CHAPTER 1

The View from Above and the Vision of the Heart

In *Paradiso* 27, just before the pilgrim falls upward into the Primum Mobile and leaves behind the starry sphere, Beatrice asks him to look down at the world below, just one more time: "Adima / il viso e guarda come tu se' vòlto" (*Par*. 27.77–78). The narrator then continues:

> Da l'ora ch'ïo avea guardato prima
> I' vidi mosso me per tutto l'arco
> Che fa dal mezzo al fine il primo clima;
>
> Sì ch'io vedea di là da Gade il varco
> Folle d'Ulisse, e di qua presso il lito
> Nel qual si fece Europa dolce carco.
>
> E più mi fora discoverto il sito
> Di questa aiuola; ma 'l sol procedea
> Sotto i mie' piedi un segno e più partito.
>
> La mente innamorata, che donnea
> Con la mia donna sempre, di ridure
> Ad essa li occhi più che mai ardea. (*Par* 27.79–90)

Dante's deictic rhetoric ("di là ... e di qua ...") gives us a remarkable sense of space, dramatizing the gestures of the pilgrim in our mind, whom we imagine as standing high above Cadiz, turning his eyes now to the wastes of the ocean in the West, and now back across the Mediterranean toward Phoenicia in the East. We can follow the movement of his gaze. Like Hugh of St Victor standing in front of his map (see introduction), the poet guides his readers' viewing experience by pointing to this, and now to that. The poet also alludes (27.79–80) to a previous instance in which he was made to look down at the world, spread out below him, like a mappamundi unrolled at his feet.[1] In the pilgrim's final moments

1 For uses of the *mappamundi* in relation to the *Comedy*, see Peter Armour, "Dante e l'imago mundi del primo Trecento"; Theodore Cachey, "Cosmographic

on Saturn before ascending to the Heaven of the Fixed Stars, Beatrice had told him, "rimira in giù, e vedi quanto mondo / sotto li piedi già esser ti fei" (22.128–29). Beatrice adds the reason she wants him to take in such a "view from above":

> Sì che'l tuo cor, quantunque può, giocondo
> S'appresenti a la turba triunfante
> Che lieta vien per questo etera tondo.

The narrator continues:

> Col viso ritornai per tutte quante
> Le sette spere, e vidi questo globo
> Tal, ch'io sorrisi del suo vil sembiante;
>
> E quel consiglio per migliore approbo
> Che l'ha per meno; e chi ad altro pensa
> Chiamar si puote veramente probo.
>
> Vidi la figlia di Latona incensa
> Sanza quell'ombra che mi fu cagione
> Per che già la credetti rara e densa.
>
> L'aspetto del tuo nato, Iperïone,
> Quivi sostenni, e vidi com'si move
> Circa e vicino a lui Maia e Dïone.
>
> Quindi m'apparve il temperar di Giove
> Tra'l padre e'l figlio, e quindi mi fu chiaro
> Il varïar che fanno di lor dove;
>
> E tutti e sette mi si dimostraro
> Quanto son grandi e quanto son veloci
> E come sono in distante riparo.
>
> L'aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci,
> Volgendom'io con li etterni Gemelli,
> Tutta m'apparve da' colli a le foci;
> Poscia rivolsi li occhi a li occhi belli. (*Par* 22.130–54)

Cartography and the Perfect Twenty-Eights," *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy*, ed. George Corbett and Heather Webb, vol. 3 (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2017), 111–39.

The result of these viewing sessions is twofold: The pilgrim conceives a healthy disdain for "l'aiuola che ci tanto feroci," now that it has been brought into perspective and compared to the rest of the dazzling beauties of the universe. Secondly, he experiences an increased burning of love within his heart. Just after Saturn, Beatrice told the pilgrim to look down so that his heart could be joyful to its capacity ("sì che'l tuo cor, quantunque può, giocondo ..." *Par* 22.130). Similarly, later among the stars, the pilgrim lifts up his gaze to Beatrice after looking down, his mind burning now more than ever ("più che mai ardea," *Par* 27.90). These views from above have somehow communicated a deep, affective |knowledge.

Over the course of this chapter, I will show that behind these two beautiful passages, in which an act of gazing downward and taking in the whole of the cosmos (what William of Conches called "comprehensio") results in a greater "burning" and a more joyful "heart," there stands a long classical and medieval tradition of the "view from above" (as Pierre Hadot called it) or *katascopia*.[2] I will begin with classical and late antique authors (Cicero, Augustine, and Boethius), showing how they set the paradigm for how *ratio* could be elevated to *intelligentia*, that is, how the mind could be raised above reason to employ a faculty of knowing beyond reason – a "visus cordis" or "acies mentis" (the "seeing with the heart" or "seeing with the mind" referred to in this chapter's title). Augustine and Boethius consistently employ the metaphor of moving "inward" in order to find a power of knowing suited for seeing "higher" levels of reality, and this is the (largely forgotten) context of much of medieval encyclopedism. In other words, as Patrick Gautier Dalché put it, meditating on encyclopedic images and texts within the Middle Ages was often a "spiritual exercise."[3] With this background established in this chapter and the next, we will then be able to turn back to Dante (in Chapter Two), examining a text from *De vulgari eloquentia* (*Dve* I.6) and a corresponding passage in *Paradiso* 33, in a first

2 Pierre Hadot, "The View from Above," in *Philosophy as Way of Life*, ed. Arnold Davidson Chase (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 238–51.

3 Patrick Gautier Dalché, "De la glose a la contemplation: place et fonction de la carte dans les manuscrits du haut Moyen Age," in *Testo e immagine nell' alto Medioevo*: *15–21 aprile 1993*, 2 vols. (Spoleto: Settimane del Studio del Centro Italiano, 1994), 2, 693–771.

effort to sketch out how the tradition of the medieval *imago mundi* shaped the general contours of Dante's own understanding of what it meant to compose an all-encompassing, encyclopedic text.[4]

Augustine's "Mouth of the Heart" and the "Eye of the Mind"

Just before his celebrated meditation on memory in *Confessions* X, Augustine summed up the futility of his youthful search for God throughout the external world, likening his quest for God to a spiritual flight, in which he soared higher and higher through the universe:

> And what is this God? I asked the earth and it answered, "I am not He"; and all things that are in the earth made the same confession. I asked the sea and the deep and the

4 My work builds on Zygmunt G. Barański, "Dante fra 'sperimentalismo' e 'enciclopedismo,'" in *L'enciclopedismo medievale*, ed. Michelangelo Picone (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1994), 383–404 (revised and expanded in Barański, "La vocazione enciclopedica," in *Dante e i segni*: *Saggi per una storia intellettuale di Dante Alighieri* [Naples: Liguori, 2000], 77-101); Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Dante's Vision and the Circle of Knowledge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993). For medieval encyclopedism, in addition to the studies cited below (particularly Mary Franklin-Brown and Cristal Meier-Staubach), see Maurice de Gandillac, *Le pensé encyclopédique au Moyen Age* (Neuchâtel: Editions de la Baconnière, 1966); Cesare Vasoli, "*Convivio* di Dante e l'enciclopedismo medievale," in *L'enciclopedismo medievale*, ed. Michelangelo Picone (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1994), 363–81; *Imago mundi*: *la conoscenza scientifica nel pensiero bassomedievale* (Todi: Accademia Tudertina, 1983); *Dante e la scienza*, ed. Boyde and Russo; *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts*, ed. Peter Binkley (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Bernard Ribémont, *La Renaissance du XIIe siècle et l'encyclopédisme* (Paris: Champion, 2002); Alessandra Coco and Riccardo Gualdo, "Enciclopedismo ed erudizione nei volgari italiani: una panoramica sugli studi recenti," in *Filosofia in volgare nel medioevo*, ed. Nadia Bray and Loris Sturlese (Louvain: Féderation Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 2003), 265–317; Baudouin Van Den Abeele, "Introduction générale," to Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum*, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 3–24; *L'idea e l'immagine dell'universo nell'opera di Dante* (Ravenna: Centro Dantesco dei Frati Minori Conventuali, 2008).

> creeping things [*mare et abyssos et reptilia animarum vivarum*], and they answered, "We are not your God; seek higher [*quaere super nos*]." I asked the winds that blow, the whole air with all that is in it answered, "[...] I am not God." I asked the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars [*interrogavi caelum*, *solem*, *lunam*, *stellas*], and they answered, "Neither are we God whom you seek." And I said to all the things that throng about the gateways of the senses: "Tell me of my God ..." And they cried out in a great voice: "He made us." My question was my gazing upon them, and their answer was their beauty [*interrogatio mea intentio mea et responsio eorum species eorum*]. And I turned to myself and said, "And you, who are you?" And I answered, "A man." Now clearly there is a body and a soul in me, one exterior, one interior [*unum exterius et alterum interius*]. From which of these two should I have enquired of my God? I had already sought Him by my body, from earth to heaven [*a terra usque ad caelum*], as far as my eye could send its beams on the quest [*nuntios radios oculorum meorum*]. But the interior part is better [*melius quod interius*] ... The inner man knows [*homo interior cognovit*] these things through the ministry of the outer man. (X.6.9)[5]

Augustine uses the thought experiment of flying to higher and higher levels of the world ("a terra ad caelum"), taking into his purview all four elements as well as the nesting spheres of the heavens, as an image for graduating from a "carnal" perception of the world's beauty to a "spiritual" perception of the invisible God. The ascent of the mind is a paradoxical, meditative *descent* into the depths within. To find God, he must, of course, look *above* himself: "Who is He that is above the topmost point of my soul [*super caput animae mea*]? By that same soul I shall ascend to Him [*per ipsam animam meam ascendam ad illum*] ..." (X.7.11). But as it turns out, to say "God is above" is meaningful only in terms of "ontological priority."[6] Psychologically, Augustine's spiritually vertical ascent is his movement deeper toward the core of the soul. Only within does he discover the "highest" faculty of his soul.[7] He must awaken the inner man, employ the "oculus animae" (VII.10.16; VII.16.6) or see with the

5 *Confessions*, 2nd ed., trans. Frank Sheed (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2006), 196–97; citations from the Latin come from *Confessions*, ed. James O'Donnell, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

6 See Dominic O'Meara, "The Hierarchical Ordering of Reality for Plotinus," in *Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66–81.

7 For Augustine's hierarchy of ways of seeing (corporal, spiritual, and intellectual), see O'Donnell's commentary on *Confessions* VII.10.16, as well as Augustine's own

"acies mentis" (VI.4.6; VII.1.1; VII.3.5) or "interior oculus" (XII.20.29), listen with the "auris interior" (XI.6.8) or, as he would put it in his *De videndo deo*, look with "oculus cordis."[8] These metaphors belonged to a whole range of Platonic metaphors employed in late antiquity and were equivalent to "intellectual vision" or what Marius Victorinus called "intellectus," as well as "oculus cordis."

Even before his conversion, Augustine informs us, he had engaged in such mental exercises: "I ranged before the eyes of my mind [*constituebam in conspectu spiritus*] the whole creation, both what we are able to see – earth and sea and stars and trees and mortal creatures [*universam creaturam ... sicuti est terra et mare et aer et sidera et arbores et animalia mortalia*]; and what we cannot see – like the firmament of the heaven above, and all its angels and spiritual powers ..." In his mind, Augustine reconstructed the dazzling variety of creation within the imagination: "I made it huge [*feci unam massam grandem*], not as huge as it is, which I had no means of knowing, but as huge as might be necessary" (VII.5.7). But such pre-Christian thought exercises failed, to put it in the terminology he would later employ in *De Genesi*, because they were merely "spiritual" (i.e., employing the imagination or phantasia alone) and did not ascend higher to employ

account in *Gn. Litt.* 12.7.16, ff; Margaret Miles, "Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's 'De trinitate' and 'Confessions,'" *Journal of Religion* 63 (1983), 125–42. For Augustine's discovery of the inner man, see Denys Turner, "The God Within: Augustine's Confessions" and "Interiority and Ascent: Augustine's *De Trinitate*," in *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 50–101.

8 Compare to Plotinus's "On Beauty," *Ennead* I.6: "So we must ascend (*anabateon*) again to the good ... Let all these things go, and do not look. Shut your eyes, and change to and wake another way of seeing (*opsin*), which everyone has but few use" (253, 259). See also Frederick Van Fleteren, "Acies Mentis (Gaze of the Mind)," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 5–6; Pierre Hadot, "Levels of the Self," in *Plotinus, or The Simplicity of Vision*, trans. Michael Chase (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 23–34; Philip Cary, "Inward Turn and Intellectual Vision," in *Augustine's Invention of the Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 63–76.

an "intellectual" or "mental" vision.[9] Augustine could look back, then, on his earlier encyclopedic thought experiments and criticize them because he had failed to understand the proper relationship between God and his creation, assuming that the world was saturated with God like a sponge is saturated with water (*Confessions* VII.5), thus failing to realize the need to turn within to find "deeper" more "interior" powers of knowing. I will return to this point below, especially with reference to Dante's Ulysses.

But as we can see from his Christian meditation on memory and his employment of the "flight of the soul," Augustine never abandoned the mental process of building up the world's image in his mind. In fact, he later found that such all-encompassing, "encyclopedic" thought experiments could help to awaken "higher" or "deeper" powers of "seeing." In other words, he discovered Platonic justifications for an essentially Stoic philosophical exercise: Because all mortal creatures are time-bound, and thus have their affections drawn to that which is immediately and sensibly present, cultivating the encompassing vision, the "view from above," can liberate us from the idolatrous influence of any single creature. It's a useful, preliminary exercise: "if all could be perceived in one act of perception, it would obviously give more delight than any of the individual parts" (*De Trinitate*, IV.11.17). In a passage from *De Trinitate* that closely echoes a passage from Plotinus, Augustine uses this thought experiment of imagining the whole world precisely in order to awaken an "intellectual" vision, or *visus corids* or *acies mentis*. Because our inner eyes are too weak to see God, we have to develop, by degrees, the power to see him as the "good of goods":

> Once more come, see if you can. You certainly only love what is good, and the earth is good with its lofty mountains and its folded hills and its level plains, and a farm is good when its situation is pleasant and its land fertile, and a house is good with its harmonious symmetry or architecture so spacious and bright, and animals are

9 There are three types of vision: "Unum per oculos, quibus ipsae litterae uidentur, alterum per spiritum hominis, quo proximus et absens cogitatur, tertium per contuitum mentis, quo ipsa dilectio intellecta conspicitur," from *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 28, XII.6; *The Literal Meaning of Gensis*, XII.7.16, as found in *On Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 2002), 470–71.

> good with their animated bodies, and the air is good when mild and salubrious, and food is good when tasty and health-giving, and health is good being without pains and weariness, and a man's face is good when it has fine proportions and a cheerful expression and a fresh complexion, and the heart of a friend is good with its sweet accord and loving trust ... and the sky is good with its sun and moon and stars, and angels are good with their holy obedience ... Why go on and on? This is good and that is good. Take away this and that and see good itself if you can [*tolle hoc et illud, et uide ipsum bonum si potes*]. In this way, you will see God, not good with some other good, but the good of every good. (*De Trinitate* VIII.2–3)[10]

Just like Plotinus had done before him, Augustine imagines a world, and then, employing it as a "dynamic image," he "thinks away" the external part of the image in order to be left with what is invisible, but truer, in its pure undivided, dynamism.[11] In this way, meditating within on the image of the cosmos can raise the gaze of the mind from "spiritual" to "intellectual vision": "Now anything that is seen not in images but as it properly is in itself, and is not seen through the body, is seen with a kind of vision that surpasses all the other kinds ... The rational mind also is called spirit, where there is a sort of eye of the soul [*ubi est quidam tamquam oculus animae*], where the image and recognition of God are to be found" (*De Gen*. XII.7). For Augustine, this "oculus animae" is what Paul means by "interior homo" (*De Gen*. XII.7).

Although his terminology lacked the precision it would later gain in *De Trinitate* and *De Genesi*, the distinctions between carnal, spiritual, and intellectual vision are already ubiquitous in *Confessions*. We see these concepts most strikingly deployed not only in Augustine's "Platonic" Book (VII) and his meditation on memory (X), but also in his celebrated account of his intellectual ascent at Ostia with Monica (IX), where he describes

10 *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991). For Latin, see *De trinitate libri xv*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 50 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968), VIII.3. Cp. to Plotinus, *Ennead* V.8.9, and see Andrew Louth's comments in *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*: *From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 44–46. For the passage from Plotinus that Augustine had in mind, see "Mirroring and the Names of God," below.

11 I borrow the term *dynamic image* from Richard T. Wallis's *Neoplatonism*, 2nd ed. (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1995), 41–42.

that one precious moment in which he achieved success in his upward / inward flight:

> Rising as our love flamed upward [*erigentes nos ardentiore affectu*] towards the Selfsame, we passed in review [*perambulavimus gradatim*] the various levels of bodily things, up to the heavens themselves, whence sun and moon and stars shine upon this earth. And higher still we soared [*et adhuc ascendebamus interius*] ... and so we came to our own souls, and went beyond them to come at last to that region of richness unending [*attingeremus regionem ubertatis indeficientis*], where You feed Israel forever with food of truth ... And while we were thus talking of His Wisdom and panting for it [*inhiamus illi, attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis*], with all the effort of our heart we did for one instant attain to touch it: then sighing, and leaving the first fruits of our spirit bound to it, we returned to the sound of our own tongue. (IX.10.24)

Much like his earlier thought experiments, in which he went "looking for God" in the world, Augustine and Monica pass in review all of the earth's creatures, from caterpillars to supernovas, but then they rise "up to the heavens themselves" and soar even higher, leaving behind the mere world of senses [*cuncta corporalia*] by "ascending within" [*et adhuc ascendebamus interius*]. They even "transcend" their own minds and come to "touch" the "region of unending richness" [*regionem uberbatis indeficientis*]. They transcend the world of time, and the world of ordinary speech [*cumque ad eum finem sermo perduceretur*]. Leaving mere *sermo* behind, Augustine must grasp for metaphors to describe his rich experience of God: He pants with the "mouth of the heart" [*ore cordis*]; he "stretches out with an even hotter affection" [*erigentes nos ardentiore affectu*]; he enters a land of "unctuous richness" where God "feeds" his flock [*regionem ubertatis ... ubi pascis Israel*]; and he and Monica "pant" and thus "touch" God in a fleeting moment, in a "stroke of the heart" [*toto ictu cordis*]. Everything else in comparison to this super-saturated event is the mere "clatter of our own tongue" [*strepitum oris nostri*].[12]

12 For reflections on this moment of super-saturated speech and its relationship to Augustinian thought in general, see Janet Soskice, "Monica's Tears: Augustine on Words and Speech," *New Blackfriars* 83 (2002), 448–58; Andrew Louth, "Augustine," in *The Origins of Christian Mysticism*, 132–58; Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*: *Origins to the Fifth Century* (New York: Crossroads, 1991), 228–64.

And so, Augustine, in a way that adumbrates Dante's own "view from above," describes how his upward search, according to which the beams of the eyes stretch themselves out to the farthest reaches of vision (X.6.9), metamorphosizes into plunging into the ocean of the interior. In the mind's eye, Augustine first formulates an encompassing vision of the world within (picturing the sun and moon and stars, oceans, mountains, and all the elements), and then he transcends it all "in a single stroke" [*ictu cordis*] to be immersed in a rich, multisensory knowledge of ardent affection, tasting with the "mouth of the heart," in a way which echoes how the pilgrim becomes more "giocondo" (*Par*. 22.30) or how his mind "più che mai ardea" (*Par*. 27.90).

Boethius: The Flight of the Soul and the View from Above

Augustine is hardly the only one to make a connection between such "rich" knowledge and the process of building up a comprehensive view of the world as a picture for the mind's eye. A century after Augustine, Boethius also poetically imagined – time and time again – what it would be like to look down at the world from above (cp. I.2m; I.5m; II.8m; III.9m). For instance, in *Consolation* 1.5, Boethius imagines himself high above the universe (in another passage that adumbrates the "view from above" in *Paradiso* 27), viewing the cosmos, stretched out beneath his feet:

> Starmaker, master of spheres,
> At whose command the heavens spin
> In the constellations' dance that you
> On your steady throne have choreographed,
> Bright stars grow dim as you bring on the moon,
> Crescent or gibbous, reflecting her brother's
> Dazzling fire ...
>
> When leaves fall and the cold of winter
> Blows from the north, our days diminish,

> But then, in summer's burgeoning heat
> The dark hours of nighttime dwindle
> As the year fulfills its obligations.
> Not even the blowing winds are random,
> But Boreas strips leaves from the trees
> And Zephyrus brings on gentling nurture. (I.5, 18–19)[13]

"Not even the blowing winds are random," says Boethius, watching the spheres turning in his mind's eye. He pictures the whole *rerum serie*[*s*] (II.8m, 13): the seasons springing up and falling away, the heavens rotating, and the dissolution and recombination of the elements. In his earlier *De musica*, Boethius had speculated that there are three kinds of cosmic music: the music of the spheres, the seasons, and the elements. The *Consolation*, then, can be read as an attempt to harmonize those three types of cosmic music: Lady Philosophy helps the prisoner envision the world moving in "regular harmony" (II.8m, 2; III.9m), in order to help retune the prisoner's *musica humana* to the *musica mundana* of the cosmos.[14] This therapeutic use of *musica* is indebted as much to Stoic thought as it is to the Platonic tradition, and, so, it is not surprising to find Boethius recycling classical authors, such as what we find in Zeno's Stoic "Hymn to Zeus" or Cicero's "Dream of Scipio."[15]

13 For Boethius's Latin, see *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. Claudio Moreschini (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005). For Boethius's poetry, I like *Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. David Slavitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), on account of its lyrical quality, but for the prose, I prefer the literalism of the old Loeb volume: *The Theological Tractates: The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Hugh F. Stewart, Edward K. Rand, and S. Jim Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

14 David Chamberlain, "Philosophy of Music in the *Consolatio* of Boethius," *Speculum* 45:1 (1970), 80–97; Stephen Blackwood, *The Consolation of Boethius as Poetic Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

15 See Joachim Gruber's commentary on the meaning of "rerum series" in II.8m, in *Kommentar zu Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006); Johan Thom, *Cleanthe's Hymn to Zeus*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

In Cicero's own visionary account of his "view from above," Scipio's soul flies through the spheres of the heavens to stand at the apex of the universe. Once there, Scipio turns around to contemplate the universe, stretched out beneath his feet: "What is this sound, so loud and yet so sweet, that fill my ears?" His guide answers:

> That is the sound produced by the impetus and momentum of the spheres themselves. It is made up of intervals which, though unequal, are determined systematically by fixed proportions. The blend of high and low notes produces an even flow of various harmonies ... By imitating this system with strings and voices experts have succeeded in opening a way back to this place ... Filled with this sound, people's ears have become deaf to it.[16]

In other words, the music created by the spheres, to which we have become deaf, can be regained through study or through music that imitates the same harmonic proportions which space out the heavenly bodies. The universe is a piece of visual music, whose proportions are evident, but only when viewed from above or recovered through study. The vision is so beautiful that Scipio stares, in a mingled state of stupor and disdain:

> When I beheld the whole universe from that point, everything seemed glorious and wonderful. There were stars which we have never seen from this earth of ours, each of a size which we have never imagined to exist ... Now the earth itself seemed so small to me that I felt ashamed [*ut me ... paeniteret*] of our empire, whose extent was no more than a dot on its surface [*quasi punctum*]. (VI.16)

Scipio's disdain is balanced by his dumbfounded admiration ("everything seemed glorious and wonderful [*mirabilia videbantur*]," VI.16; "I gazed at all these things in amazement [*cum intuerer stupens*]," VI.18), just as Dante's pilgrim is dumbfounded when his ability to hear the "l'armonia" of the world is restored (*Par*. 1.76–81).

Even if Boethius has borrowed elements from Cicero's Stoic meditation on the "temple" of the universe [*hoc templum*, VI.15], he does something Cicero had not: He maps onto the Stoic's view of the harmony of the

16 Cicero, *The Republic and the Laws*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 90. For Latin, see *De Re Publica*, ed. J. G. F. Powell, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 134–47.

world a Neoplatonic verticality. In other words, like Cleanthes or Cicero, Boethius uses the encyclopedic image of the *machina universitatis* (II.8m, 21) or *rerum series* (II.8m, 13) to promote disdain for our petty earthly desires and admiration for the intricacy of the world as a way of bringing about *ataraxia* and inspiring acquiescence to fate; but, like Augustine and Plotinus, Boethius uses the flight of the mind as a metaphor for developing a deeper sense of interiority, discovering faculties of the soul so hidden within the depths of the soul that they were previously unknown to the inquiring mind. As Lady Philosophy moves on to the complicated arguments of Books IV and V, we see this Neoplatonic "vertical" element being woven into the more straightforward cosmic "views from above" in Books I, II, and III. In Book IV, for example, Boethius, echoing the "Dream of Scipio," imagines a flight of the mind, in which the soul turns around to note how small things below now seem. What is new, though, is that this upward flight is recast as an *inward* descent, an awakening of faculties deep within:

> Philosophy has wings with which you can fly, ascending
> As an exaltation of larks to heaven,
> And when the swift-moving mind [*velox mens*] has fastened them on and soared,
> It can look down [*despicit*] on the earth with contempt [*perosa*].
> Flying even higher beyond the spheres [*superat globum*]
> Of air, it can look below at the clouds
> And climb beyond the highest point of fire [*transcendit ignis verticem*],
> Rising even to the house of the stars ...
> [...] it then
> can aspire even further, beyond the upper
> air toward the awesome dazzling light
> where the king of kings wields his royal sceptre ...
> There you will at last remember yourself
> On the road back, the road home,
> And you will say, "Yes, I recall it all,
> Where I was born, where I belong ..."
> And should you chance to look down
> To the dark earth you have left behind [*placeat tibi / noctem relictam visere*],
> Where wretched people fear their tyrant rulers,
> You shall see them as exiles. (IV.1)

The Neoplatonic significance of the metaphors of rising higher [*superat*] and looking down [*despicit*] become clear in light of the following book

(V), where Boethius identifies four stages of the upward/inward descent: sense-perception [*sensus*]; imagination, that is, the ability to picture things within [*imaginatio*]; reason [*ratio*]; and finally, what he calls "*intelligentia*" (V.4). Each one of these powers of knowing is appropriate to different kinds of creatures: The lowest forms of life, like clams, have sense-perception, but no ability to picture things for themselves within (like a dog or cat); reason is the power most appropriately belonging to human beings, but "*intelligentia* belongs only to God" [*intelligentia sola divini*, V.5.4]. These powers of perceiving are hierarchical, but they are also nesting, that is, higher powers contain within them lower powers: Sense-perception knows bodily things when they are present; imagination knows bodily things in the memory, even when they are not present; reason abstracts still more, finding "types" or "forms," but intelligence takes another leap, perceiving what *all* forms have in common, that is, the form of forms, the "form itself" [*simplicem formam … formam ipsam*] (V.4.30). And although such *intelligentia* is proper only to God, Boethius hints that, in rare instances, God loans this way of seeing to human beings (V.5.11–12).[17]

Because *intelligentia* is above ordinary human reason, when Boethius tries to describe it, he has to cast about, looking for metaphors. In words that echo Augustine's description of panting, stretching out, and touching at Ostia, Boethius says that the human mind, when it gets to the highest point of reality, has to "stretch itself out" in longing: "Wherefore let us be raised up [*erigamur*], if we can, to the height of that highest intelligence [*in illius summae intelligentiae cacumen*]; for there reason will see that which she cannot look at in herself … the simplicity, shut in by no bounds, of the highest knowledge [*summae potius scientiae nullis terminis inclusa simplicitas*]" (V.5.12). Elsewhere Boethius calls the employment of *intelligentia*, "a higher eye" [*intelligentiae celsior oculus*], and he says that

17 For the hierarchy of these powers as related to the hierarchy of cosmos, see Bernard McGinn, *Golden Chain*: *A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Isaac of Stella* (Washington, DC: Cistercian Publications, 1972), 66–69; and for Boethius's influence on the later Middle Ages, see David Albertson, "The Discovery of the Fold," in *Mathematical Theologies: Nicholas of Cusa and the Legacy of Thierry of Chartres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 119–39.

it gazes "with the pure sight of the mind at the simple Form itself [*ipsam illam simplicem formam pura mentis acie contuetur*]" (V.4.30), and that such *intelligentia* looks and sees "by one stroke of the mind" [*illo uno ictu*] rather than by reason (V.4.33). Thus, just as Augustine's upward flight turned out to be an interior descent to open the "oculus animae" or "interior oculus," a mode of spiritual looking that occurs "in ictu cordis," so, too, for Boethius the "higher eye of intelligence" is opened "illo uno ictu." Boethius, then, at the highest reaches of the universe, resorts to the search for metaphors to get at this super-saturated, intellectual activity that is above reason and beyond speech. Most importantly for our purposes, he likens the acquisition of this *intelligentia*, or "deep knowledge," to a view from above:

> But the eye of intelligence is set higher still [*vero celsior oculus*]; for passing beyond [*supergressa*] the process of going round the one whole, it looks with the pure sight of the mind [*pura mentis acie*] at the simple Form itself. And herein the greatest consideration is to be given to this: for the higher power of comprehension embraces the lower, while the lower in no way rises to the higher. For neither can sense attain to anything outside matter, nor does imagination look at universal specific forms, nor reason grasp the simple Form [*simplicem formam*]: but the intelligence, as it were looking down from above [*quasi desuper spectans*], by conceiving the Form that distinguishes all the things subject to that Form, but only because of the way it comprehends the Form itself [*formam ipsam*] which could not be known to anything else. For it knows the reason's universal, and the imagination's shape, and what is materially sensible, but without using reason, imagination or the senses, but by the one stroke of the mind, Formally, so to speak, looking forth on all these things together [*illo uno ictu mentis formaliter*, *ut dicam*]. (V.4.30–33)[18]

In this remarkable, but difficult, passage, it becomes evident that the imaginative picture of the orderly cosmos [*machina universitatis*; II.8m,

18 William of Conches recognized this passage as referencing the awakening of an inner eye: "INTELLIGENTIAE OCULUS id est consideratio, EXISTIT CELSIOR, et vere celsior NAMQUE SUPERGRESSA AMBITUM. Ambitus universitatis dicitur consideratio rei de qua specie rerum sit, quia esse de tali specie rei universis convenit hominibus. Sed intelligentia hunc ambitum supergressa est cum non inquirit de qua specie rerum sit aliquid, et supergressa illum ambitum universitatis CONTUETUR ILLAM SIMPLICEM FORMAM id est illud incoporale quod infra hominem est," *Glosae super Boetium*, ed. Lodi Nauta, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Latina 158 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 326.

v. 21] and the flight of the mind (IV.1m) are related. Struggling for words and metaphors ("ut dicam"), Boethius likens *intelligentia* to a "higher eye" [*celsior oculus*, V.4.30], "looking down" upon the world [*intelligentia quasi desuper spectans*, V.4.32; *cuncta prospiciens*, V.4.33; cp. to *despicit* in IV.1m] and "rising up to the height of intelligence [in illius summae intelligentiae cacumen]" (V.5.12). Just as vision takes in the whole of a sphere, wrapping its gaze around it (*totum simul iactis radiis intuetur … circa ipsum motus ambitum*, V.4.16), so, too, does *intelligentia* ascend above the "universitatis ambitum" (V.4.30) to wrap its vision around everything, and enjoy a view form above (*quasi spectans desuper*, V.4.32) in which everything thing is perceived in "a single stroke of the mind [*illo uno ictu … cuncta prospiciens*]" (V.4.33). *Intelligentia* perceives "eternity," then, which is "the simultaneous and perfect possession of interminable life [*interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*]" (V.6.4). *Intelligentia* is the mode of seeing that takes in all and comprehends all, because it has ascended to a point where it can look into the inner core of the universe. It is a vision "higher" and more comprehensive, because more interior, looking at the world from the inside out: "illam simplicem formam" (V.4.30). As William of Conches tersely noted: "from above: not in the sense of place but rather dignity" [*DESVPER non loco sed dignitate*] (*Comm. ad* V.4.32).

In the centuries that followed, these wonderful metaphors of seeing with the "vision of the heart" or looking with the "eye of the soul" became part of the standard vocabulary for speaking of spiritual enlightenment.[19] More importantly, these metaphors, borrowed from Platonic descriptions of the hierarchical powers of the human intellect, formed the hermeneutic

19 For instance, the *Glosa ordinaria*, summing up several centuries of commonplaces, reflects on what the Gospels mean by "seeing" by the flesh and the "spirit": One must use the "eyes of the heart" (oculis cordis) to see the invisible glory of the Lord. Likewise, Rabanus Maurus says that Christ can be called "light," because "he opens up the eyes of the heart to contemplate the truth" (lux, quia ad veritatem contemplandam cordis oculos reserat). See Gordon Rudy, *Mystical Language of Sensation in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Rachel Fulton, " 'Taste and see that the Lord is sweet' (Ps. 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West," *The Journal of Religion* 86:2 (2006), 169–204.

paradigm in which the *imago mundi*, the *mappamundi*, and the "view from above" were understood.[20] Remigius of Auxerre, for instance, while commenting on Boethius's definition of eternity in *Consolation* V.6, refers to Gregory the Great's description of the *Visio Benedicti*. From a high point at the top of tower [*specula*], Benedict was given a vision [*speculatio*] of a single, immensely bright point of light, in which he saw the entirety of the world enclosed within ("*omnis etiam mundus sub uno solis radio collectus*").[21] Remigius's mind drifts back to this anecdote in Gregory, precisely when explicating Boethius's understanding of eternity. For Remigius, then, Gregory's account of Benedict's cosmic vision is not only a story about a fleeting glimpse of a Boethian eternity, but a vision of eternity communicated through a comprehensive view from above[22]: "Benedict our father, when he saw the whole world at once [*simul totum mundum conspexit*], was elevated by the divine spirit beyond the nature of all things things."[23] In other words, Remigius maps Boethius's understanding of the ascent to *intelligentia* onto the hagiographical account of Benedict's cosmic vision, a connection made easier to grasp given Gregory's own desire to compose a Christianized *Somnium Scipionis*.[24] In the same century as

20 As one of the leading experts on medieval cartography puts it, "Qu'est-ce qu'une *mappa mundi* … sinon ce qui est vu par un regard situé très haut dan l'espace? Ce qui semble immense au regard humain, apparaît comme minuscule dans cette situation et de ce point de vue. Idée en réalité fort banale dans l'Antiquité," Patrick Gautier Dalché, "L'Héritage Antique de la Cartographie Médiévale," in *Cartography in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*: *Fresh Perspectives*, *New Methods*, ed. Richard Talbert and Richard Unger (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 29–66 (58).

21 *Les Dialogues de Gregoire Le Grand*, II, *Sources Chrétiennes* 260 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1979), Ch. 35. For an analysis of this passage, see Brian Fitzgerald, *Inspiration and Authority*: *Prophets and Their Critics from Scholasticism to Humanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 169–72. See also Dalché, "L'Héritage," 59–61.

22 "Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio," *Consolatio* 5.6.4.

23 "A Commentary by Remigius Autissiodorensis on the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius," ed. H. F. Stewart, *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1916), 37; as cited in Fitzgerald , *Inspiration and Authority*, 169.

24 See Dalché, "L'Héritage," 58–61; Pierre Courcell, "La vision cosmique de saint Benoit," *Revue des Études Augustinienne* 13 (1967), 97–117; Th. Delforge, "Songe

Remigius, Bishop Adaldbold of Utrecht demonstrates the same tendency, reading Boethius's most encyclopedic moment (III.9m, which he reads as the *Timaeus* compressed into a single poem) as a mental exercise capable of elevating the philosopher to the *visus cordis*: "Both [Plato and Hermes] were blind and groped in shadows for what Boethius saw by the light born of truth; indeed, he saw not by the eyes of the body, but by the eyes of the heart [*oculis cordis*]."[25]

After centuries of cultivation in monastic communities, meditation on the *imago mundi* reached its most explicit and self-conscious practice and formulation in the twelfth century, for reasons I will discuss in the following chapter. Authors such as Honorius of Autun and Hugh of St Victor, as well as William of Conches, Thierry of Chartres, Richard of St Victor, Bernard Silvestris, and Alan of Lille, perfected the imaginative practice of holding *totus mundus* within, while coaching their students on how to add a rich variety of sensible details. They also conceptualized with greater precision about what the end of such meditation was, and precisely how such an image could lead to the awakening of *visus cordis*. In sum, in the century before the Platonic "world's body" gave way to scholastic *quaestiones* as the organizing principle of encyclopedic knowledge, we have the great age of the *imago mundi*, wherein the image of the world, as contained and visualized within the mind, yielded to a *visus cordis* and opened up *oculus cordis*.[26] As will we see in the next chapter, this is the intellectual background to *Paradiso* 33 and *De vulgari eloquentia* I.6.

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de Scipion et vision de saint Benoît," *Revue Bénédictine* 69 (1959), 351–54; Peter Dinzelbacher, "Voli celesti e contemplazione del mondo nella letteratura estatico-vizionaria del medioevo," in *Cieli e terre nei secoli XI–XIII, Atti della tredicesima settiman internazionle di studio Mendola, 22–26 agosto 1995* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1998), 215–33.

25 "uterque eorum caecus sub tenebris palpauit, quod Boetius exorto ueritatis lumine uidit; uidit, inquam, non oculis corporis, sed oculis cordis," R. B. C. Huygens, "Mittelalterliche Kommentare zum *O qui perpetua*," *Sacris Erudiri* 6:2 (1954), 409-10.

26 As Dalché put it: "L'élaboration géographique est donc conditionnée par un but spirituel," Dalché, "L'Héritage," 60. See Mary Franklin-Brown, "The Book of the World: Encyclopedism and Scholastic Ways of Knowing," in *Reading the World*: *Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 33–92.