a moment to further delineate this modification of the reflexive in Hobbes. In analyzing the Augustinian proof of truth outside the self, Taylor summarizes it this way: "I can only understand myself in the light of a perfection that goes far beyond my powers. How is it that this light is cast upon my thoughts? It is beyond my powers to have produced it myself."[632] This same appeal to divine illumination fits well within the Platonist tradition I have been working with. Hobbes breaks cleanly from that when he contains 'light' to previous experiences.

> As men that are utterly deprived from their Nativity, of the light of the bodily Eye, have no Idea at all, of any such light; and no man conceives in his imagination any greater light, than he hath at some time, or other perceived by his outward Senses: so also is it of the light of the Gospel, and of the light of the Understanding, that no

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[630] Jeffrey R. Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31, accessed 09/14/2016.
[631] Stephen J. Finn, *Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Natural Philosophy*, *Continuum Studies in British Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2006), 91.
[632] Taylor sees this Augustinian spirituality flowering "across all confessional differences" during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Taylor, 141.

> man can conceive there is any greater degree of it, than that which he hath already attained unto.[633]

At the phenomenological level, knowledge only reaches backward for Hobbes. There is nothing available to draw a person outside of one's own sensory catalogue.

Returning to my topic of end, this Hobbesian commitment nullifies all external claims about the good pursued in life. A future end becomes visible in the midst of present and past conflict. This, of course, pushes forward the political expediency of processes involving a sovereign. The good to be participated in can only be a shared public reality.

> For the use of Lawes, (which are but Rules Authorised) is not to bind the People from all Voluntary actions; but to direct and keep them in such a motion, as not to hurt themselves by their own impetuous desires, rashnesse, or indiscretion, as Hedges are set, not to stop Travellers, but to keep them in the way. And therefore a Law that is not Needfull, having not the true End of a Law, is not Good. A Law may be conceived to be Good, when it is for the benefit of the Soveraign; though it be not Necessary for the People; but it is not so. For the good of the Soveraign and People, cannot be separated.[634]

Defining the end as social stability via proper governance entrusts public discourse over and against individual freedom. I think it is fair to say that Traherne believes strongly that societal peace flows out of individual enlightenment. In Trahernian logic, the expanded self amends the social capacity for collective grace. Divine transformation has an infectious quality to it, transmitting from person to person until a new social reality emerges. For Hobbes, peace comes only through the subjection of individual desires. If there is any end to be had, it comes through the careful ministrations of comprehensive governance.

Let me turn to Lloyd who portrays these divergent means in Hobbes well.

> Hobbes's strategy for resolving his problem of order is to overcome (1) by reconciling through redescription and the elimination of error competing conceptions of what's valuable, good, useful, and worthy. The liberal solution to our problem of justice focuses, rather, on overcoming, or limiting the scope of, (2) by promoting liberty, toleration, and individuality as independent values, by

[633] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLIV.
[634] ibid., XXX.

> separating church and state, value and fact, and private and public realms, and by this means protecting the pursuit of competing conceptions.[635]

It is interesting that Traherne, and the Platonist tradition I have been referencing, leans into the liberal commitment as Lloyd describes, one which continues to drive social imagination in contemporary democracies. The primary driver, it seems to me, is that teleological vision derived from a Plotinian unity with simplicity. For Traherne, *contra* Hobbes, where one begins sets the contours of where one ends in thought. This circular framework emerges and then returns from a non-discursive ontology. This circuit of heaven carries with it a certain energizing quality as one experiences an integration of identity, reflection, and attainment through the exercise of freedom. The Hobbesian experiment does not carry the same momentum. Instead, it tends to de-emphasize individual freedom by disabling the trajectories of desire for the sake of communal peace.

[635] Lloyd, 276.

Chapter 5 – Memory and Innocence

At this point in my argument I have explored three aspects that help outline a Platonic anthropology: the notion of evil, the concept of the soul, and the role of the senses. Plotinus, Ficino, and Traherne have collectively mapped out key features in the Platonist tradition. I have also examined ways Traherne pivots within that generalized ideology. We have seen areas where he Christianizes it. We have also noticed moments when he adapts it as a resource for theological engagement with his time and place in the world. Finally, throughout this argument Hobbes has helped us see numerous ways Trahernian theology is pertinent to the philosophical milieu of early modern England. The Hobbesian epistemology has been presented as a nascent empiricism and Traherne's writings are conscious and engaged with the philosophical shift that portends.

These insights affirm a central claim I am making in this thesis, that Traherne shows significant connection to a Platonist tradition in his theology. These philosophical affinities and the particular anthropological features from the previous chapters now set us up to reconsider his theology of innocence through a discussion of memory.

> Of that Kind which Adams Thoughts were, in the Estate of Innocency, ours ought to be, since our Redemption only with this Difference; As there has been since the fall an Addition of Mercies, so ought there to be in us an Addition of Resentments. And as the Mercies which Adam enjoyed, are in their Lustre and Valu to us Enhanced, so ought our Joy and Estimation to increas. Evry man Esteeming Him self as Adam was, the Sole Possessor of the Whole World. For the Heavens and the Earth serv him as much as they did Adam, yea far more, when the Truth is Known.[636]

I will once again show how Traherne comfortably aligns with our Platonic tradition in this area. Hobbes will help us distinguish this model as I contrast it with his understanding of cognition rooted in a physical causality. I will analyze four aspects in all of our thinkers: the dynamics of memory, the attitude towards temporality, how individuality engages

[636] *Inducements to Retirednes* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 31.

transcendence, and how one returns to innocence through recollection and imagination. I have chosen to discuss the dynamics of memory first because it allows me to identify what types of thoughts are a part of remembering. With this in view, it will then be necessary to analyze remembrance and its relationship to temporality since time categorizes certain types of thoughts in Platonism, which will help us interpret passages, as seen below.

> That the Joys of Heaven are shut up within that Duration which as a Part of Eternity followes the Day of Judgement is a Misapprehension so Great, that it banisheth us His Kingdom who made the World, and Bereaveth us of more Joys then we hope in Heaven to receiv. For it maketh the Greater half of Eternity to be Dark and Empty. To wit all the Eternity which was before the World began and Time it self which is the Yelk of Eternity. Which is more Probable Natural and Blessed. Either that all Eternity should be a Sphere of Joys, or part only? All Eternity is a Sphere of Joys, and evry Soul the Inhabitant or Centre.[637]

I will then examine how the pursuit of transcendence affects one's sense of individuality. This will help us to see how Platonic contemplation affects social construction. Finally, I will turn to the topic of innocence against this Platonist backdrop to ultimately show how Traherne's usage of it is embedded in a contemplative theology which has little to do with early expressions of Romanticism.

I will begin with Plotinus to help ground the framework and then move into Ficino to see how he employs that essential tradition. I will then turn to Traherne for his interpretation of memory. This discussion ends with Hobbes as I surface contrasts that illustrate how early modern empiricism communicates with these Platonist commitments.

5.1.1 Plotinus and the Dynamics of Memory

As discussed in chapter three, the soul in Plotinus can remember its life in the One and vivifies that awareness whenever it encounters beauty. The soul also retains some reminder of sensory experiences while embodied on earth. So when we discuss the

[637] *Inducements to Retirednes* in ibid., I: 34-35.

dynamics of Plotinian memory, we have two trajectories to consider. Each direction seems to contain a particular kind of content, but as I shall show, these disparaging memory types converge into one synthesized cognitive activity.

When the soul leaves Intellect, it is yoked with individuality.[638] The sensory world is only experienced by humanity when existing in the composite state. This comes with a liability. Material existence can obscure the soul's awareness of its identity through diffusion of the mind. Embodiment infinitely drifts cognition away from the One as materiality ceaselessly iterates an infinite array of entangling particularities to capture one's attention. This descent into infinite procession becomes a persistent cloud of distraction for anyone interested in spiritual progress.

The temptation towards digression also highlights the need for intentional discernment. Plotinus calls this judging skill dialectic, saying "it is the science which can speak about everything in a reasoned and orderly way, and say what is and how it differs from other things and what it has in common with those among which it is and interweaves and distinguishes these consequences, till it arrives at perfect intelligence."[639] Plotinus, following Plato, explores the use of dialectic in three kinds of people: the philosopher, the musician, and the lover. Each person experiences the difficulty of having memory of the One as well as memory of sensual pleasures. With the lover, he makes it a little clearer how those disparaging remembrances can be reconciled.

> The lover … has a kind of memory of beauty. But he cannot grasp it in its separateness, but he is overwhelmingly amazed and excited by visible beauties. So he must be taught not to cling round one body and be excited by that, but must be led by the course of reasoning to consider all bodies and shown the beauty that is the same in all of them, and that it is something other than the bodies and must be said to come from elsewhere.[640]

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[638] King uses the phrase 'leaving thought'. See R. A. H. King, *Aristotle and Plotinus on Memory*, *Quellen Und Studien Zur Philosophie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 206.
[639] *Ennead* I.3.5.
[640] *Ennead* I.3.3.

So a lover can recall pleasurable encounters in the flesh, but must have a certain discipline in the mind to transform the understanding of those individual events into a general truth. Hadot compares this spiritual practice to the adjustment of a mirror. "This process is all the more simple in that consciousness, in the last analysis, is a kind of mirror: it need only be polished and turned in a certain direction for it to reflect the objects that present themselves to it. We must therefore place ourselves in an inner disposition of calm restfulness, in order to perceive the life of Thought."[641]

Until a person decides to recognize the transcendent forms behind a particular material expression, the mind will hold, in tension, two sets of memories that evaluate the same object. Once a person is taught the dialectic and practices it correctly, the memories converge into a single conclusion. This practice seems to be the unique work given to the embodied soul as part of its descent. Sara Ahbel-Rappe discusses the reasoning she sees in Plotinus behind this vocation. "Since perception is a function of the soul and not of the body, souls must possess some faculty for sense perception even before entering the world of genesis… The purely noetic condition would therefore be unnatural for the soul. So the nature of the soul is to exist in a state wherein the sense faculties may be used."[642]

If discernment is not practiced then sensual memories, ironically, obscure the knowledge of the forms available in the soul, effectively shrouding those higher realities and consuming the *dianoia* with discursive tasks that, in Plotinus' view, yield little benefit. Plotinus "suggests the reader try to perceive the world as unified within thought, to think of the world as a single object of thought yet as retaining all of the features of its different members."[643] *Noesis* describes that different vantage point on reality. It recollects the

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[641] Hadot, 30.
[642] Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism : Non-Discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius*, 35.
[643] Sara Ahbel-Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism : Non-Discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 103-06.

Intelligibles towards a simple Unity and transforms the understanding of otherwise atomized material experiences.

Plotinus recognizes the felt tension between the memories of the ensouled body and the recollections of primal existence in the Intellect. He commends *apatheia* to mediate the mental conflict. *Apatheia* negates the *dianoia* faculty where sensual memory is stored, freeing the soul to regress back to its natural state of contemplating the One.[644] This is a restoration of freedom in his view, that state of rest Hadot mentions.

> "But it contemplates God", we might say. But if anyone is going to admit that it knows God, he will be compelled to agree that it also knows itself. For it will know all that it has from him, and what he gives, and what his power is… but if it cannot see him clearly, since perhaps that seeing is the sight itself, then especially in this way it will remain for it to see and know itself, if this seeing is being the sight itself. For what else should we give it? Peace and quiet, of course. But peace and quiet for Intellect is not going out of Intellect, but the peace and quiet of Intellect is an activity taking its rest from all other activities.[645]

This state of rest is associated with the Beatific Vision. With memory of externalities released, the soul can move towards cognitive union with the One.[646] In Plotinus, this recollected vision becomes a reconciliation of sorts between corporeal faculties and the non-discursive aspects of the self. Whatever was previously distracted by embodiment now manifests a conscious indifference to those same material concerns. So when it comes to the dynamics of memory, we see Plotinus situating the impressions of embodied experiences in tension with eternal recollections held by the soul. Memory is the place where all of this is stored and the dissonance between the two categories finds resolve whenever contemplation of the One is pursued.

5.1.2 The Plotinian Attitude Towards Temporality

[644] Ibid., 58-66.
[645] *Ennead* V.3.7.
[646] This is a loss of individuality (a temporal phenomenon). See Wallis, 81.

The normal human condition in Plotinus consists of an eternal identity ever tempted towards embodied confusion amid any temporal phenomena. Memories in the flesh of what the ensouled body encounters become possible because time is experienced. For Plotinus, this kind of remembrance is a completely separate category from the soul's memory of the divine. This is because the One exists in a state unaffected by time. "If memory is something acquired, either learnt or experienced, then memory will not be present in those realities which are unaffected by experience or those which are in the timeless."[647] It is also important to note here that in Plotinus, time is derived from the eternal realm. They are "two different things, the one belonging to the sphere of the nature which lasts for ever, the other to that of becoming and of this universe."[648] I want to explore this distinction a bit more as it affects how memory works.

Memories created within temporal existence are part of a fallible process of thinking, according to Gerson.[649] It is only in the realm of intellect that knowledge is reliable. Sense-perception and the recollection of those experiences are just obscure glimpses of a larger truth, so to speak. For example, someone may remember a purple grape on a particular day. Out of that one instance of recall, he may then logically conclude he understands what purple is. But in Plotinian logic, this one instance cannot encompass the entirety of purple as an idea. It is only when the soul correlates that instance with what is known in the Intellect that purple is truly known. Embodied memories by themselves then, no matter how many there may be concerning a particular physical encounter, can never yield a knowledge that is reliable. This is because "our ability to have even deficient awareness of the identities behind appearances depends

[647] *Ennead* IV.3.25. In this discussion I have been using the word memory to describe both realms of activity. I am distinguishing them by the content each process accesses.
[648] *Ennead* III.7.1.
[649] Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology*, 138.

upon our ability to access and employ identities behind appearances that are altogether non-sensible."[650]

Whenever someone remembers something that has happened to her, some external object she has interacted with during embodiment, the truth of that experience can never be known if she only employs sensual capacities to fixate on that materiality. Time plays a key factor here in negating any reliable truth claim. Each embodied occasion happens in a specific moment of time and every moment moves towards a future.[651] This restlessness of existence towards whatever is next reveals a state of fragmentation constantly driven by a desire to become more real. For Plotinus, this temporal motion is the antithesis of the unity of the eternal One. The One is sufficient and at rest. Material existence, on the other hand, is diffusing itself toward a profound incompleteness as the realm of Ideas is forgotten. Or, as Armstrong puts it, "to descend deeper than necessary into matter is for Plotinus a sin, but it is a sin rather of self-isolation than self-pollution."[652] The progression of time helps reveal that corruption.

Conversely, when the soul engages in remembrance of the Intellect, things are quite different. The eternal nature of the soul interacts with the eternal nature of the Forms and begins to process physical experiences against the backdrop of the infinite. As I mentioned previously, sensory memory is conditioned upon temporality in Plotinus. When it comes to engagement with the Forms, the soul is not so much remembering "when" it was free from the body but rather "what" it is like to be free from the body. Thinking within the realm of Intellect does not have a parallel type of thinking in the realm of matter. Intellection is instead a type of cognition that transforms consciousness and

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[650] Ibid., 139.
[651] "And the universe, too, must have a future, in moving towards which it 'will be' in this way. This is why it, too, hastens towards what is going to be, and does not want to stand still." *Ennead* III.7.4.
[652] Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus. An Analytical and Historical Study*, 89.

temporal or sequential logic. Emilsson describes this feature of the soul's logic process: "the characteristics usually ascribed to this kind of thought are the following: subject and object of nondiscursive thought are identical; nondiscursive thought is supposed to be intuitive, that is, not based on reasoning; it is nonpropositional and a grasp of the whole at once, *totum simul*."[653]

Gerson talks about this as a communication between faculties.

> Cognitional awareness occurs when there is a communication (*metadosis*) between the intellect and the perceptual faculty. This communication involves more than the presence of an intelligible image alongside the presence of a sensible image. If mere co-presence were occurring, we could not understand what it is we perceive. The communication consists in the use of the thought (*noēma*) of that which is intelligible to cognize the identity of what is perceived.[654]

This upwards communication helps shed illusions previously generated by embodied existence. The soul elevates towards that higher consciousness with every encounter of truth from above. This transformation of thought seems to be a primary concern of Plotinus' philosophy, one where human beings know the true nature of their existence and move towards it until they reach the place where "ultimate certainty coincides with an inward experience of existential nature."[655]

5.1.3 Individuality and the Experience of Illumination

The way of thinking I am describing here is what Plotinus considers illuminated. "The partial soul, then, is illuminated when it goes towards that which is before it-for then it meets reality-but when it goes towards what comes after it, it goes towards non-existence."[656] Here is that basic move from an eternal to temporal framework. As the soul proceeds into embodiment, it is presented with new ways to think that can fixate on

[653] Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson, "Cognition and Its Object," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 241.
[654] Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology*, 148.
[655] Sinnige, 293.
[656] *Ennead* III.9.3.

material concerns. If the soul thinks in that direction, there is only mental darkness. Indeed, it is "every way dark," according to Plotinus.[657] The individual "when" of human encounters in the flesh offers nothing of inherent worth. The soul must choose between this timed wandering existence or a timeless journey back to the light being cast from the realm of Intellect.

The grasping of the nondiscursive "what" is how goodness is actualized in Plotinus. When the soul is engaged in intellection, a viable ethical system emerges. Illuminated thinking is a participation in the Good from the One because of the emanated structure of the universe. Lloyd, following Plotinus, calls this intellection "living thought."[658] Blumenthal describes this as "static"[659] thinking where the soul accesses the stability of higher realms. Ethics are derived from the static Goodness of the divine. The more fluency a soul has with the realm of forms, the more transformation occurs in a person towards that power which initiated the possibility of well-being and eternally beckons all things to return to that simplicity.

It is worth noting here, especially in light of the intellectual history I have been tracing through Ficino and Traherne, that Plotinian spiritual ethics reside in the individual. As Dillon remarks, Plotinus' ethics are not "concerned with love of, or care for, one's neighbor, *for his or her own sake*."[660] However transformative this spiritual return to reality is, it does not seem to be informed by a sense of others on the world, strictly speaking. While society certainly improves as a unity of thought emerges from this ethical system, society itself stands only as a benefactor of the progress, not as a shaping entity at the forefront. This will be notable point of contrast with Hobbes, which I will discuss later.

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[657] Ibid.
[658] Lloyd, 133-35.
[659] H. J. Blumenthal, *Soul and Intellect : Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism*, *Collected Studies Series* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1993), 343.
[660] Dillon, in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 319.

Finally, moving towards the light is also an embrace of innate desire within the soul for that return. Plotinus uses the metaphor of a spring to explain this.

> And in this dance the soul sees the spring of life, the spring of intellect, the principle of being, the cause of good, the root of the soul; these are not poured out from him (the One) with the result that they diminish him … they are eternal, not divided up into them but abiding as a whole… we exist more when we turn to him and our well-being is there.[661]

To pursue illumination through contemplation is to become more fully alive for Plotinus.[662] This renewal manifests increasing measures of good in the world because the soul rightly becomes a conduit of truth. Dillon identifies this experience as *eudaimonia*, a state of being that has shed its temporality. Following Plotinus, he remarks that "true *eudaimonia* is not a thing of time at all, but relates to the realm of eternity, and so cannot be measured by time."[663] The soul, when contemplating the One, demonstrates an impassible joy. Or in different terms, once a soul remembers what is truly real, composite experiences become sacramental windows through which happiness can be seen over and over again.

Individuality does not disappear as the soul ascends through timeless memory. Since physical memories are with physical objects that reveal the world of forms, there is always, in Plotinian metaphysics, some glimpse of transcendence in material phenomena. When the soul remembers its identity, temporal memories do not simply fall away or get exchanged for something entirely different. Physical memories expand in their significance to the mind. They are illuminated by the soul, not discarded. As Warren notes, "there can be no loss when ascending to God; indeed, ascent must involve an increase in knowledge, an arrival at a noetic condition which no longer needs the psychic function of memory. The ascent to Nous removes time, and, so too, any need for recall or memory."[664] The soul

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[661] *Ennead* VI.9.9.
[662] For a discussion on various interpretations about this mystical union, see Robert Arp, "Plotinus, Mysticism, and Mediation," *Religious Studies* 40, no. 2 (2004).
[663] Dillon, in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 325.
[664] Edward W. Warren, "Memory in Plotinus," *The Classical Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1965): 255, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/637918.

may no longer desire temporal experiences nor the memories associated with them, but it still holds what it has experienced as an illuminated testimony to its true identity as a being. This, to me indicates a preservation of individuality because particular moments remain attached to divine truth. This connectivity in Plotinus is also congruous with the emanation paradigm. As we look towards Traherne, we will also see how individuality is similarly esteemed in view of its sacramental function.

5.1.4 Plotinian Innocence Through Recollection

The last element I want to review in this discussion of Plotinus relates to his understanding of innocence. As we anticipate Traherne, it will be informative to surface some traces of this concept in his philosophy as part of our Platonic stream.

Plotinus does not provide a soteriological scheme akin to what Christian imagination employs. So when we talk about innocence, it is not determined by a juridical paradigm focused on ethical behaviors. We do, however, see something that echoes the Judeo-Christian divine Garden, particularly the primativist way of believing that life is best at the eternal beginning. In Eden we have a pre-lapsarian state available to Adam and Eve, one where death is not known and time is irrelevant. It seems that in the Garden there is no urgency to move into a future as the present contains all that is desired. In Plotinus we see no mythological presentation as such, but there is a great affinity for portraying this state when all the soul knew was Intellect.

Plotinus describes it this way: "Now when the soul is without body it is in absolute control of itself and free, and outside the causation of the physical universe; but when it is brought into body it is not in all ways in control."[665] "When" here demarcates the moment that primitive freedom ends and embodiment's demands begin, a type of Plotinian fall. He

[665] *Ennead* III.1.8.

also compares the individual soul to Aphrodite "because of the beauty and brightness and innocence and delicacy of the soul."[666] This innocence is an inherent reality for the soul, no matter where it finds itself. These aspects are ontological, especially since Plotinus espouses a philosophy of freedom for the here and now that primarily employs a strategy to recover that initial, innocent mind.

> When, therefore, the soul is altered by external causes, and so does something and drives on in a sort of blind rush, neither its action nor its disposition is to be called free… when, however, in its impulse it has as director its own pure and untroubled reason, then this impulse alone is to said to be in our own power and free.[667]

Purity regained is spiritual progression. When the soul remember its primitive state, it restores the freedom it knew before corporeality. This connection between freedom and innocence finds an interesting articulation in Traherne, as I will discuss later.

It is time now to turn to Ficino to see how he appropriates Plotinus in these areas we have been discussing. As we shall see, memory becomes an important element in his defense of the immortal soul.

5.2.1 The Dynamics of Ficinian Memory

As discussed in chapter two, the mind[668] is eternal for Ficino. This characteristic also helps define the memory faculty. "The mind itself, which is unchanging and, because of its eternity, beyond movement, will it not accept species unchangingly and motionlessly in accordance with its own nature? Will it not preserve eternally the things it receives in its eternal bosom?" [669] With an infinite capacity for the preservation of divine ideas, memory can aid the mind in its ascension into the realm of forms by providing a library of thoughts useful for the return to the Good.

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[666] *Ennead* III.5.8.
[667] *Ennead* III.1.9.
[668] 'Mind' and 'soul' are somewhat interchangeable in Ficino.
[669] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, V: 175.

Similar to Plotinus, a person's corporeal impressions are also reasoned through by the soul. Thoughts which might fixate on sensual concerns are ultimately transformed into something useful to the soul who is regressing back to God. The soul does this by bathing these corporeal memories in its own divine light. Any semblance of embodied particularity surrenders to a more comprehensive truth as the soul recollects the forms.

> Where the [mind's] substance is always in act, a species passes from act into habit and the reverse, and understanding passes from being into not-being and the reverse. Nor do species need images in order to be preserved … Though we use the appropriate images to understand the common nature of bodies, yet to intuit the divine forms we never customarily use their appropriate images but rather the very natures that the images accompany.[670]

In this passage we see how memory can serve the eternal nature of the mind. The process of remembering physicality is open-ended and indeterminate. This is problematic for spiritual progress as that condition infinitely diffuses mental attention towards a state of non-being. The soul, as steward of divine light, correlates the unending collection of memory's sensual images with the ineffable forms from which those particulars ultimately stem. This means all external objects and their impressions on the senses are somehow connected to the world of forms. Ficino is steadfast to defend[671] the necessary relationships between God, God's ideas, and the emanations humanity perceives through the body.[672] The thinking soul reaches across various hypostases, which affirms the power of the soul's faculties for Ficino.

Memory, as an instrument of the mind, is portrayed as reliable in Ficino. He does not give significant attention to false impressions or misinformation. Rather, he is much

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[670] Ibid., V: 179.
[671] Memory in service to the eternal ideas is an important piece of Ficino's overall argument on the immortality of the soul in *Platonic Theology*. For an example of the polemic, see ibid., V: 171-87.
[672] For an extended discussion on the correlative capacity of the soul, see Collins, 73-104. Also, Corrias finds Ficino attending to the preservation of memory in support of individuality for souls. See Anna Corrias, "Imagination and Memory in Marsilio Ficino's Theory of the Vehicles of the Soul," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 6, no. 1 (2012): 86, http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1163/187254712X620988.

more concerned with the cognitive interchanges that lead the soul back to God. As Kristeller summarizes it, "all thought is a steady ascent of the Soul toward God, in whom even particular and empirical unconsciously has a part."[673] This Ficinian commitment is similar to what Plotinus conveys, where all memories of material experiences sit at the edge of non-being and await divine light from the soul to transform human understanding. Plotinus, however, allows sensory impressions to exist without engagement by the soul, a state of pure enmeshment. Whereas in Ficino, there is an insistence that the soul is ever working towards the Good and that no corporeal moment escapes the notice of the soul's transforming gaze. Thus he remarks that "the cutting edge of the mind becomes quicker and sharper; and it would certainly continue uninterruptedly to direct its thoughts upward if, out of pity for this body entrusted to it, it did not interrupt its proper task for the sake of reviving the body."[674]

There is an interesting discussion on memory loss found in Book IX that I want to highlight as it further reveals Ficino's commitment to uphold the integrity and accessibility of the soul's recollections.

> If someone appears to lose his memory from a head injury, the Peripatetics will respond that the images kept in the cerebral spirit are thrown into confusion, but that the species themselves that are in the mind are not really damaged; rather one might say they are at rest. For as long as the mind inhabits the body, of necessity it does not gaze upon the species of incorporeals without the images of corporeals.[675]

Ficino goes on to discuss death and whether something is lost when the body dies.

> A proof that at that moment it (the mind) does not lose its powers and mental gifts comes to us from the fact that many people who have been restored to life from the brink of death by the effort of doctors never recover their body's powers, or only after a long time; but they do recover their soul's powers… It is as if the

[673] Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, 255.
[674] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, III: 89.
[675] Ibid., III: 87.

> body's powers have been extinguished, but the light of the rational soul has merely been hidden, like fire under the ashes, instead of vanishing away.[676]

Ficino is attempting to account for mental defects associated with deterioration of the body. It is clear in these passages that whatever intellection the soul achieves, the body's condition cannot alter that progress made. While the soul may become concerned with preservation of the body in a near death experience, once those conditions are lifted, the soul continues its transformative ways. Memory of the realm of ideas does not diminish nor does the soul lose any gains made in understanding the true nature of reality.

It should also be noted that while Ficino strongly adheres to a generalized iteration of Platonic thinking, he is also aware of ways his philosophy can threaten traditional Christian orthodoxy. This attentiveness is evidenced in the discussion of souls and whether they have memories before embodiment. As James Hankins thoughtfully traces out,[677] Ficino wants to preserve the metaphysical paradigm and yet accommodate expectations of the magisterium. To do so, he moves the question of the soul's abilities from temporal identification (when) to ontological qualification (what), in Hankins's view.[678] This shift in logic resembles what is seen in Augustine's philosophy of memory in *Confessions.* "Instead of the truth-standards hidden in memory being buried memories of a former life, they are evidence that God dwells within us and provides his illumination in every process of reasoning."[679] The ability to transform consciousness remains the same for Ficino, but the issue of whether a soul remembers something of God before embodiment is no longer germane to his philosophical project.

So when we compare what we have seen in Plotinus with what Ficino explains as memory's dynamics, there is a good bit of congruence. Divine discernment sifts through

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[676] Ibid.
[677] Hankins, "Marsilio Ficino on Reminiscentia and the Transmigration of Souls."
[678] Ibid., 14.
[679] Ibid., 16.

sensory impressions for the purposes of transformation in both thinkers, but the Ficinian view of the body is less affirming than in the *Enneads*.

5.2.2 The Ficinian Attitude Towards Temporality

I now want to compare the Ficinian view of time as it relates to memory to what we have seen in Plotinus. In Book IX Ficino grounds his discussion of time in a few important commitments. First, "what is true is different than truth."[680] Ficino identifies a hierarchy of knowledge where incorporeal truth reflects itself downward into corporeal things that are correspondingly true. Second, "truth is eternal."[681] Temporality obscures the fullness of any thought. Since God is unity and simplicity outside of time as well as the source of all truth, lesser truths that manifest within the movement of time experience qualitative deterioration. Time-bound ideas are therefore limited in their potential to transform consciousness.

Since temporality has this diffusive effect upon images in the mind, memory of those impressions within time cannot be held tightly. Ficino illustrates this issue with speech.

> So in the very moment in which the quality is said to exist, it can also be said not to exist, since it has not yet completely departed from non-being and is already sliding backward. And since the speed of time exceeds the speed of the tongue, even as you say that the quality exists, it eludes you as you speak and before you can get the word 'exists' out of your mouth.[682]

This fluidity of truth is a direct function of the passage of time. Memory of temporal experiences must be correlated with the forms that produced them if they are to have any permanence at all. Indeed, everything that exists is initially supported by the forms. Ficino makes this clear. "Form must come from form, and ultimately from form subsisting of

[680] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, III: 299.
[681] Ibid.
[682] Ibid., III: 303.

itself; and the one formable matter must ultimately be brought back to the one form-giver."[683] Memory, as a servant of the mind, helps a person move closer to a recollected state where all material experiences can remain, in a sense, as they are transformed by the soul.

When we review Plotinus in this regard, we can see that same sort of distrust of time as in Ficino. Memory preserves thoughts and is necessary because the passage of time denies the repeatability of any immediate experience. Union with God will ultimately eliminate this temporal need for preservation because in that higher state of existence, divine forms encapsulate all of the particularities beneath them. This is why, in emanationist philosophy, the practice of intellection is an inherently stable and unifying manner of cognition. In different words, one could say that memory is a time manager, taking those immediate experiences in the body within time and making them available for other parts of the mind to hold in a permanent fashion through contemplation of the eternal.

5.2.3 Individuality and the Process of Illumination in Ficino

As we turn to illumination in Ficino's model of cognition, it is important to remember that he does not embrace Plotinian recollection in its entirety. This is primarily due to Plotinus's view on the emanated soul, a teaching incompatible with creation doctrine in Christianity. But the phenomenological exchange between the divine and humanity is essentially preserved. Risto Saarinen even sees Ficino introducing "a new tradition of recognition among (almost) equals."[684] Humanity and God, when gazing upon one another, experience a loving mutuality of sorts.

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[683] Ibid., III: 305.
[684] Risto Saarinen, *Recognition and Religion : A Historical and Systematic Study* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 84.

> Towards the end of *Platonic Theology*, Ficino discusses the view that God has created souls so that they are prepared to obtain the knowledge of divine goodness and love… If this is the case, then all minds have the potential to know and love God… In this event, the divine light 'forms' the knowledge and love 'reforms' (*reformet*) it so that it grasps the divine truth.[685]

Illumination, then, begins with divine creation. The capacity to experience the love of God is always there within the soul. When the light is received by humanity, whatever is held in the mind's eye benefits from that divine ability for the sake of knowledge. It is no longer understood in the same way, becoming somehow translucent to the soul.

> Thus the divine ray penetrates everything: it exists in stones but does not live; it lives in in plants but does not shine; it shines in animals but does not reflect on itself or return to its source. In men it exists, lives, shines, and first reflects on itself through a sort of observing of itself, and then returns to God, its source, blessed in coming to know its own origin… our mind's ascent, directed perpetually towards God, has an appointed goal it can someday attain; and this goal is nothing other than rest in God, which the rational soul will not enjoy until it has abandoned its abode here.[686]

This particular passage is helpful because it shows the panentheism necessary for Ficino's process of illumination to work. All objects contain divine touch, but only humanity has the capacity of self-reflection where the light of God reveals origin. And the invitation to know origin, I think, solicits some sort of remembrance. Objects experienced in the embodied state serve as pointers towards that expanded consciousness.

In this Ficino greatly resembles Plotinus with those two types of memory available (corporeal and non-corporeal) which end up reconciling into one pure truth,[687] outside of time, whenever the soul embraces the divine light's implicit invitation. Ficino also Christianizes the transformation of consciousness, as Valery Rees helpfully traces out. It is the Holy Spirit within the believer that warms up to the light of God and, once warmed,

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[685] Ibid., 86.

[686] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, III: 161-63.

[687] When it comes to discursive analysis in life, Ficino warns of the confusion mental habits of dissection can create. "The result will be dismemberment not resolution: in tearing apart the general concepts, we will destroy knowledge." See ibid., II: 311. This commitment is particularly interesting in light of the emergence of scientific understanding and its reliance upon dissection (literal and procedural) for truth finding.

reflects that light back out.[688] The content of physical memories, alongside a remembrance of the forms, allows a unification of the soul with the mind of God. What is eternal within becomes enlivened as divine desire is engaged.

Ficino explains how the various aspects of cognition ultimately surrender to this discernment made possible by divine light. In a discussion of the lower powers of the mind (phantasy and sensory reasoning), he makes it clear that the soul's cognition does not take queues from whatever the lower powers concern themselves with.[689] Both of these lower powers are bound by temporality and thus the images they conjure up lack stability. Only the eternal mind can properly conceive the nature of an object and then inform phantasy and sensory reasoning on exactly what it is seeing.

> In the sight, new images are constantly being recreated, and properly so, for they are created by an external light. In the mind, however, the species abide, and are bathed intensely by that same internal light out of which they first flowed; and especially because, if they have been created precisely because the nature of the object of knowledge has been kept apart from the passions of changeable matter.[690]

For this illuminated discernment to occur, there must be regulation of any false passions supported by the lower faculties in the mind. The love of God, embedded in all things, is what should attract the mind towards the higher realms. The soul's work is to tutor the lower faculties. All objects, imagined or experienced externally, can become case studies of divine intention. This hierarchy of mental faculties helps support Ficino's conclusion that "even when present to the body, the mind can operate without the body's help; and so, when it has departed from the body, it will operate through itself still more."[691]

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[688] Valery Rees, "The Care of the Soul: States of Consciousness in the Writings of Marsilio Ficino," *Aries* 8, no. 1 (2008): 12-13, http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1163/157005907794762407.
[689] Phantasy in Ficino is able to recall images that have no connection to a sensory experience. Sensory reasoning provides an image to the mind whenever a sensory experience is happening.
[690] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, V: 179.
[691] Ibid., 181.

With such an emphasis on recollection of the forms, it would be reasonable to conclude that Ficino disregards individuality in light of the greater benefits of transcending the body's limitations. But he also places great emphasis on the soul's role as a transformer of creation. This vocation is the reason behind humanity's existence on earth. "Through union with the body, the soul communicates and passes on the principles and laws of the divine and immaterial sphere to the sensible and material sphere of the cosmos… It is this achievement of connection and guidance which gives sense to the earthly existence of man."[692] In Plotinus we see a muted version of this cosmic intentionality. The Plotinian soul is concerned with following the path of true desire towards the One, but does not seem to be yoked with the task of going outside that individualized journey for the sake of others. Ficino's philosophy allows for a more meaningful alignment with the Christian teaching that humanity is empowered to subject nature and to propagate cultures reflective of God's purposes.[693]

This vocation for humanity was intended by God for the sake of Good since the world began. Temporality, I think, becomes key to the actualization of human freedom for the purposes of transforming creation.

> So things had to come to be just as God understood and saw them, namely in a rational manner. God understood that they had to emanate from Himself in a temporal manner, that is, from the beginning of time; and He willed this shadow whose nature is situated in motion and time.[694]

With God's will intentionally manifesting in shadowed creation, humanity becomes the primary agent to transform her surroundings by the light of God within. Compare this passage to Plotinus, who portrays emanation as an act of willful rejection of union until the edge of non-existence is reached through successive stages. Ficino tunes his cosmology

[692] Lauster, in *Marsilio Ficino : His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, 51.
[693] Ibid.
[694] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, VI: 75.

instead toward the Christian tradition of participation in the work of God, one where Christians act according to the needs of the place they find themselves in.

With this understanding of illumination now in view, I now want to turn to the final aspect of innocence. As I shall show in Ficino's brief discussion of childhood, innocence has connection to these illuminated memories both within time as well as outside of it.

5.2.4 Ficinian Innocence Through Recollection

One striking section found in Book VI of *Platonic Theology*, which resonates with Traherne I think, reveals Ficino's understanding of childhood in relationship to the immortal soul. When the soul enters the body, Ficino posits that the foetus exists with pure understanding. Since the body cannot experience sensory input, the mind has only the realm of Intellect to know. As soon as birth occurs, this is no longer possible of course. The lower faculties begin to tutor the mind about life, and can easily conclude that the soul is corporeal. By their nature, the phantasy and the inner sense have only the information provided by external objects. So no other conclusion is possible given their bodily capacities.

Ficino calls these lower faculties "ignorant tutors."[695] This denigration is further accentuated by the soul's awareness that embodiment is not as grand as the freedom it recollects before this state of temporality. He compares this confusion to a child covered in mud. The boy is asked "What is your body made of?" Because of his condition, the boy can only reply "Isn't it made of mud?"[696] Memories, without clarity in the soul about their nature, soil perception "with vices' stains."[697] In this metaphor I think we gain a glimpse of

[695] Ibid., II: 129.
[696] Ibid., II: 131.
[697] Ibid.

a cognitive state where innocence becomes one's nature anytime the soul remembers the timeless truths illuminated by God's light.

This way of knowing is so idealized in Ficino that he commends his reader to "seek yourself there beyond the world… take wings and fly beyond it." And in a phrase reminiscent of what I shall soon discuss in Traherne in the next section, when flying beyond it "return your gaze and look beyond it. For when you yourself embrace the world, you are beyond it."[698] Once the soul is alight in this manner, a vision becomes possible where the particularities of the physical world can be captured in a unifying manner. The soul acquires a prior understanding about its embodiment when it is no longer being captivated by any specific external objects. This truth circles back in the mind where one now can see everything afresh in the right manner. It is a truth that has always been there, but only becomes available once inadequate tutors are released.

So what we have here developing in our Platonist stream is a view of innocence focused on a certain quality of cognition. In Plotinus this is more of a de-personalized identification of when the mind is thinking purely. Ficino, though, introduces reflection on the human experience itself, suggesting that there may be evidence within each of us, as individuals, that those initial noetic capacities are clouded over from the world's influence. Thus innocence can always be regained once those misguided tutors are thrown off so that the mind can function as originally intended by God.

It's time now to turn towards Traherne and see how this Platonic tradition around memory articulates in his writings. As I shall show, Traherne remains largely faithful to the tradition and also introduces other imaginative activities that enrich the mind in light of its infinite capacities.

[698] Ibid., II: 133.

5.3.1 The Dynamics of Memory in Traherne

Traherne provides a brief sketch of his understanding of cognitive abilities, what he calls the "inward senses of the Mind."[699] These functions are common sense, fancy, foresight, and memory. As discussed in chapter three, common sense is above the five corporeal senses, a kind of reasoning power over various input from external objects. The second on the list, fancy, is related to imagination. Fancy is the ability to conjure up past or present impressions from sensory activity or even create new images unknown to the senses. These ideas are then presented to the mind for consideration. The third inward sense, foresight, can specifically awaken the senses with an object that has not yet appeared for detection. This is a type of intuition that something is about to present itself to the body. Finally, memory is able to revive images from times past, both to the fancy and to the common sense.

With Traherne' description of memory now in view, it seems there are two possible areas of content for memory to explore, that which has been imagined and that which has been experienced by the senses. Memory does not, however, access ideas before embodiment occurs. This is a departure from our Platonist tradition concerning the soul. Memory is under the soul's control,[700] but it is not employed in the manner that Plotinus and Ficino portray. With them, remembrance of the eternal helps establish a certain ontology. For Traherne, the soul recalls every idea in order to observe the infinite capacities of the mind and to discover the true origin and end of all things. This broadens the point of reflective inquiry from the nature of the soul to the nature of reality.

> Man is an inquisitive and restless Creature, and Knowing that there is an Original and End, he is not contented to see the surface or Colour of things, to taste their Qualities or smell their Odors, or take in their apparent Brightness or Beauty, but

[699] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 487.
[700] "a rational and Diviner Soul, that is able to prie without restraint or Limitation into all Existences; to use that fancy, to command the Memory, to excite those Passions and employ those Affections, which the merit and Nature of that object requires, on which it pondereth." See *Seeds of Eternity* in ibid., I: 242.

> feeleth an Instinct strongly moving him to know from whence this Creature came, and whither it tendeth.[701]

Traherne himself is not exempt from this restlessness to understand truth. His mental wanderings lead him to conclude that God intended this inexhaustible dimension of cognitive activity to further draw his mind towards God.

> I hav a restless Illimited fancy, that can Imagine innumerable Millions of other kind of Worlds, which is so far from being satisfied with all these, that I hav a Room for all Possibles together, and see not by Implicit Faith, but by clear Intuition, that it was best to leav all Possibles unmade, that are not actualy created.[702]

Memory sustains this restlessness within by providing an infinite number of thoughts to consider. So we see here that the traditional Platonist dilemma of what kind of memories to contemplate takes on a different trajectory in Traherne. It is no longer a question of what direction the soul looks (towards itself or away), but rather how every thought can be illuminated by the awareness of that idea's origin and end in God.[703] This shift by Traherne opens up the entire catalog of reflection to transformative processes. Any hierarchy of cognition that we might expect from a Platonist thinker seems to defer to a more substantial valuation where all cogitation contains expansive possibilities.

Traherne has three categories of thoughts that together comprise all of human cognition: the actual, the possible, and the impossible.[704] Since memory can both recall occasions of the senses as well as conjectures of the imagination, specific memories also take on one of these three labels. So I will first present their definitions in Traherne and afterwards explain the logic at work here.

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[701] *Seeds of Eternity* in ibid., I: 243.
[702] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 477.
[703] Kuchar shares a similar sentiment in his analysis of Traherne's epistemology: "Traherne emphasizes a sacramental relation between knower and known-one where the perceiver adapts him or herself to the object in its permanent, ontological dimension rather than in its transient or ontic aspects. Yet Traherne's critique here is not aimed at those who seek knowledge for worldly profit, but at those who seek it for its own sake, as something distinct from one's relation to God." Kuchar, in *Religion in the Age of Reason*, 65.
[704] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 337-40.

Actual things are those made existent by the wisdom of God. Humanity encounters these physical objects in the present embodied state and can recognize and understand them. Possible things are products of the human imagination. They do not exist in the physical realm but can be created by the mind. Possible things do not become actual things because the wisdom of God has chosen a different reality. Traherne provides an example of this divine reasoning operating between the possible and the actual: "It is possible that insteed of evry Atom there Should hav been an Angel, and for evry Sand a Cherubim, but it is better, as things are, tho that be a Strange Paradox that Sands and Atoms should be better then Angels."[705] Traherne, while affirming the generativity of human imagination, always defers human logic to divine will.

Impossible things have to do with the complete otherness of God. For example, Traherne says "It is Impossible to See the Kingdom (of God)."[706] Impossibility has to do with the limits of human perception. Because God is entirely other, human knowing cannot enter that realm completely. This, of course, sounds like the concept of the One in Plotinus. But Traherne also repeatedly reminds his reader in *The Kingdom of God* that "all things must be Possible with God, with whom Nothing can be Impossible."[707] So the impenetrability of God's nature is made known by God's own initiative, even into the material realm.

> Nor is it altogether Impossible, but that Infinity, eternity, and Love may be Communicated by the Intellect to the Sences, and brought down as it were to the Vessels, and Capacities of the outward Man, Even as it is Possible that the Relishes, and Tastes of the Body may be Imparted, and Conveyed to the Understanding.[708]

Yet while Traherne may use the word "Impossible," there is a notable reciprocity here between corporeal and intellectual communications.[709] The predilection to shed

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[705] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 338.
[706] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 337.
[707] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 422.
[708] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 488.
[709] Cefalu, in his analysis of Plotinian elements within Traherne, seems to miss these accommodations to Christian orthodoxy. See Cefalu, "Thomistic Metaphysics and Ethics in the

embodiment, as we detected in Ficino, is abandoned because God has initiated a downward opening of truth-knowing into the lower states. The embodiment of humanity is needed to complete the circuit. While there may be a lifting of consciousness when higher ideas are considered, there is also an expansion of the mind within material experiences because God has infused them with meaning in their present state. Traherne even calls this veneration of lowly matter "altogether Mysterious and Miraculous."[710]

Regardless of what kind of 'memory' a person has (actual, possible, or impossible), there is a capacity in humankind to connect it with the divine. I think Traherne develops this schema for a couple of reasons. First, his anthropology is repeatedly concerned with how an infinite God shows infinite love.

> Spiritual Infinities are so far from Impeding, that they promote each other, they mutualy Establish and magnify themselvs. Infinit Knowledg cannot be without Infinit Objects; Infinit Blessedness without infinit Treasures; Infinit Goodness, without infinit Emanations; Infinit Joys, without Infinit Causes.[711]

Thus in Trahern's theology, creation must somehow convey the entirety of God's infinite reach. Second, he turns attention to the mind itself and ensures a reflexivity is available there which can respond in measure to divine initiative. Memory consequently expands in its power to present those ideas in concert with God's limitless articulations. As I turn towards the next topic on time, we shall see how imagination particularly takes a place of prominence in Traherne's contemplative paradigm as God makes the impossible possible.

5.3.2 The Trahernian Attitude Toward Temporality

At this point in my discussion we have seen how Plotinus and Ficino both commend a life of the mind that transcends temporality. This is largely connected to their

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Poetry and Prose of Thomas Traherne," 253. I attribute moves like this in Traherne to his Trinitarian commitments. This is similarly seen in Ficino.

[710] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 481.

[711] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 336.

estimation of the soul's nature and its higher faculties. The path to a transformed consciousness involves a privileging of the soul's eternal memories, a renewed contact with a state of being more enlivening than anything materiality might offer. Traherne does not strike the same chords, already evidenced by my discussion above. His view of time and his imaginative play in the past portray a type of remembrance not seen in our previous two Platonists.

A text from *The Kingdom of God* portrays the kind of exploration possible through those cognitive abilities implanted in humanity by God.

> If therfore thou wilt not Equal thy self to God, thou canst not understand God. For the Like are Intelligible by the like. Increas thy self to an immeasurable Greatness, leaping beyond evry Body, and Transcending all Time. Become Eternitie, and thou Shalt Understand GOD: If thou believ thy self that Nothing is Impossible, but accountest thy self Immortal and that thou canst understand all things, evry Art, Evry Science, and the Manner and Custom of Evry Living Thing, become Higher then all Height, Lower then all Depth, Comprehend in thy self the Quality of all the Creatures, of the fire, the Water, the Dry and the Moist, and conceiv likewise that thou canst at once be Evry where, in the Sea, in the Earth; at once understand thy self not yet Begotten in the Womb, yong, old, to be Dead, the Things after Death, and all these together; As also Times, Places, Deeds, Qualities, Quantities all this thou mayst do, and must do, or Els thou canst not yet understand God.[712]

Traherne commends his reader to transcend time and space through contemplation. This exercise takes a person to places lowest, highest, farthest, nearest, smallest, largest, particular and nondescript. Or to use our terms from Traherne, places actual, possible, or even impossible. The willingness to imagine helps one discover happiness. "Retirement (contemplation) is therfore Necessary to him, that Studieth Happiness, becaus it is the Gate that leadeth therunto. For in Retirement alone can a Man approach to that which is Infinit and Eternal. Infinity and Eternity are only to bee seen by the Inward Ey."[713]

Since this section is a discussion on memory and time, I want to give attention to a couple of passages in Traherne where he collapses distinctions normally in place because of temporality. The first comes from *Centuries of Meditations.*

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[712] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 464.
[713] *Inducements to Retirednes* in ibid., I: 5.

> Som times I should Soar abov the Stars and Enquire how the Heavens Ended, and what was beyond them? concerning which by no means could I receiv satisfaction. som times my Thoughts would carry me to the Creation, for I had heard now, that the World which at first I thought was Eternal, had a Beginning: how therfore that Beginning was, and Why it was; Why it was no sooner, and what was before; I mightily desired to Know. By all which I easily perceiv that my Soul was made to live in Communion with God, in all Places of his Dominion, and to be Satisfied with the Highest Reason in all Things.[714]

Here we see all three of our categories pertaining to memory: actual, possible, and impossible. The actual starts with the reference point of what has been physically observed, the stars and heavens. The possible appears in Traherne's question of "why it was no sooner." He is able to imagine other possibilities and wonders why they do not physically exist. Finally, the impossible shows itself in Traherne meeting God "in all Places of his Dominion" and that satisfaction occurring with exposure to "the Highest Reason." When it comes to time, it is clear in this text that Traherne is not simply imagining what does not exist, at least by modern sensibilities. He is instead leaving his place and time to encounter another. This cognition is a real experience for Traherne because communion with the Divine is real.[715]

The second passage that collapses temporal distinctions comes from *Christian Ethicks*. Here Traherne talks about the benefits of contemplation.

> There thou art to exercise thy strengths, and acquaint thy self with him, to look into all Ages and Kingdoms, to consider and know thy self, to exp[...]ciate in the Eternity and Immensity of GOD, and to gain that GODLINESS, which with real Contentment is Great Gain. There thou art to stir up thy self, by way of pure Remembrance, to recollect thy scattered and broken Thoughts, and to cloath thy self with all thy necessary Perfections… He is GOD-LIKE that is high and serious in all his Thoughts, humble and condescending in all his Actions, full of love and good-will to all the Creatures, and bright in the knowledge of all their Natures.[716]

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[714] *Centuries of Meditations* in ibid., V: 101.

[715] Ford considers this kind of contemplative theology a type of feasting, in this case a feasting on the wonder of being created and the divine encouragement to explore the questions embodiment generates. See David Ford, *Self and Salvation : Being Transformed*, *Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 275-80.

[716] Traherne, *Christian Ethicks, or, Divine Morality Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason / by Tho. Traherne*, 574-75.

The movement upward here is facilitated by recollection. There are noticeable Plotinian echoes with "scattered and broken Thoughts" being drawn into a purifying vision. This thought process employs the imagination to explore the infinite possibilities of createdness as well as the infinite God who can bring them to be. Singular knowledge obtained from particular life events surrenders to a more profound and comprehensive understanding of identity above all circumstances. Once a person obtains this brightness within, contentment is found. Clements concludes that in Trahernian logic, "a man cannot enjoy himself unless he enjoys God precisely because of the essential spiritual unity of God and man, because, at the least, God-likeness is the real nature of the inward man."[717] Inge calls this full remembrance an awakening of the infinite within.[718]

So we see that for Traherne time is not a constraining factor for truth finding. Truth is not discovered in a particular moment or place but rather is realized whenever the higher faculties of thought are employed. Memory, for Traherne, employs the infinite imaginings of things never known through the senses as well as the ever-changing perspectives one can recall from lived experiences. This comprehensive awareness helps one to see what is means to be fully human and created in the image of God.[719]

It is also notable that Traherne does not necessarily commend a mental path primarily confined to the eternal realms, again in contrast with the other two Platonists. Memory can bring together temporal and atemporal qualities into a single grand truth. In his discussion on the nature of an atom, we can see how this might occur.

> And if there be one Eternal… there is a Being by Whose Excellency Temporal Things are made to seem Eternal, Absent Things present, and an Atom Everlasting. And truly if Eternitie be infinit in Extent and yet Indivisible, upon the Union of these two Repugnancies so vastly Different, nothing can be well Expected but irreconcilable Harmonies, Amiable and incomprehensible Mysteries.[720]

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[717] Clements, 20.
[718] Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, 107.
[719] Ibid., 101.
[720] *Commentaries of Heaven* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, III: 338-39.

Traherne here is employing a kind of paradoxical frame for ideas that might otherwise resist one another. This faith in semantic coherence reminds us of the regard for simple Unity in the Plotinian One. Platonic unity allows a synthesis of disparaging concepts into a higher ideal. This way of tying words together to describe God's divine intention in human experience is a common device for Traherne, one which reveals in part a Platonist understanding of language against the backdrop of the ultimate and original meaning of all things.

5.3.3 Individuality with the Process of Illumination in Traherne

As we saw in the previous text from *Christian Ethicks*, remembrance makes available an interior brightness which helps reveal the nature of all things. Before examining the value of individuality in Trahernian metaphysics, I will explore illumination through his discussion on blindness.

Traherne speaks about "Spiritual Absence," which "ariseth out of Ignorance, or Forgetfulness."[721] This condition involves a failure to discern the purpose of objects in one's perception. This ignorance results in blindness, "an Absence of the Understanding, which by Degrees it so confirmed that it cannot see the Mysterie it hath forgotten."[722] The mind becomes darkened by this neglect. This confusion is not the intention of God for humanity. The mystery of divine love in all things was meant to be seen by the soul's eye from inception. But when willful forgetfulness commandeers human consciousness,

> God doth blind and harden sinners by withdrawing the Light, and his Grace from them: But then it is when they both are abused. first he gave them unto men. And when he gave them, he gave them for a Excellent End, not to damn and to aggravat their Misery, (as some madly enough affirm) but to enlighten and to save them.[723]

[721] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 39-47.
[722] Ibid., II: 41.
[723] *A Sober View* in ibid., I: 167.

Here we see two dynamics affecting perception, the voluntary abuse of God's grace and the active withdrawal of divine light when that abuse occurs.[724] This inward blindness comes with a restlessness in life, one where we cling to whatever enjoyments can be found on earth, regardless of their intended end. Rest comes when we realize the inherent value of all things since they are connected to the love of God.

> In order therfore to his satisfaction, it is meet to open his Eys, and removing that Blindness, that hinders him from seeing God's Kingdom, to discover the Treasure that is hid in the field of the Gospel, and to Shew those Heavenly things that are abov us and beneath us, before us, and behind us, within us and round about us.[725]

This opening of eyes is not an ascetical move of denial. As McIntosh points out,

> Traherne explores the difference between, on the one hand, seeing everything in a narrow way as instrumental to our own purposes, as something we either possess or control, and, on the other hand, seeing everything with a more understanding eye, that is, seeing its causes and purposes, seeing it as a beautiful feature of a vast mosaic.[726]

With the light of God ever available, humankind need only recollect those fragmentary conclusions brought on by any imperfect attempts to satisfy longing. All human experiences are invited into a spiritual reconsideration, one where the light of God restores a certain vision about the true nature of reality.

When we look back to our other Platonists, Traherne is doing something different with memory I think. Whereas in Plotinus and Ficino there is a confidence that an eternal soul can access its identity apart from physical experiences, Traherne seems to be saying that the real task is to access God's eternal presence in the living, embodied moment. Memory, as I stated before about Traherne, is calling into the mind all manner of thought. A fulfilled life is one where those ideas gain exposure to the light of God within, a light given by divine grace. In the realm of sensory experiences, we could call this illumination

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[724] *A Sober View* is an important piece from Traherne that reacts against a cognition model grounded in a Calvinist anthropology. For an example of his theological justification on this view, see *A Sober View* in ibid., I: 164-67.
[725] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 261.
[726] McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth : The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge*, 242.

"trans-sensible," where categories of distinction obtained from sensual reasoning surrender to "a wholly other essence than those in which they are apprehended." [727] Traherne does not commend a release of one kind of thing for another, but rather an expansion of all that is known into what could be known when we are aware of God's love.

One can quickly see how this invitation to explore all memories necessarily involves the realm of particular experiences. Even if individual memories are marred in some manner by sin, God works a wonder upon the soul to see life in an illuminated way once again. This logic appears in Traherne's discussion of how the goodness of God prevails despite the fall of Adam.

> yet then also his Wisdom wrought, and his goodness prevailed and his power Shined in overcoming the Misery. And that nothing might be Impossible, he purified his Kingdom and Kept it pure, by turning all those disasters into Delights and Victories. He opened a Gate to his Judgments and Mercies. He wrought by his Almighty power for his names Sake, which was mightily profaned, and lest his Creatures Should seem to prevail against him, wrought a greater Wonder then when he first Created all out of Nothing. It is a dreadfull and amazing verity. He brought Good out of Evil, Light out of Darkness, Happiness out of Misery, Joy out of Sorrow, Glory out of Shame, Lov out of hatred, Holiness out of Sin, and Beauty out of Deformity.[728]

This "verity" extends into the present moment "so that all is pure and Wise and Holy Still (as he orders the same) and Blessed and Glorious."[729] The spiritual journey in Traherne is, I think, intensely personal as illumination addresses malformed understandings and desires. The self is not annihilated in the end but rather restored to full potential for Good. "Their Blindness is to be healed by the Light of the understanding, their Dulness to be Quickened with Celestial Life… that they may be brought out into the Glorious Liberty of the Sons of God."[730]

It is time now to turn to our final discussion concerning the relationship of memory and innocence. As I shall show, Traherne reflects on innocence under this Platonist

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[727] Maritain, 228.
[728] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 291.
[729] Ibid.
[730] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 291.

scheme and advocates the innocent state as a mature posture of reflection on the realities that undergird life.

5.3.4 The Recovery of Trahernian Innocence through Recollection and Imagination

When it comes to innocence in Traherne, we are dealing with a topic that garnered immediate attention with his manuscript discoveries at the turn of the twentieth century[731] and a feature that continues to shape reception of Traherne's writing even to this day.[732] I have chosen to work through this entire discussion via the Platonist tradition because I think it helpfully interprets the paradigm of cognition Traherne employs as well as the supporting anthropology where his constructs are philosophically situated. That is not to say that Traherne can only be read in this fashion or under these particular metrics in an exclusive manner. But I do think his broader theology at work in his corpus resonates significantly with what is seen in Christian Platonism. By having greater fluency of that Platonist tradition, it is easier to see places where Traherne innovates as well as affirms that philosophical stream.

The topic of memory brings this intellectual history out acutely. And when we turn to innocence, Traherne shows an innovative adjustment in his anthropology that communicates well with Platonism and yet shows adaptability to a world in which emerging scientific philosophy challenged long held metaphysical claims. I will have three main subsections in this discussion and will again employ Traherne's cognitive categories of actual, possible, and impossible to map out his conceptual framework.

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[731] For example, "like Blake, like Whitman and Wordsworth, none of whom could possibly have seen his work, he believed the world to be altogether beautiful and life-giving and only a failure when convention had ruined man's vision." Willcox, 897.

[732] Elizabeth S. Dodd, *Boundless Innocence in Thomas Traherne's Poetic Theology : 'Were All Men Wise and Innocent ... '* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015).

5.3.5.1 Innocence and the Actual

As mentioned earlier, actual for Traherne entails lived experiences of embodiment. These are memories of what has happened to us in the flesh. Traherne, as many have noted, pays attention to his childhood as a window into innocence in extraordinary and sometimes peculiar ways.[733] But he does not automatically lift up all things childish as good.

> Childish Apprehensions take Lustre, and Splendor to be the Greatest Glory, because it most affecteth the Ey with Material Beauty, but to an Experienced Understanding, a Liberty, and Power to operate Upon all Objects in a Wise, and Holy Maner is far Greater, if it be well Employed.[734]

The passage above presents a progression of understanding in the mind. Simply being a child does not entail wise perception. But we can also identify texts where Traherne narrates a confident posture in seemingly personal childhood experiences, such as this statement from *Centuries of Meditations*: "Is it not Strange, that an Infant should be Heir of the whole World, and See those Mysteries which the Books of the Learned never unfold?"[735] There appears then to be some state of innocence for Traherne where knowledge of the forms situates all other sensual experiences. It is not a direct outcome of age. It is rather a frame of mind, I think, that infancy possesses ontologically in his theology.

Recalling what we have seen in Ficino regarding the soul's purity when a foetus, Traherne seems to be accepting a similar premise that at embodiment, before life's tutors confuse the mind, there exists a pure state of knowledge within, a pure contact with God. This is a recurring tenet of Traherne's Platonist anthropology. So when he reflects on his experiences as a child, Traherne is claiming certain cognitive capacities indicative of a pure

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[733] Newey sees the theme of childlikeness "at the center of Thomas Traherne's theological imagination." Newey, 19.
[734] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 498.
[735] *Centuries of Meditations* in ibid., V: 93.

soul now enfleshed. This state of sheer intellection, prior to corporeal confusion, is the origin of human thought. It is at the beginning of composite existence that a profound truth is understood: all that is comes as gift from God's love for one's enjoyment. Subsequent sensory experiences can translate to divergent interests which wander away from this understanding. The task of the spiritual life is to nurture the kind of thoughts about objects that confirm our divine identity. Thus Traherne writes,

> If Thoughts are such; such Valuable Things;
> Such reall Goods; such human Cherubins;
> Material Delights; transcendent Objects; Ends
> Of all God's Works, which most His Ey intends.
> O! What are Men, who can such Thoughts produce,
> So excellent in Nature, Valu, Use?[736]

This particular text is focused on the *actual* realm of memory I think, so I do want to address the question of whether Traherne believes he is accessing physical memories of a particular moment in time when exploring his own childhood. Under modern sensibilities and knowledge of how the brain develops, one is hard-pressed to take Traherne at his word. But if we allow the Platonist perspective to inform our understanding of thought, another option appears.

Since thought flows out of physical experience and participates in the eternal realm of forms, when Traherne accesses the truths behind his childhood memories, it is not the temporal information of those experiences that sits in first priority. It is instead the realization of those forms that comes to mind. So, in Platonist terms, even when Traherne is a physically mature adult, he is able to think just as he did while younger when it is a pure intellection of the ideas of God. He is quick to say in various ways that "the first light which shined in my Infancy in its Primitive and Innocent Clarity was totally Ecclypsed."[737] But the pathway back to primal clarity is not through a sophistication of discursive thought. The return back to the original state of mental purity involves a non-discursive engagement

[736] *The Inference II* in ibid., VI: 183.
[737] *Centuries of Meditations* in ibid., V: 96.

with the forms. The finer details of temporal experience are secondary to the transcendent truths they helped reveal to the infant soul. The adult soul can reclaim that manner of higher thought, even within the relative obscurity of discursive memories that, with today's sensibilities, we might find inaccessible, unreliable, or even imaginary. When he does commend childhood, it is by way of regression through memory to a state of deep and primal connection with God.[738] Traherne narrates his own experiences along these lines,[739] going back to memories of intuitive insight that predate the obscurities of later social experiences.

He also expands this thought experiment to Edenic imagination.[740] This exercise obviously goes beyond his personal sensual experiences. But when one considers it within his Platonist anthropological frame, the mind is essentially travelling to another place and remembering. Thus it is not an act of imagination but a real extension of the mind's faculty that is able to regress back to God.[741] Eden, in Traherne's theology, offers the immediacy of unity and enjoyment of divine love. It becomes a place where God's desire and humanity's enjoyment interact in fullness. I will explore this more in the next section on the *possible*.

5.3.5.2 Innocence and Adam (The Possible)

[738] Inge remarks that for Platonists of Traherne's day, the exercising of these divine faculties demonstrates the fullness of what it means to be human. See Inge, *Wanting Like a God : Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*, 101.
[739] One of the more well known passages comes from *Centuries of Meditations*. There he commends childhood as the primary instructor for spiritual awareness. See Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 94-95.
[740] Martz suggests "paradise, for Traherne, as for Peter Sterry, has always been essentially inward and spiritual." See Martz, 39. Metaphysically, I don't think Traherne would have located it this way given his description of the soul and its activities.
[741] Clements echoes some of Traherne's project I think. "Becoming like unto a child, traveling the *via mystica*, is the highest act of Self-knowledge: it is to undergo the transformation from egohood to Selfhood, to make that spiritual journey whereby man's Divine Image is restored, to be transhumanized, in Dante's phrase, from man into a god." See Clements, 19.

This understanding of cognition we are examining helps set the stage for the second arena of *possible* thoughts and how they relate to innocence. Traherne makes regular use of the Eden story and how that world might be present to the mind. As a reminder, memory for Traherne encompasses the translation of sensory experience as well as the imagination. When we come to the realm of the *possible*, we are talking about thoughts that are not created in the physical world but are conceivable to the human mind. Memory is the power that allows all manner of ideas to be recalled for the soul's consideration.

Adam and the Edenic tale seem to capture Traherne's attention throughout the corpus. Here are some notable examples.

> A man may talk face to face with God, even while He is as Naked as Adam. And by the Expence only of His Thoughts, purchase for Himself Eternal favor.[742]

> The Reach of Man's Understanding being Endless, all things are Equaly near therunto. The Sun is best enjoyed in its proper place, and is better many millions of leagues removed then if with us here. It is with us now more conveniently. So is the Sea: so is the Light and Beauty of the Indies; so are the fruits and fields of the Antipodes: so is Adam's Innocency.[743]

> yea there where the Body can never com, in all Ages. And when it pleaseth can in a Thought be present there, with Adam in Paradice[744]

> Tho the World was made wholy and Soly for Adam, yet was He the Idea only of Evry mans Glory. Gods Wisdom attaining so much that evry Man as well as He is the End of All Things. Adam and Eve and all their Posterity were Created for me.[745]

> Since therfore Jesus never seems to be but what He is, He is a Gardiner in very deed. An Ancient Gardener of the fairest Garden that ever was, for He planted Paradice.[746]

> For the high Exaltation whereby thou hast glorified every body, Especially mine, As thou didst thy Servant *Adam's* in *Eden*.[747]

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[742] *Inducements to Retirednes* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 11.
[743] *A Sober View* in ibid., I: 151.
[744] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 465.
[745] *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 223. This comes from an entry specifically on Adam. See *Commentaries of Heaven* in ibid., II: 214-26.
[746] *Church's Year-Book* in ibid., IV: 19. Traherne then goes on to describe the church as a "fenced Garden," extending Edenic imagination into the present experience of believers.
[747] *Aserious and patheticalContemplation* in ibid., IV: 325.

> I saw all in the Peace of Eden; Heaven and Earth did sing my Creators Praises and could not make more Melody to Adam, then to me. All Time was Eternity, and a Perpetual Sabbath.[748]
>
> A Broken and a contrite Heart is made up of Knowledge Sorrow and Lov: knowledge of our primitiv felicitie in Eden, Sorrow for our fall, Lov to God so Gratious and Redeeming.[749]
>
> Only what Adam in his first Estate,
> Did I behold;
> Hard Silver and Drie Gold
> As yet lay under Ground; my Blessed Fate
> Was more acquainted with the Old
> And Innocent Delights, which he did see
> In his Original Simplicitie.[750]
>
> But Thou must enter into Ages too
> And those His Chambers deckt with Treasures view:
> And all things by the Ey of Wisdom see
> For Thee prepared by the Dietie.[751]

From this brief scan of the corpus, it seems clear that Traherne utilizes the Eden story with regularity in his writings, primarily through the imagined life of Adam. Adam in Eden is both typological[752] and participatory for Traherne. In describing prelapsarian life, Adam is portrayed as one naturally relating to God.[753] To become Adam, then, is to experience this state of pure relationship with the Creator. Traherne practices this kind of remembrance by entering into Edenic innocency (and other Biblical moments) as if it were his own.

> Adam's Innocency, Noah's Ark, Aaron's Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, Our Saviors Cross, the Primitive Counsels, and the Learning of the fathers, the Day of

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[748] *Centuries of Meditations* in ibid., V: 92.
[749] *Select Meditations* in ibid., V: 265.
[750] *Eden* in ibid., VI: 8.
[751] This passage appears under the subheading of "Adams Fall" in *The Ceremonial Law*. Ibid., VI: 199.
[752] For discussion on the fascination with prelapsarian speech in Traherne's day, see Cynthia Saenz, "Language and the Fall: The Quest for Prelapsarian Speech in Thomas Traherne and his Contemporaries" in Jacob Blevins and Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies., *Re-Reading Thomas Traherne : A Collection of New Critical Essays*, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007), 65-91.
[753] In *The Kingdom of God* he writes "Speaking in the Primitive and pure Language of Eden, Nothing was natural, but what was Natural to Adam there. There it was natural to hate Evil, and Love Good; to rejoyce in Happiness, and avoid Misery; to be Thankfull for Benefits and desire Glory, Wisdom, Joy, and Pleasure." See Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 132.

> Judgement, the Things that are, and the Joys of Heaven: All serving us best in their Proper Places, and most conveniently Seated round about us.[754]

Durr labels this activity as "imaginative vision."[755] But this can be more a substantive experience for Traherne if he is showing an affinity for Plotinian emanation and divine ideas. With all things proceeding from God and the contemplative path being how one begins the return to simple unity, then these acts of imagination are moves towards a state of non-distinction in light of everything's origin. To travel time and space, which many of these ideas require, and to enter the awareness of Adam, is to assume a common supra-sensual reality. As Matar phrases it, "the soul-seeking God would stretch forth beyond all limits, intellectual or physical, towards the divine."[756] Since humanity is *imago dei*, the imaginative capacities are implanted by God to stir this chasing after infinity itself. Traherne embraces this kind of logic and in Adam he is able to see the world as Adam saw it. The truths revealed in those imaginings are not bound to temporality in a discursive manner but are known intellectually in the non-discursive catalog. The transfer of knowledge from Adam's experiences to Traherne's requires a shared metaphysical substratum, or as the Platonist terms it, the Intellect. The proof that this exists, for Traherne, is that his consciousness is transformed as Adam's was while in Eden.

The Edenic thought experiments position human memory as a doorway into this estate of innocency. It is through these imaginings that Traherne discovers some of the hidden treasures of contemplation. While I have chosen in this section to focus particularly on Adam as an example of the *possible,* Traherne extends this kind of cognition to numerous other objects in the world and finds them all equally infused with God's

[754] *A Sober View* in ibid., I: 151.
[755] R. A. Durr, *Poetic Vision and the Psychedelic Experience* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1970), 8.
[756] Matar, 62.

beckoning love. It's time now to turn to the final arena, things *impossible*, where I will discuss the place of mystical union in Traherne's return to innocence.

5.3.5.3 Innocence and the Impossible

My final section focuses on spiritual experiences that Traherne identifies as impossible. As a reminder of his statement in *The Kingdom of God*, "It is impossible to See the Kingdom" where the "Fullness of the Godhead lodg."[757] The impossible relates to the sheer presence of God, an unadulterated and pure vision. In mystical terms, the issue I want to examine now is how Traherne thinks about mystical union as a Christian Platonist. If seeing God without mediation is impossible, then how should one understand stanzas like this:

> Natures Corruption he doth hate
> Seeking his former State;
> Or rather that Exalted one,
> Which truly is Divine,
> To be Enjoyd, when on the Throne
> Of Glory he doth Shine.
> Where all his Body Shall be purified
> Flesh turnd to sense, and sense DEIFIED.[758]

On one hand, it appears Traherne allows for a complete Otherness of God that is inaccessible. On the other hand, there is a transformation at work in the diligent seeker where the divine within comes to life with right thinking.

With this disparity in view, I first want to turn to Andrew Louth and his summary of the mystical life under a Platonist scheme. According to Louth, the soul that achieves contemplation when "the whole world of ultimate reality is seen as a single whole, and the meaning even of sensible reality becomes clear… the soul seems to transcend itself, to be rapt out of itself. At the same time, this ecstasy is a sort of *home-coming*. The soul

[757] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 337.
[758] *The Kingdom of God* in ibid., I: 408.

becomes what it truly is in its deepest self."[759] So for Traherne to suggest that some sort of deification can happen within fits the larger tradition we have been examining overall.

But does someone following Traherne's philosophy no longer experience a sense of distinction from God once this elevated state is achieved? Traherne emphatically states "Shall any thing be too hard for God! With him nothing is Impossible." Though seeing God's kingdom may be impossible from a human standpoint, God's love compels a bridging of the chasm. Divine initiative plays a key role by providing a reliable light by which we can understand and participate in.

Traherne turns to Plato's *Dialogues* to help explain spiritual vision. Plato, of course, attributes three items to the process of vision: the eye, the object, and light. Traherne translates this theologically.

> So is this Intelligible Light whereby we understand, An object that may be known and the meanes by which wee see things, and that is God… How much therefore must the soul of Man, be Mingled with Eternity that Deriveth Light from all its parts: And what need he hath to be Conversant with the Deity, since God is the Light of his understanding, in whose Bosom, and manner of enjoyment, He Seeth all things, Infinitly a bove a Beast, and like a God must He be, to whom all these are for ever Open.[760]

Here we see similar language of "like a God," but Traherne locates the light of discernment outside the self, not within. This then requires a certain hierarchy of being that one would expect in Christian Platonism. While that illumination may have an infinite realm for expanded consciousness, the power that enables the entire process only flows from God. The phrase "like a God" preserves that steady distinction.[761]

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[759] Louth, 189.
[760] *Select Meditations* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, V: 305.
[761] This commitment in Traherne that distinguishes divine light from human perceptive capacities makes Lacanian analysis problematic. While the linguistic structure may resonate with that approach, it does ignore a key commitment seen in Traherne. DeNeef, following Lacan, remarks "there is no need … to suppose any Platonic or Christian sect in order for this to be so: it is a structural condition of our existence." See his Lacanian treatment in DeNeef, 91-178. Snider frames the mirroring in Traherne more along Platonist tradition. See Snider.

To come back to our original dilemma then, it seems Traherne preserves the otherness of God in his understanding of divine light and yet commends a life of contemplation because God has made that impossible vision of Godself available through a refinement of the capacities within the soul. This beatific vision does not collapse identities ultimately. Instead, it draws the soul into its fullness and power, reminding it of what was already latent within and calling it into an ongoing dynamic interaction with eternal love.

As we anticipate Hobbes in the next section, I want to summarize a few key elements in Traherne that will help us see his developed logic more against the backdrop of a Hobbesian epistemology. First, Traherne's view of memory allows the mind to re-evaluate information in any form from any source. The collection of ideas receives affirmation because of those mental capacities which can transform perception through illumination. Second, this re-learning makes use of one's particular experiences that ultimately supports an integration of personal experiences with cosmological claims. Finally, innocence in Traherne is celebrated because it encapsulates a manner of thought most in line with full human potential. To become innocent is to become fully alive in Trahernian theology.

5.4.1 The Dynamics of Memory in Hobbes

Distinct cognitive boundaries are created by Hobbes which limit human understanding to the realm of sensual information. But before I present the Hobbesian alternative, I want to bring to the front a tenet he holds on the phenomenon of faith. This will help frame the value he attributes to memory. In *De Cive*, Hobbes says "Taking *Faith* in the universal sense, an *Object of Faith,* i.e. *the thing which is believed,* is always a *proposition* (i.e. an affirmative or negative assertion) which we allow to be true."[762] So any

[762] Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, XVIII, 4.

belief must find some form of text so that mental reasoning can then digest it. As we consider what content memory makes available to the mind, this tenet bifurcates knowledge into categories. Some thoughts will not have a reliable text and thus become ancillary. Some considerations will be describable and verifiable, and thus become true. And some thoughts that remain outside of words and cognitive repeatability will have no useful reflective purpose.

Hobbes defines knowledge as memory, even commending Plato's insight on that ancient conclusion.[763] Given the above logic on truth I just spoke about, whatever memory contains for Hobbes must move into some type of reliable verbal proposition for that knowledge to have benefit. Since the faculty of internal reasoning associates words with ideas, then knowledge is primarily an action of an individual to find language for ideas. Memory is in service to that cognitive production.

This move to interior logic is further intensified in part because Hobbes "insists on the incomprehensibility of God and the impossibility of a positive, literal description of his attributes."[764] Without language there can be no knowledge, so if God or Godself's attributes are beyond text, they cannot come into proper mental discourse. Herbert helps us see how this philosophy positions human knowing. "Subtly, the claim that we know only what we make transforms itself into the conviction that knowing is making, that intelligibility and order are the products of human creativity and, finally, knowledge is power."[765] This autonomy within does not require any external agent without for clarification on meaning.

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[763] ibid.
[764] Willis B. Glover, "God and Thomas Hobbes," in *Hobbes Studies*, ed. K.C. Brown (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 159.
[765] Herbert, 122.

Compare this to what we have seen in our Platonists. Knowledge for them exists without and, through the power of self-reflection, knowledge is discovered within, primarily as a reorienting encounter with external truth. Along these same lines, when a soul remembers something eternal in nature, that capacity for awareness is also bestowed by the divine. So we can see here how Hobbes turns an about face on this paradigm when it comes to the externality of truth. Memories in his philosophy can only reinforce what one's reasoning previously concluded. External objects mean little until subjective meaning is determined.

This restriction of the mind towards only what is inwardly validated via text harmonizes with Hobbes's understanding of natural religion and its deist tones.[766] Whatever the world conveys to us through the senses, those images await internal verbalization. Human reasoning can parse fancy from fiction, but both categories of thought sit under the reasoning capacities of the corporeal mind. Recall that in Traherne there is a far different spectrum of memory and where it leads. Whether, as Traherne would say, something is *actual*, *possible*, or *impossible*, all thoughts recalled help direct the mind towards a revelatory God. In Hobbes there is no need to look externally for correlation of any information since human reasoning itself, initially and subsequently, defines any experience and what it could mean.

As for the images stored in memory, Hobbes considers physical phenomena to always be in flux. This instability creates a liability within the function of memory. Hobbes says "we inhabit a flux in which there is more going on than can be observed at one moment, and too much change to permit of our recollections remaining valid for long."[767] Even should one have precision in one's specific recollection, the sheer amount of

[766] Tuck, *Hobbes*, 80.
[767] J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time : Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), 156.

information available prohibits a comprehensive conclusion by any one person. Hobbes attends to this fallibility of incompleteness by commending a need for social discourse in the pursuit of knowledge. In Alan Ryan's view, "Hobbes remains an epistemological individualist, but recognizes the place of social discipline in epistemic reliability. Unless we are controlled by common standards we may fly off in all directions."[768]

When contrasting this indeterminacy to what we have discussed in our Platonists, Hobbes finds memory to be functionally incomplete in a couple of important aspects. First, memories cannot capture any idea in its entirety. Second, memories lose value over time as motion continues to bombard the mind with new information to process. In order to gain knowledge, dialogue is required. Even then, the power to agree to some new knowledge has to be centralized in order to make any sort of progress for human learning. With our Platonists, those ineffable experiences with the divine lead the mind to a greater (and simpler) comprehension of reality. Remembrance serves as a platform for further exploration of the now and what else there might be behind the signs recalled to the mind.

There is also a noticeable lack of skepticism concerning human thought in this stream of Platonism we have been looking at. Which is to say, Platonic thinking upon the forms leads to a certain faith in the non-discursive shift of consciousness. It is not fettered by the need for text in each act of thought. This comes out noticeably in Traherne, where all things lead back to God's love, even reflections that at first glance seem shadowed or indeterminate.

I want to turn now to the topic of individuality and its place within illumination. As I shall show, his mechanical empiricism transforms the illuminating light from above into a

[768] Alan Ryan, "Hobbes and Individualism," in *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes*, ed. G. A. J. and Ryan Rogers, Alan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 87.

solipsistic process divorced from outside influences, which then carries a negative impact into the self.

5.4.2 Individuality and Illumination in Hobbes

In *Leviathan* Hobbes remarks: "The decay of Sense in men waking, is not the decay of the motion made in sense; but an obscuring of it, in such manner, as the light of the Sun obscureth the light of the Starres; which starrs do no less exercise their vertue by which they are visible, in the day, than in the night."[769] Hobbes here finds memory to be a deterioration of experiential information, like stars receding against the emerging daylight. But the prescriptive towards mental clarity is quite different.

Where Traherne commends a remembrance to engage noetic abilities, Hobbes instead fixates on the intricacies within the physical mechanisms for thought when sensory information deteriorates. For Hobbes, once a sense is impressed by an external object, perception depends completely on bodily organs retaining motion in some fashion.[770] Memory is but one function of this mental process. Hobbes also discusses fancy, imagination, experience, prudence, and wit in an attempt to explain reasoning.[771] This rationale is captured succinctly in *Leviathan*.

> By this it appears that Reason is not as Sense, and Memory, borne with us; nor gotten by Experience onely; as Prudence is; but attayned by Industry; first in apt imposing of Names; and secondly by getting a good and orderly Method in proceeding from the Elements, which are Names, to Assertions made by Connexion of one of them to another; and so to Syllogismes, which are the Connexions of one Assertion to another, till we come to a knowledge of all the Consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand; and that is it, men call SCIENCE. And whereas Sense and Memory are but knowledge of Fact, which is a

[769] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, II.
[770] Particularly the brain, nerves, arteries, and heart. See Thorpe, 85.
[771] For a thorough treatment on this, see Thorpe's chapter "Hobbes' Theory of Imagination" in ibid., 79-117.

> thing past, and irrevocable; *Science* is the knowledge of Consequences, and dependance of one fact upon another.[772]

Memory is situated within his larger definition of science. Humanity searches out the consequences of sensory experience stored in the body, rifling through prior understandings in a compounded effort to order truths impressed from engagement with the external world. Hobbes sees this kind of material reasoning process as stable and amenable to civil peace. Conversely, superstitions tied to invisible and non-sensory ideas lead society towards volatility, fostering all kinds of false religion.[773] In *Leviathan*, Hobbes calls this realm of superstition the "kingdome of darknesse."[774] Satan is the prince of this domain since he is the prince of illusion, Satan's kingdom is allegorically extended to all who wish "*to obtain dominion over men in this present world, endeavour by dark, and erroneous Doctrines, to extinguish in them the Light, both of Nature, and of the Gospell; and so to dis-prepare them for the Kingdome of God to come.*" [775]

To avoid chaos, it is necessary for all knowledge to be derived from corporeal experiences in Hobbesian philosophy. As the previous excerpt shows, Hobbes thinks in categories of light and darkness, truth and error. But when truth is confined to a materialist causality, it then requires a re-evaluation of divine activity. For example, Hobbes cannot allow the mind to consider anything infinite as that might allow metaphysical constructs to emerge that cannot be communicated or quantified through language.

> It is also evident, that there can be no Image of a thing Infinite: for all the Images, and Phantasmes that are made by the Impression of things visible, are figured: but Figure is a quantity every way determined: And therefore there can bee no Image

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[772] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, V.
[773] "By which means it hath come to passe, that from the innumerable variety of Fancy, men have created in the world innumerable sorts of Gods. And this Feare of things invisible, is the naturall Seed of that, which every one in himself calleth Religion; and in them that worship, or feare that Power otherwise than they do, Superstition." See ibid., XI.
[774] ibid., XLIV.
[775] ibid.

> of God: nor of the Soule of Man; nor of Spirits, but onely of Bodies Visible, that is, Bodies that have light in themselves, or are by such enlightened.[776]

So it is not a matter here that Hobbes does not advocate an improvement in human contemplation. Instead, we see that illumination of the mind is connected with an increasing empirical alacrity.[777] This is so much so that Hobbes is willing to subordinate any supposed hierarchy of knowledge to the power of human rationality. The Hobbesian mind is able to generate its own light and nurture its own growth through empirical investigation of corporeal existence.

This commitment has a negative effect on the stability of one's sense of personhood. Personal reasoning that is severed from authoritative powers[778] is rightly framed as autonomous and individualistic. But if personal memories exist in flux and lack connection to a larger scheme of reality, then one's self-concept cannot be structured from within or without. Reasoning without stable content to consider prefaces method above meaning or, as Ryan phrases it, "Knowledge, then, is an individual possession, which each of us can secure for himself or herself."[779] Thus, meaning does not exist until a person decides it is there. When we compare this to Traherne's invitation to explore everything external for hidden divine treasures that somehow resonate with capacities within, the Trahernian vision ensures a cognitive connectedness and communicability. Hobbes, on the contrary, leans towards isolation, both from personal experiences themselves where meaning is only ascribed and thus never encountered externally, and from social disconnect where meaning is never mutually experienced unless people collectively agree that it is happening.

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[776] ibid., XLV.
[777] For a recent discussion on whether Hobbes employs purely formal reasoning in his philosophy, see Gert, "Hobbes on Reason."
[778] A necessary move in Hobbes as "authority stands in the way of the growth of knowledge." See Ryan, in *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes*, 84.
[779] Ibid., 87.

This shift also ties into Hobbes's larger political project. As Johnston points out, "the ultimate root of Hobbes's argument lies in his recognition that men can be moved by imaginary rewards and punishments, and that these imaginary sanctions can exercise even greater power of men's actions than the real benefits of life and the real evil of death."[780] Any power for human transformation must lie within human agency for the political system to maintain control. This social vision leads Hobbes to attack external agency in any form as it can subvert the collective will of a sovereign state.

In our Platonist tradition, it is the power of divine light that sets the course for human improvement. Humanity awaits illumination and creates the right kind of internal conditions that allow God's light to create a transformative effect in society. Hobbes's light of progress exists as well, but its locus is within the material processes of the body and its potency expands through propositional reasoning.

I want to turn now to the topic of temporality. For the Platonists, the eternal nature of God compels createdness towards a fullness rooted in timelessness. Hobbes critically addresses this commitment as well and as I shall show, he divorces the notion of permanent qualities from any substantive interaction with human cognition.

5.4.3 The Hobbesian Attitude Toward Temporality

A critical element in Plotinian metaphysics is the concept of eternity. For Plotinus, the One is outside of measured time. This means the divine exists in its own dimension of temporality, the eternal now or *nunc stans*.[781] This divine quality contrasts with the

[780] Johnston, 149.
[781] See footnote 34 for a concise history on this Platonic definition in Leo Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, *Studien Und Texte Zur Geistesgeschichte Des Mittelalters* (New York: Brill, 1990), 178.

human dilemma of being ensnared in the vagaries of measured time. Hobbes attacks this philosophy of time.

> For the meaning of *Eternity*, they will not have it to be an Endlesse Succession of Time; for then they should not be able to render a reason how Gods Will, and Praeordaining of things to come, should not be before his Praescience of the same, as the Efficient Cause before the Effect, or Agent before the Action; nor of many other their bold opinions concerning the Incomprehensible Nature of God. But they will teach us, that Eternity is the Standing still of the Present Time, a *Nunc-stans* (as the Schools call it;) which neither they, nor any else understand, no more than they would a *Hic-stans* for an Infinite greatnesse of Place.[782]

Here Hobbes shows how his mechanical causation requires a redefinition of time, one where a series of events occur along a timeline. To place God outside of that causality chain is to allow for divine influence outside of human cognition, an untenable conclusion for the Hobbesian epistemology.

Time, and the memories within it, can only be sequentially explained. As a result, human knowledge expands as time is remembered accurately in a quantifiable sense. This alignment by Hobbes dismisses any value of imagination and fantasy from human thought, at least when it comes to the science of cognition.[783] Compare this to Traherne, where remembrance embraces the wanderings of the mind in and outside of time itself. For Traherne, thought can run wherever it chooses and the conclusions from that activity are a gracious recognition of that divinely-graced human capacity. Even if a thought cannot be categorized as Hobbes might wish, it still retains value in Traherne and communicates identity to the thinker because it demonstrates transcendent activity. It is not necessary for Traherne to believe his soul is remembering its past *per se*. It is sufficient simply to let the mind chase the unfathomable, wherever those questions may arise. Hobbes does not affirm this kind of mental activity. As I turn to our final discussion of innocence and

[782] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XLVI.
[783] Fiaschi explores how transcendence can be understood in Hobbes despite his rejection of medieval metaphysics. See Giovanni Fiaschi, "Hobbes and Theology," *Hobbes Studies* 26, no. 1 (2013), http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1163/18750257-02601001.

recollection, the Hobbesian anthropology will position itself antithetically to what we have seen in our Platonist tradition on memory.

5.4.4 Innocence and Recollection in Hobbes

To reiterate what we have seen in Hobbes thus far, the corporeal soul does not contain memories nor have a capacity to recollect a world of forms. The organs of the body replace any incorporeal faculties and ideas must find verbal articulation if they are to be valid. Likewise, the Platonist mental reaching towards the ineffable One is replaced by Hobbes with a reaching inward towards reason's light which grows stronger as its logical mannerisms are developed. When it comes to this topic of memory and the recollected innocent mind, Hobbes offers another clarifying contrast. To show this, I want to take what we see in Traherne's estate of innocency and set it alongside Hobbes's state of nature.

Traherne's portrait of innocence extends the Platonist mind into imaginative places. Traherne does not bind the experience of memory to a concrete moment in time. He is more interested in encouraging the self-reflexive realization that thought leads into infinite possibilities. When the mind is pure, it is untutored by others. Raw thought, before influence, recreates the estate of innocency which Eden typifies. Once there mentally, Traherne sees this as a grounding influence on further spiritual progression. If one experiences that purity of thought, one can work backwards, so to speak, into other thoughts corrupted by ignorant tutors and redeem the mind back to its intended purposes.

Trahernian innocence, then, becomes a beginning point for human potential. Recovering innocence as a mental exercise leads a person into a more harmonious relationship with God's desires for herself. For Hobbes, though, innocence involves desires to embrace pleasure or avoid pain. When people come together, these primitive passions

in solitude begin to clash. A philosophy for civil governance then becomes crucial to human flourishing. Hobbes considers the state of nature to be least desirable and thus non-directive. "So, for Hobbes, not only has the state of nature become the situation in which humans naturally begin, but the actions which they undertake in it will generate their societies."[784] The origin of life and the practices that arise in that state of nature will eventually be shed as conflicts arise with others. The state of nature is ultimately left behind for the common good.

When we review what we have seen in our Platonists, Hobbes's ontology puts the burden on human collective endeavors to define what being human might involve. It has a present and future orientation. With our Platonists, the experience of being human intellectually reveals truths about the world and what undergirds it from its foundations. This is more of a past orientation, or better put, a reality understood outside the confines of marked time. The construction of a Platonist society is secondary to the fundamental anthropology that transforms the individual morally. In the Hobbesian system, moral transformation comes through the exercise of power and the viability of the local social contract to articulate concerns of all involved.

It is ironic, I think, that though Hobbes holds up individual truth (one person simply cannot think what other does), in the end his society has little place for a full articulation of individual truth since that will ultimately breed conflict with others. In our Platonist tradition, there is greater confidence that the transformation of the individual leads to transformation of society. Human minds that embrace the infinite mystery of their

[784] Goldsmith, in *The Rise of Modern Philosophy : The Tension between the New and Traditional Philosophies from Machiavelli to Leibniz*, 334.

existence begin to operate from a common, non-discursive, center[785] which then translates to common language for whatever endeavors any community might pursue.

When it comes to any sort of recollected innocence in Hobbesian philosophy, the past offers little to inform direction in life. The desires of the primitive, isolated state of nature do contribute to a social vision, but only as a liability amid other competing interests. So there is little to recall in the embodied life that has worth in light of the present moment. "The state of nature is the situation that would prevail if mankind were made up of people able to slay one another, destitute of all mutual fondness, strangers to any contractual arrangements and political institutions."[786]

[785] This could also be framed as a trust in universals (Traherne) versus a trust in pragmatics (Hobbes). For a discussion along these lines, see G. K. Callaghan, "Nominalism, Abstraction, and Generality in Hobbes," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (2001), http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/27744872.

[786] Francois Tricaud, "Hobbes' Conception of the State of Nature," in *Perspectives on Hobbes*, ed. G. A. J. and Ryan Rogers, Alan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 110.

Conclusion and Future Trahernian Trajectories

In the beginning of this thesis, I made the claim that Traherne's reception as a theologian and philosopher needed a more substantial engagement. The early tendency to frame his work as proto-Romantic often obscured any thorough analysis of his theological commitments as a Christian Platonist. A review of the literature showed this gap to be significant, with few extended treatments available that provide theological readings of Traherne. I have particularly selected his use of innocence in the corpus in order to evaluate his theology from the perspective of a tradition within Christian Platonism. This area was chosen because it is one of the more prominent features in his writings which often, mistakenly, lent credence to the Romantic interpretation Traherne received.

The discussion has been presented anthropologically. The theological tradition Traherne participates in carries with it certain commitments about what it means to be human and how that identity affects cognition. So the argument examined specific elements within that anthropology ultimately to create a scaffolding which helps interpret Trahernian innocence. The areas I addressed in the chapters were the idea of evil, the nature of the soul, the role of the senses, and the place of memory. With those aspects appropriately explored, I finally suggested that Traherne's advocacy of innocence should also flow out of his ongoing endorsement and appropriation of Christian Platonism, a tradition which entails an emanationist paradigm of reality where one experiences cognitive transformation through a participation in divinity and divine ideas.

I have also chosen to put Traherne in dialogue with influences recognized by scholarship. I performed a type of primary text exegetical comparison to accentuate interactions with Plotinus and Ficino and to show the moments when Traherne, as a

Platonist, both affirms and innovates within that philosophical stream. Hobbes, a systematic thinker with materialist tendencies, was well known by groups like the Cambridge Platonists. The Hobbesian vision of humanity, put alongside Traherne, has helped us to see how engaged and systematic Traherne was with the debates of his time over reason, being, and community. The Trahernian vision for human potential shows its explanatory power over and against the fragmenting empirical paradigm Hobbes espouses.

So in chapter two, our discussion of evil has helped us to see how Traherne places confidence in the human mind. Traherne exhibits a trust that God has empowered humanity to perceive the divine. That awareness can be inhibited by poor customs or tutoring, but never damaged irreparably. We used Augustine's writings to help locate Traherne in this regard and dealt with the topics of matter, desire, and freedom. Traherne affirms createdness (*contra* Manichaeism) and attributes evil to the inappropriate exercise of freedom in an effort to satisfy desire (*pro* Platonism). I also reviewed Traherne's Christology in this regard and showed his attendance to Christian orthodoxy when it comes to mediation of sin.

In our discussion of soul in chapter three, I portrayed the mental capacities that experience transcendence for Traherne. This was important to surface because of the soul's significance in the Platonist tradition. I reviewed the idea of *logos* as organizing principle and compared higher and lower functions of the soul in cognition. This treatment helped us to see in what ways Traherne carries forward a Platonic metaphysical framework in order to explain cognitive possibilities. Traherne is less technical in that respect. Whereas in Plotinus and Ficino a finer detail is given on how a soul attends to things divine and things material, Traherne frames the faculty as a sacramental instrument to understand the infinite nature of God's love in all things. Hobbes seems interested to run the same sort of philosophical processes, but his redefining of the soul as corporeal and

causally linking it to material phenomena introduced a schism in cognition that Traherne avoids as a Platonist.

In chapter four, the discussion on the senses has illuminated Traherne's philosophy of embodiment. I reviewed this corporeal faculty in the areas of estimation, mechanics, and service. I have shown that there is an important connectedness of body and soul in Trahernian theology. The senses empower the mind to live out its end properly and Traherne's spirituality insists on the enjoyment of createdness, not the abandonment of it. The senses also helped highlight how Traherne situates himself philosophically against the rise of experimentalism in his day. In this chapter Hobbes helped us to see how isolation of the senses from reasoning is problematic for the integration of other human reflective capacities. Traherne's view of the senses is non-dualistic and yet conciliatory towards the process of scientific discovery.

Finally, chapter five on memory is where I offered a reinterpretation of Trahernian innocence that is more conversant with the Platonic model of cognition explored throughout this thesis. I first looked at the dynamics of memory in order to see what content is being thought about there. I also discussed temporality because one of the interpretative blocks with Traherne is whether he is inciting temporal memories and how that may indicate a type of Romanticism. We saw how remembrance in Traherne, both temporal and atemporal, is also a participation in divine ideas and how that understanding helps reframe Traherne's backward glances as such. I also gave attention to how one returns to innocence as a Platonist. We saw the important of imagination as well as recollection in that process and how Traherne throws open all manners of recall an encounter of the divine when the mind is aligned with that reality. Hobbes, in this chapter, helped us to see how any sort of primitive past in his philosophy means little for present

and future collective endeavors. That Hobbesian dismissiveness ultimately isolates the individual both intellectually and socially.

With my comparative analysis now completed, a few key insights have emerged about Traherne that I think will be helpful for future scholarship. First, this argument puts forward a Platonist tradition Traherne knew well via Plotinus and Ficino and has advocated an interpretative awareness of those substantive influences, especially in engagements with more enigmatic texts in Traherne's corpus. This philosophical harmony invites a continued exploration between Christian Platonism and Traherne when it comes to his theological endeavors. If Traherne is largely employing a Platonist model of cognition, then further research into those available influences may reveal more nuances to Traherne's accent within that tradition.

Second, bringing Hobbes alongside this argument throughout helps show Traherne's engagement with cultural shifts in epistemology on a broader scale. Hobbes is certainly not the standard bearer for these changes, but he has served in this argument as a reliable foil that helps us better understand Trahernian illumination theory and its potential usefulness in that day. Hobbes has also helped us to see the resiliency of the Platonist stream we have identified. While he attends to many of the same projects with mechanical commitments, the end result shows numerous signs of instability in his philosophy that undermine confidence in human cognition. Whether it is his attempt to define evil as social strife, his desire to centralize individual concerns in a manner akin to Platonic *logos,* his insistence on a corporeal soul to accommodate his cognition model, his preference for a subjective reasoning power attached to sensory processes, or his views on the unreliability of memory, Hobbes more times than not introduces instabilities which darken the cognitive prospects for life in the flesh. Traherne's Christian Platonism, to the

contrary, celebrates createdness consistently and holds up particular mental abilities that support a sense of human flourishing within and without.

Finally, locating Traherne philosophically helps us to see his pastoral undertones. Traherne's writings regularly speak to the human condition for the purposes of a life lived well. His philosophy is offered with a spirit of charity so that his reader may know just how the world may be all hers as well.

> … to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed. It whispers in evry Gale of Wind. and Speaks aloud in Thunder. It is trampled on the Earth and Crowns us in the Heavens. It burnes in the Sun, and Shines in the Stars. It is Constant in the Moon, and guides her changes to Wonderfull Ends. It breaths in the Air and communicates the Light. It Shades like a Banner in evry Cloud, and drops down upon us in Evry Shower. It is hidden in Evry Root, and Sowen in Evry Seed. It flourishes in Evry Flower, and in Evry Spire of Grass; aspires to our Happiness, in Evry Tree brings forth fruit for our Contentment. It melts Seas, and Springs, and Fountaines, flowers in the Streams of Living Water in Evry River, Lives in Beasts Flies in the Fowles of the Air, paints the Peacocks plumes and sings in the Nitingale. It Swims and playes in the Fishes of the Sea; Sees us in Men, and makes us to See them. It is apparant in its Laws, in all its Ways, and in all its Works throughout the Universe. It Ministers to us in the Holy Angels, it Beautifies all Ages with Miracles and Visions, and Filles the face of the Earth with Cities and Kingdoms. Even Dunghills, and Wildernesses disclose its Sweetness, Evry Creature being made so usefull in its place and order. It inspires us with Life, and approacheth neerer. It incorporates in our Bodies, and dwelleth in our Souls. It lays hold on our Hands, and Strengthneth our Ankle Bones; It warms our Heart with its Vital Heat, and fanneth our Lungs with Air. It speaketh in our Tongue, is hid in the Labyrinth of our Ears, and seen in the Sight of our Ey, in the Beauty of our Cheeks, in the light of the understanding.[787]

[787] *The Kingdom of God* in Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, I: 313.

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