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**Eloquent Wisdom:  
The Role of Rhetoric and Delight in  
the Theology of Saint Augustine of Hippo**

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Submitted for PhD

University of Durham  
Department of Theology and Religion  
2010

# Abstract

This study examines Augustine's conception of the role of delight (*delectatio*) in the divine acts of creation and redemption. In the first part of the dissertation, I argue that Augustine, who was trained as a rhetor and taught rhetoric before his conversion, came to conceive of theology as the fulfilment of Cicero's conviction that wisdom and eloquence ought to be united. His approach to Cicero's rhetorical theory as found in *De inventione*, *De oratore*, and *Orator* shares many similarities with that of Late Antique rhetors (especially Marius Victorinus) in whose works the orator functions less as a statesman than as a physician of the soul. Accordingly, an orator's role is not to sway the senate or deliberate in law courts (as in Cicero's thought) but to inform and persuade people towards a fruitful return to the divine.

In the second part of the dissertation, I demonstrate how this approach influenced Augustine's understanding of redemption. He conceives of God as Cicero's ideal orator, in whom wisdom and eloquence are perfectly united. God engages in a rhetorical contest with the devil whom Augustine portrays in terms of the false orators in Cicero's *De inventione*. The devil's rhetoric comprises an illicit delight in actual sin and an inordinate delight in created goods, both of which exert their power over the human will through suggestion, delight and persuasion and result in a bondage to sin and death. By contrast, God 'utters' creation as a delightful song and opposes death's nihilistic rhetoric by pouring his own delight into the hearts of the faithful; this delight persuades the will to move towards a joyful participation in the divine that is the happy life for which all people long. Ultimately, Augustine identifies this spiritual delight most closely with the Holy Spirit who functions as God's eternal eloquence.

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# Abbreviations

## Series

CCL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latin (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953-)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna: Tempsky, 1865-)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press)
PL	Patrologia Latina, Cursus Completus ed. by J.-P. Migne (Paris: 1857-1866)

## Ancient Works

### Augustine

<i>b. vita</i>	<i>De beata vita</i>
<i>c. Jul. imp.</i>	<i>Contra Julianum opus imperfectum</i>
<i>conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i>
<i>diu. qu. 83</i>	<i>De diuersis quaestionibus 83</i>
<i>doc. chr.</i>	<i>De doctrina Christiana</i>
<i>en. Ps.</i>	<i>Ennarationes in Psalmos</i>
<i>ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>ex. Gal.</i>	<i>Expositio Epistulae ad Galatos</i>
<i>ex. prop. Rm.</i>	<i>Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos</i>
<i>fid. et sym.</i>	<i>De fide et symbolo</i>
<i>Gn. adu. Man.</i>	<i>De Genesi aduersus Manicheos</i>
<i>Gn. litt.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram</i>
<i>Gn. litt. imp.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber</i>
<i>Jo. eu. tr.</i>	<i>In Johannis euangelium Tractatus</i>
<i>lib. arb.</i>	<i>De libero arbitrio</i>
<i>mor.</i>	<i>De moribus ecclesiae Catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum</i>
<i>mus.</i>	<i>De musica</i>
<i>ord.</i>	<i>De ordine</i>
<i>quant.</i>	<i>De quantitate animae</i>
<i>retr.</i>	<i>Retractationes</i>
<i>s.</i>	<i>Sermones</i>
<i>s. Dom. mon.</i>	<i>De sermone Domini in monte</i>
<i>Simpl.</i>	<i>Ad Simplicianum</i>

*spir. et litt.*      *De spiritu et litteram*  
*trin.*              *De trinitate*  
*vera. rel.*        *De vera religione*

**Cicero**

*De inv.*            *De inventione*  
*De orat.*          *De oratore*  
*Off.*                *De officiis*

**Juvenal**

*Sat.*                *Saturae*

**Seneca the Elder**

*Con.*                *Controversiae*

**Marius Victorinus**

*In Cic. Rhet.*      *Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam*



# 1

## Introduction

### A Beleaguered Rhetor in a Beleaguered City

By summer of 384, Augustine had been vexed beyond endurance. His experience of Rome had been a disagreeable one and he was eager to escape from the Eternal City. The omens had been poor from the start. First, he had to endure the tearful entreaties of his mother Monica to remain in North Africa or, if he must go, to take her with him.<sup>1</sup> Next, no sooner had he arrived than he fell seriously ill and believed himself to be ‘on the way to the underworld’.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps worst of all for a man schooled in rhetoric and whose reputation and position in life were due entirely to his teaching of rhetoric, he found his new situation in Rome, which he had admired from afar, very disappointing. Apparently, Augustine’s reputation and influential contacts were such that he had little trouble attracting pupils. Infuriatingly, however, he soon discovered that the well-heeled Roman students had a disagreeable habit of transferring to a new rhetor once payment of their fees was due.<sup>3</sup> No wonder Augustine was ready to endorse the decision of so many prominent Romans—including the emperors—and return to enjoying the idea of Rome from afar instead of its reality from close proximity.

Fortunately, Augustine had come into the orbit of one of the most prominent men of late Roman society: Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, an immensely powerful senator, vocal defender of traditional paganism, and profuse litterateur.<sup>4</sup> By his own

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<sup>1</sup> *conf.* 5.8.15.

<sup>2</sup> *conf.* 5.9.16.

<sup>3</sup> *conf.* 5.12.22.

<sup>4</sup> On Symmachus, see John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1-31; John Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*

account, Augustine caught Symmachus's attention partly through the networking of his Manichean friends and partly through an impromptu oration he delivered before Symmachus.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the old senator, still smarting perhaps from his recent political duel with Ambrose over the removal of the Altar of Victory, selected Augustine to become the new rhetor in Milan.<sup>6</sup> With his travel expenses covered by the imperial court, Augustine bade farewell to Rome and, though he did not yet know it, his former life. His move from the orbit of Symmachus into the orbit of Ambrose marked the beginning of his own conversion to Christianity; although he owed his advancement to the help of his Manichean friends, already he had come to reject the religion that he had shared for nine years.<sup>7</sup>

Milan of the fourth century was with Trier one of the two administrative centres of the Western Empire.<sup>8</sup> When Augustine arrived in the autumn of 384, the court of the young emperor Valentinian II had for seven years resided defenceless at Milan. Though Augustine now taught rhetoric near the centre of western authority, he had come to an unhappy and beleaguered city. The empire itself was in disarray following the crushing defeat of Valens at the Battle of Adrianople (378), and even as Augustine contemplated leaving Rome, in far away Britain Magnus Maximus

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(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), *passim*; and Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> *conf.* 5.13.23.

<sup>6</sup> McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 169-170 proposes that the fact that Symmachus had been asked to find a rhetor for Milan and that he chose an unknown provincial for the post highlights the political weakness of the adolescent emperor. This seems to fit the facts better than Peter Brown's description of Augustine as a 'protégé of Symmachus' (Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo, A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 70). On Symmachus's debate with Ambrose over the restoration of the Augustan Altar of Victory see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court* 203-211 and McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 166-167.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 46. T.D. Barnes, 'Augustine, Symmachus and Ambrose' in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, Joanne McMilliam, ed. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 7-13 argues that Symmachus and Ambrose may have been first cousins. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 263-264, however, demonstrates the tenuous nature of Barnes's evidence.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25.

assumed the purple and led his army into Gaul where he caught and killed  
Valentinian's older brother, the emperor Gratian.<sup>9</sup>

What must have affected Augustine more than the distant signs of imperial  
collapse, however, was the bitter struggle within Milan itself in which Ambrose  
contested on the one hand the Arian policies of Valentinian's mother, empress  
Justina, and on the other hand the attempts by the remnant of powerful pagans to  
preserve their traditions. The imperial court's open conflict with Ambrose,  
culminating in the attempted confiscation of some of the Milanese churches for use  
by the Arian supporters of Justina, was particularly bitter and potentially fatal to the  
tenuous nature of Valentinian's regime.<sup>10</sup>

Considering Augustine's Manichean background and his debt to the pagan  
Symmachus for his new position, it is remarkable that he was immediately drawn to  
the Bishop of Milan. By his own admission, however, Ambrose attracted him less  
because of his Catholicity or even his holiness and more because of his eloquence.  
Augustine writes, 'I was not interested in learning what he was talking about. My ears  
were only for his rhetorical technique; this empty concern was all that remained with  
me after I lost any hope that a way to you might lie open for man'.<sup>11</sup> The second part  
of this statement refers to the Scepticism of the New Academy to which Augustine  
had turned during his time in Rome and which he first encountered in his studies of  
Cicero.<sup>12</sup> Thus, disillusioned and without any of the faith that had previously

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<sup>9</sup> Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, 173. For Ambrose's role in these events see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 160-163. At this time, almost all of the troops of the western empire were under Maximus's command.

<sup>10</sup> McLynn, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, 170-219 discusses in detail Ambrose's political struggles with the imperial court and questions Ambrose's portrayal of Justina's role as the prime antagonist. Augustine mentions the conflict in *Conf.* 9.7.15-16.

<sup>11</sup> *conf.* 5.14.24.

<sup>12</sup> *conf.* 5.10.19; Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 79.

sustained him, Augustine fell back on the only two pillars of which he was certain: his admiration for rhetorical technique and his esteem for Ciceronian philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

***‘...now I have grown old’<sup>14</sup>***

At first glance, Hippo Regius in North Africa in 427 would seem a world away from the Milan of Augustine’s younger days. Not only did more than a thousand miles and a wide sea lie between the two places, but more importantly a conversion and an entire episcopal career separated the elderly Augustine from his earlier ambitious self. Instead of working on the very threshold of imperial government, Augustine lived now in a self-imposed, monastic retreat far from the political affairs of a fast crumbling world.<sup>15</sup> Only three years from his death, Augustine could now focus on setting his affairs in order.

Yet, the similarities between the circumstances of Augustine in Milan in 384 and Hippo Regius in 427 are striking. First, in many ways Augustine was a disillusioned bishop.<sup>16</sup> He had devoted over twenty-five years to fighting the Donatist heresy, achieving success with the aid of Roman legal and military authority. Yet, if Peter Brown’s view is to be accepted, just at the moment of triumph, Augustine lost faith in the combination of the Church’s true doctrine with the empire’s military might.<sup>17</sup> What perhaps awakened him to this was the execution of Marcellinus, an effective ally against the Donatists, in 413, a sudden event that

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<sup>13</sup> On Augustine’s disillusionment, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 79.

<sup>14</sup> *ep.* 213.1.

<sup>15</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 427.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 338 refers to Augustine of this time as feeling ‘old and ineffective’.

<sup>17</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 336-337. Brown points out that at the same time Catholicism was achieving victory *through* the State over the Donatists, the governing authority was moving rapidly in a militaristic direction in response to the sack of Rome and the general collapse of the western empire.

Augustine was entirely impotent to prevent. He retreated from Carthage to his books in Hippo Regius: 'I decided, if the Lord is willing, to spend as much time as I am allowed by those obligations demanded of me, given the needs of the Church that I serve as my duty, on the task of studies pertaining to the ecclesiastical sciences, where, if it is pleasing to God's mercy, I may do some good for future generations'.<sup>18</sup> What perhaps proved even more dispiriting was the lapse of Boniface, Count of Africa, into what Augustine considered to be heresy and immorality. The ambitious general, whom Augustine had only recently talked out of retiring to monastic life,<sup>19</sup> had returned from Rome with an Arian wife and a number of concubines.<sup>20</sup> *Ep.* 220, in which Augustine scolds the general, reveals a bishop deeply scandalised by his former friend.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, when Boniface visited Hippo, Augustine refused to see him.<sup>22</sup>

Also, like Milan in 384, North Africa had the feel of a beleaguered land. Potential and actual enemies hemmed the province on three sides. First, from the south, Berber nomads had grown bolder in their raids, humiliating Boniface in Augustine's eyes, whose vast military might remained sheltered in and around Carthage while farms and towns along the southern frontier were sacked and pillaged.<sup>23</sup> The reason why Boniface's forces remained in the north is that he was

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<sup>18</sup> *ep.* 151.13.

<sup>19</sup> *ep.* 220.3. See also Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 422. Augustine provides an insight into the instability of the times when he reminds Boniface that he was convinced not to seek out the cloistered life by being reminded of the need of Church's need for continued protection from 'barbarian hordes'.

<sup>20</sup> *ep.* 220.4.

<sup>21</sup> Augustine refers to himself as 'dumb with amazement' at the news of his friend's remarriage (*ep.* 220.4).

<sup>22</sup> *ep.* 220.1. Augustine's excuse was that he had been laid low by 'bodily weakness'.

<sup>23</sup> *ep.* 220.7.

preparing himself for an attack from Rome.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the citizens of North Africa must have watched in dread as the enormous province of Hispania, only seven miles across the Strait of Gibraltar from Roman Africa, fell to the Vandals in the first quarter of the fifth century.<sup>25</sup> As North Africa was the breadbasket of the western empire, few could have been under any illusions about where the hungry barbarians would turn next.<sup>26</sup>

In the midst of all these concerns and as he critically reviewed his own *opus vitae* in his *Retractationes*, Augustine turned his attention to completing a work he had left unfinished in around 396, *De doctrina Christiana*, dwelling at length on the role of eloquence in Christian teaching. Just as his thoughts in Milan in 384 had been filled with appreciation for the art of rhetoric and with the philosophy of Cicero, so now he returned to mull over both in a manner that would profoundly influence rhetoric in the West for more than thousand years. On the one hand, book four of *De doctrina Christiana* reveals the influence that thirty years' of reflection and experience, first as a Christian and then as a preacher, writer, and bishop, had on Augustine's initial training as a rhetor. On the other hand, the two episodes suggest that despite his conversion, his subsequent experiences, and even his apparent protestations to the contrary, Augustine in fact remained a rhetorician to the end of his days.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Boniface, commander of one of the three standing armies of the west, attempted to play the part of kingmaker in late imperial politics. In the years leading up to 427, he opposed the powerful Felix, commander of the armies in Italy, whose forces unsuccessfully attacked Boniface at Carthage in 427. See Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 259-261.

<sup>25</sup> Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 266. Cartagena fell to the Vandals in 425.

<sup>26</sup> For an excellent survey of the importance of Carthage and North Africa to the western empire and their swift collapse before Vandal invasion see Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 266-280, 288-289.

<sup>27</sup> Augustinian scholars have frequently been imprecise with their terminology about those involved with rhetoric, using 'rhetorician', 'rhetor', and 'orator' interchangeably. While the differences between these last two will be explained in the following two chapters, for purposes of clarity I will use 'rhetor' to describe a teacher of rhetoric, 'orator' to describe one

## Augustine: Rhetor and Theologian

Yet, one does not encounter in Augustine's own account of his early years in the *Confessiones* a man who seems to approve of rhetoric. To the contrary, he repeatedly denounces the art as at best pretentious and at worst gleefully dishonest. In his own estimation, as an adolescent he was taught rhetoric not to equip him for a pursuit of truth but to elicit praise.<sup>28</sup> And so, he can dismiss his own promising career as a rhetor by writing:

In those years I used to teach the art of rhetoric. Overcome with greed myself I used to sell the eloquence that would overcome an opponent. Nevertheless, Lord, as you know, I preferred to have virtuous students (virtuous as they are commonly called). Without any resort to trick I taught them the tricks of rhetoric, not that they should use them against the life of an innocent man, but that sometimes they might save the life of a guilty person.<sup>29</sup>

Again and again, he derides the vanity and treachery of rhetoric, arguing that it lacks substance, ignores truth and justice, and is interested solely in self-promotion.<sup>30</sup> And thus it is not entirely unusual that theologians have by and large taken Augustine at his word and looked on his conversion to Christianity as a conversion away from his life as a rhetor.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, historians such as Marcia Colish, James Murphy, James Ward, George Kennedy and Mary Carruthers (among others) have highlighted the

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who delivers speeches (typically in classical times in the forum) and 'rhetorician' to describe both roles where no distinction is needed.

<sup>28</sup> *conf.* 3.3.6-7.

<sup>29</sup> *conf.* 4.2.2.

<sup>30</sup> See Calvin L. Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 11 for a discussion of Augustine anti-rhetorical rhetoric.

<sup>31</sup> One book actually takes this conversion for its title: Joanne McMillan (ed.), *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992).

importance of Augustine's thought to the emergence of a medieval rhetoric.<sup>32</sup>

Kennedy and Murphy in particular have added to our knowledge of how Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana* serves as a bridge between classical and medieval theories of rhetoric.<sup>33</sup> Yet, possibly because all of these scholars are primarily interested in rhetoric, few have considered how rhetorical theory may have influenced Augustine's theology. Despite Augustine's apparent rejection of rhetoric, the failure to study his theology in light of rhetorical theory is more than a little strange.

First, Augustine trained as a rhetor and devoted more than a decade of his life to teaching rhetoric in Thagaste, Carthage, Rome, and Milan. Grammar and rhetoric therefore profoundly shaped his intellectual life in a way that nothing else did. So, when Augustine encountered first philosophy and then Christian theology, and when he turned to the careful study of Scripture following his conversion and ordination, he did so as one deeply versed in classical rhetoric. No matter how profound his conversion, even had he wanted to reject his pagan training entirely, he would have found it exceptionally difficult to do so.

Second, scholars have been much less willing to be taken in by Augustine's criticism of Neoplatonism, arguing that after his conversion Augustine (particularly in his early years) remained fundamentally a Neoplatonist with only slight adjustments

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<sup>32</sup> Marcia L. Colish, *Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), 1-54; James Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 43-88; John O. Ward, 'From Antiquity to the Renaissance: Glosses and Commentaries on Cicero's *Rhetorica* in James J. Murphy, (ed.), *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 27.; George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 267-270; Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), *passim*.

<sup>33</sup> Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, 265-270; Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 47-63.



made for the demands of Christian theology.<sup>34</sup> Whatever the merits of this view, it is peculiar that scholars should notice the influence on his theology of a particular strand of philosophy which he had only studied in depth shortly before his conversion to Christianity, and in which he was largely self-taught, while failing to notice the influence of rhetoric in which he had been educated and which he had taught. If someone were to form an opinion of Augustine solely from such scholarship, he or she might be forgiven for believing that Augustine shows an interest in rhetoric only in parts of the *Confessiones* and in Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana*!<sup>35</sup> Fortunately, scholars have begun to redress this imbalance but the overwhelming bias remains towards reading Augustine's theology in light of Neoplatonism with little attention given to the influence of rhetorical theory.<sup>36</sup>

Third, as shown above, the art of rhetoric seems to have remained prominent in Augustine's mind throughout his life. How could it not have remained so considering that much of his life was spent in two of the oratorical theatres of the late Roman Empire: the pulpit and the law court? Indeed, as will be shown, the episcopacy itself uniquely embodied the ideals of a Ciceronian orator, uniting in a single office the role of sage, orator, judge and statesman. To this extent, Augustine's

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<sup>34</sup> The debate about Augustine's Neoplatonism dominated mid to late twentieth-century Augustine studies. See, for example, P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1950), 157-167; P. Courcelle, *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire: Antécédents et postérité* (Paris: Augustiniennes, 1963); John J. O'Meara, 'The Neoplatonism of Saint Augustine' in Dominic O'Meara, (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 34-41.

<sup>35</sup> Gerald Press, in his perceptive essay on the subject and structure of *De doctrina Christiana* laments the tendency among scholars to examine only Book Four for Augustine's rhetorical theory as 'too narrow'. See Gerald Press, 'The Subject and Structure of Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*', *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980), 118.

<sup>36</sup> Two recent studies of Augustine in light of rhetoric are Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thoughts of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Paul R. Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 2010). The two works make are interesting to read together: both situate Augustine within a rhetorical tradition—primarily Cicero—but Dodaro reveals how that tradition influenced Augustine's political theology while Kolbet shows how it shaped his understanding of the necessity for the healing of the soul in redemption.

consecration may be viewed as the culmination of his ambitions as a rhetor, though he certainly did not view it as such. Next, Augustine stands in a long line of North African theologians who were intimately familiar with the principles of rhetoric: Tertullian, Cyprian, Minucius Felix, Arnobius, Lactantius, and Marius Victorinus.<sup>37</sup> All of these, except Tertullian (though he was probably trained as a lawyer and thus grounded in forensic rhetorical theory), were formally trained as rhetors and before their conversion functioned as such; in this respect, Augustine was their natural heir.

Finally and more subtly, Augustine shared with rhetors, especially Cicero, a high regard for the role of delight (*delectatio*) in human motivation. At key moments of his thinking—in his treatment of music, God and creation in *De musica*, in his grappling with the question of the will in *Ad Simplicianum*, in his placement of Romans 5.5 at the heart of his understanding of redemption, in his influential insights into the mechanics of Romans 7 and 8, in his controversy with the Pelagians, and above all in his understanding of love—delight appears, pointing him in interesting directions that warrant further exploration and explanation. The closest parallel to Augustine’s use of delight is in classical rhetoric, especially the place of delight in the Ciceronian mechanics of persuasion. In almost every case that Augustine dwells on the nature and role of delight in his theology it appears as either a means or goal of persuasion.

In fact, Augustine always remained a man disciplined in the Ciceronian tradition of speaking ‘so as to prove, to please, and to persuade’,<sup>38</sup> and likewise remained firmly convinced that delight lay at the ground of human motivation. One can only wonder how often he observed a proficient orator change the hearts of an

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<sup>37</sup> Little is known about Minucius Felix, though his one surviving work, *Octavius*, demonstrates his deep classical learning.

<sup>38</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 69 (LCL 356): ‘...ita dicet, ut probet, ut delectat, ut flectat’.

audience—likely he had accomplished this himself—through not only the wisdom of his conviction but also the delightfulness of his oratorical performance. His life prior to his conversion had been devoted to the art of shaping and directing the will of others through words both wise and charming. Who better, therefore, to know first hand the phantasm of free will than one trained in the manipulation of the will through words? Augustine might claim that he had rejected the ideals of the rhetors for those of the philosophers (a common enough claim among rhetors), but the Christian God he came to embrace after his conversion was a strangely eloquent Deity.

## **Delight**

It will be my contention, therefore, that the basis for Augustine's understanding of redemption is found in rhetoric; his interpretation of Scripture, particularly Romans 7 and 8, are deeply influenced by his rhetorical knowledge. The nature of delight in Augustine's thought can be found most forcefully expressed in Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana*, where Augustine, drawing directly from Cicero, states, 'A hearer must be delighted (*delectandus*) so that he can be gripped and made to listen, and moved so that he can be impelled to action'.<sup>39</sup> Delight here is not a modest appreciation but a potent force that overwhelms the defences of the will, demands attention, and prepares it to be spurred into action. Indeed, as will become clear, Augustine accords delight such enormous power that even sin and virtue are wholly dependent on it. The only way either sin or virtue can obtain people's free acquiescence is by delighting them so that they can be gripped and moved towards either virtuous or sinful action. Because of that estimation—perhaps only fully

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<sup>39</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.12.27 (CCL 32.135).

appreciated by classical rhetors—Augustine devoted much of his work to guiding others towards a true and secure delight or preventing them from straying (either through immorality or heresy) farther away from it.<sup>40</sup>

The usual word Augustine uses is *delectatio* (in its noun form) or *delectare* (in its verb form). *Delectare* is generally synonymous with *placere* (to please) and *gaudere* (to rejoice), and Augustine uses all three terms (along with *iucunditas*, *suavis* and *dulcis*) to describe the act, object or source of pleasure. The interchangeable definition of these words is reflected in the translations of Augustine, all of which use ‘delight’ as an English equivalent for all these Latin terms. Confusingly, translators at times use alternative words where Augustine only uses one; thus, for example, in *Confessiones* 10.3.4, Henry Chadwick translates *delectat* as both ‘delight’ and ‘pleasure’ within the space of a dozen words.<sup>41</sup>

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines delight in three ways: 1. as ‘pleasure, joy, or gratification felt in a high degree’, 2. as ‘source of great pleasure or joy’ or, 3. ‘the quality (in objects) which causes delight; quality or faculty of delighting; charm, delightfulness’.<sup>42</sup> The *OED* defines delight in its verbal form as ‘to give great pleasure or enjoyment to, to please highly’, or in its reflexive form as ‘to be highly pleased, take great pleasure, rejoice’.<sup>43</sup> As the *OED*’s citations of ‘delight’ demonstrate, normally in English delight has a positive connotation: a ‘high degree’ of enjoyment of something for its own sake.

Augustine’s description of delight in *De doctrina Christiana* suggests, however, that he defined the concept a little differently. Delight for him can be

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<sup>40</sup> See John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St Augustine* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1938), 220-222 for a good treatment of Augustine’s reaction to Pelagianism in the context of delight.

<sup>41</sup> See Chadwick, *Confessions*, 180.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Delight.’ *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Delight.’ *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989.

forceful, sweeping the delighted up into the love of the other and bonding the two together. In such cases, *delectatio* is reminiscent of the English word ‘sublimity’, particularly as defined by Edmund Burke and the early Romantics.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, his understanding of the forcefulness of delight can at times be similar to our own concept of addiction as when he writes, ‘Before the habit is acquired, either there is no pleasure (*delectatio*) whatsoever or it is so slight it is scarcely present....If he then goes so far as to perform the corresponding act, the craving seems to be satisfied and extinguished, but a more intense pleasure (*delectatio*) is enkindled when the suggestion is repeated afterwards. This pleasure (*delectatio*), however, is far less than that which has turned into a habit by continuous acts, for it is very difficult to overcome this habit’.<sup>45</sup> Delight for Augustine is therefore a powerful experience that cannot be easily resisted.

Passages such as these might easily lead one to think that Augustine had a mainly unfavourable opinion of delight. Certainly, such a view accords with the popular notion of the character of Augustine’s thought and, indeed, of the medieval theology he so influenced. But such an interpretation would be mistaken. Augustine speaks of delight as originating in God; he is equally happy to speak of God himself delighting especially as Scripture often does so. Indeed, in *en. Ps.* 85, Augustine is willing to say to God: ‘You alone are delight’, using the word *iucunditas* with its connotation of playfulness.<sup>46</sup> Finally, central to his understanding of how Christians persevere to salvation is the necessity, as he sees it, of a victorious ‘delight in

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<sup>44</sup> See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful and other Pre-revolutionary Writings*, ed. by David Womersley (London: Penguin, 1998) and Edmund Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), 36-38. Farley writes, ‘The sublime then names neither something subjective nor objective but rather a way in which certain human emotions are seized by a dimension of things that humans cannot control, predict, be secure with or even conceptualize’.

<sup>45</sup> *s. Dom. mon.* 1.12.34.

<sup>46</sup> *en. Ps.* 85.6.

righteousness' (*delectatio iustitiae*) that is imparted to the faithful through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup> Obviously, delight is a very complex concept in Augustine's thought.

Surprisingly, despite Augustine's educational background and for all his use of the concept of delight, no scholars have made delight the primary focus of their studies. Certainly, many studies of Augustine's theology make some mention of 'delight', and a few key works even devote a section to its role. Yet most scholars prefer to discuss the importance of 'happiness' in Augustine, pointing out the possible inspiration of the *Enneads* or placing his thought within the Aristotelian tradition of eudaemonistic ethics.<sup>48</sup>

Undoubtedly the most influential discussion of delight is that found in Peter Brown's *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, where he argues that through analysing the 'psychology' of delight, Augustine reached the conclusion that delight 'is the only possible source of action, nothing else can move the will'.<sup>49</sup> According to Brown, this epiphany led Augustine to discard his earlier optimism about the will's ability to cooperate with God's grace for a more pessimistic view in which the will completely relies on God's initiative. Such is the influence of Brown's proposal that almost all subsequent examinations of delight are influenced by it.<sup>50</sup> As a result, delight has been reduced to an entirely motivational force without any deeper or theological basis for its power over the will.

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example, *Jo. eu. tr.* 26.4; 41.9.2-10.1; s. 154; s. 159; *sp. et litt.* 2.4.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, R. J. O'Connell's 'The Enneads and Saint Augustine's Image of Happiness', *Vigiliae Christianae* 17 (1963), 129-164 for a discussion of the possible influence of the Enneads on Augustine's concept of happiness. Scholars are generally agreed, however, that Augustine's eudemonism was primarily influenced by Cicero, more precisely his *Hortensius*, of which we now only have fragments. See Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 45-52; Oliver O'Donovan's *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 24-29 and 137-159.

<sup>49</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 154.

<sup>50</sup> For an important challenge to Brown's view, see Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

It is worthwhile to compare Brown's understanding of delight in Augustine's thought with that of Oliver O'Donovan in order to illustrate how a dominant concern can significantly influence an appreciation of what Augustine intends by delight. Brown's emphasis, of course, is on the transformation of Augustine from the young, optimistic Christian philosopher into the father of a dour strand of western theology fixated on the bondage of the will, original sin and predestination. 'Delight' is central to Brown's argument. He writes: 'Augustine came to view "delight" as the mainspring of human action; but his 'delight' escaped self-control. Delight is discontinuous, startlingly erratic: Augustine now moves in a world of "love at first sight", of chance encounters, and, just as important, of sudden equally inexplicable patches of deadness'.<sup>51</sup> Here, Brown is carried away by his own rhetoric, concluding his chapter by portraying Augustine as a 'Romantic' abruptly swept into a world of alarming uncertainties.<sup>52</sup> His account is beguiling and accords well with Augustine's portrayal of delight in *De doctrina Christiana*. Yet, his approach should give one pause. Brown believes that Augustine reached his conclusions about delight after a careful psychological analysis of the concept of delight. But one wonders whether Augustine's hypothetically new insight arose from a psychological analysis or from a deep theological consideration.<sup>53</sup> In fact, Brown's psychological account of Augustine's concept of delight hardly compels him to consider the possible theological reasons for Augustine's view. He makes a passing reference to delight's connection to grace and to God serving as the source of delight, but he expends no effort in pursuing either thought. He never asks why Augustine understands delight as central to human motivation or why it finds its source in God. Brown's sole

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<sup>51</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 155.

<sup>52</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 156.

<sup>53</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 154.

concern is with how Augustine's psychological analysis of delight facilitates his supposed change of heart. Finally, given that Brown's hypothesis appears in his biography of Augustine, he surprisingly makes no attempt to understand Augustine's approach in light of his education and earlier profession as a rhetor.<sup>54</sup> Thus, Brown's account leaves one with two important questions: what is the theology behind Augustine's supposed metamorphosis and how was that theology informed by his training as a rhetor?

While Brown comprehends Augustine's delight as a kind of 'Romantic' turn, Oliver O'Donovan presents it as a kind of refined rationalism. In the first chapter of his insightful *The Problem of Self-Love in Saint Augustine*, O'Donovan seeks to guard against a false polarity between a 'cosmic' and a 'positive' love in Augustine by categorising Augustine's use of love into four aspects: 'cosmic', 'rational', 'benevolent' and 'positive'.<sup>55</sup> Within this scheme, he understands delight as synonymous with a 'rational love' that is 'neither "appetite" nor "movement" but estimation, appreciation, and approval'.<sup>56</sup> Earlier he describes this 'rational love' as 'an admiring appreciation of the good, in which the subject recognises the teleology which he himself has not imposed but from which he can maintain an observer's independence'.<sup>57</sup> In short, O'Donovan presents delight as a refined and measured love with the lover very much in control (necessary for the observer's independence) of his or her own appreciation. Yet, as the passage quoted above from *De doctrina Christiana* makes clear, far from being a detached appreciation of the beloved, Augustine speaks of delight as something that grips, forces attention, and compels action. These are violent terms more like Donne's 'Batter my heart three-person'd

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<sup>54</sup> See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 35-45 for his discussion of Augustine's education.

<sup>55</sup> O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, 18.

<sup>56</sup> O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, 29.

<sup>57</sup> O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, 18.



God' than any Platonic appreciation of the good or the beautiful. Surely, therefore, *delectatio* is not always synonymous with a 'rational' and demurely appreciative love.<sup>58</sup> Yet, O'Donovan seems to suggest so.

What one finds in each of these descriptions of delight is not so much a misinterpretation of Augustine as the failure fully to pursue his concept of delight. Even Brown, who at first glance appears to concentrate on delight, really concerns himself not so much with delight itself as with how Augustine's use of that concept in *Ad Simplicianum* reveals his theological transformation. Likewise, the only explanation for O'Donovan's equating of delight with 'rational love' is that he has not considered other ways in which Augustine makes use of the word *delectatio* (or its various synonyms). Thus, while O'Donovan's account of 'rational love' is sound, less so is his unqualified correspondence of 'rational love' with *delectatio*.

What then are we to make of Augustine's concept of delight? First, delight is more than a pleasant if overpowering source of motivation or a mere facet of eudaemonistic ethics. In fact, delight is first and foremost the affective element of God's love. Because God is love, Augustine can speak of delight as a property of the Trinity itself, one which he most closely associates with the Holy Spirit. Thus, he refers to the Holy Spirit as 'blissful delight' and of God himself as actually delighting.<sup>59</sup> Augustine can also picture heaven as where 'delight beyond measure' will be enjoyed because there the faithful will be given 'the chance to contemplate the Lord's own delight'.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, whenever Augustine speaks of delight he refers to something that is more than mere psychology; delight is not an emotion

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<sup>58</sup> In fact, such is the close link between love and delight that delight itself can easily be fit within each of his categories: 'cosmic delight', 'positive delight', 'rational delight', and 'benevolent delight'.

<sup>59</sup> *trin.* 6.12.

<sup>60</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (2), 8.

manufactured by the human psyche but, fundamentally, the expression and confirmation of love that finds its origin in God. It should not, therefore, be surprising to find Augustine referring repeatedly to delight in his discussion of God's acts of creation and redemption. Delight is present in the act of creation, involved in the movement of that creation towards God, and present at the end of all virtuous striving. Delight also plays a vital role within redemption as an integral aspect of the love that draws the faithful to God and enables them to persevere or abide in that love.

Yet, Augustine's approach to delight is not wholly sanguine. In fact, delight is a central part of his understanding of the Fall and of why people turn away from God in the embrace of death. While a 'spiritual' or 'eternal' delight may compel one towards God, illicit and temporal delights entice one towards death. Such delights manifest themselves either as the enjoyment of wickedness itself or as an unhealthy fixation on the mutable and transitory. Such is the power of delight in Augustine's thought that it makes even death seem sweet and pleasurable. The perversity of fallen humanity causes it to enjoy its own journey towards death.

## **A Rhetorical Theology**

What one finds in Augustine, therefore, is a mature and developed understanding of the nature of delight that is unparalleled in either Christian theology or rhetorical theory yet draws heavily from both. It is as though Augustine the rhetor discovered in the Christian God the source of the almost magical power that the classical world ascribed to orators. For Augustine therefore, delight is not a secondary concept to be understood only in the light of other overarching concerns. Delight is in fact of such paramount importance that it influences not only what he

writes but how he writes. The failure to grasp this point not only leads to the misconstruing of Augustine's theological concerns (often assuming that they are the same as present-day ones) but also ignores what arguably is Augustine's greatest legacy to medieval theology: a theology and spirituality grounded in rhetorical principles.

I begin Part One of my study, therefore, by examining Augustine's rhetorical background in order to show the historical and rhetorical milieu in which he developed his theology. The period of rhetorical theory and practice during Augustine's day is normally termed 'Second Sophistic' (a name coined by Philostratus the Athenian during the third century) and is marked by an exaggerated esteem for style over content.<sup>61</sup> If one carefully studies Augustine's supposed rejection of rhetoric, it becomes clear that what he really condemns is this overly ornamented approach to oratory, which to his mind is both facile and self-promoting. Instead, he upholds an understanding of rhetoric that is most clearly expressed in Cicero's enormously influential *De inventione*.<sup>62</sup> In the proemium of that work, Cicero maintains that rhetoric and philosophy depend on each other. While eloquence without wisdom is potentially very harmful, wisdom without eloquence is mute and ineffectual.<sup>63</sup> For Cicero the eloquent expression of philosophical wisdom is a political act necessary for the formation and continued well-being of the commonwealth.

Augustine's own approach to philosophical rhetoric bears much resemblance to Marius Victorinus's Neoplatonic commentary on *De inventione* entitled

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<sup>61</sup> For Philostratus of Athens, see Graham Anderson, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1993), 13-21.

<sup>62</sup> On the continued influence of *De inventione* and Victorinus's *In Cic. rhet.*, see John O. Ward, 'From Antiquity to the Renaissance', 37-43. According to Brian Vickers, between one and two thousand medieval copies of *De inventione* remain. See Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 216.

<sup>63</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.1.

*Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam*. Written before Victorinus's dramatic conversion to Christianity, this long commentary reinterprets what for Cicero is primarily a political art into one which makes the embodied soul receptive to the wisdom that will enable it to ascend back to the divine. Victorinus's work represents an important turn in classical rhetoric away from a civic role within law courts and the forum towards a more 'religious' and personal role in the *reditus* of enlightened souls back to their original nature and their disembodied participation in the divine.

Both *De inventione* and Victorinus's commentary on that work shed much light on Augustine's understanding of redemption and the role of delight within it. My study of Augustine's theology, therefore, begins with a careful examination of Cicero's rhetorical theory—both as it represented Republican ideals and, more importantly, as it sought to shape those ideals—in order to illustrate the shape and influence of Cicero's model for the ideal orator in whom eloquence and wisdom coalesce. Central to that theory is the myth in the proemium of *De inventione* in which he conceives of people originally roaming like cattle, scattered around the countryside and living by brute force, unaware that they could be something better. Eventually, a wise and eloquent man arose who could convey his wisdom with such eloquence that those within earshot could not help but be charmed. His wise speech gathered the people together, formed them into a civilisation, and taught them divine truths and human duties. This could only have been accomplished by someone in whom wisdom was united with eloquence.

Equally important is Cicero's development of his wise orator in *De oratore* and *Orator*, in which defines the purpose of eloquence as proving, pleasing, and persuading in such a skilful way that the will of the audience is overwhelmed. Cicero's ideal orator is one who can convince his audience to hand over its will to

him and to want to do as he compels them. The orator is not a philosopher, he does not seek to convince through a series of carefully reasoned proofs; he is a rhetorician who seeks through argument and emotional appeal to convince the audience to act in a particular way. The difference is expressed well by Marjorie Boyle in her survey of medieval dialectic and rhetoric: ‘Dialectic seeks an act of the intellect...through compulsion of reason, and it secures its religious end in contemplation. Rhetoric seeks an act of the will...through persuasion of feeling, and it secures its religious end in conversion.’<sup>64</sup>

Cicero himself, however, would not have naturally conceived of either dialectic or rhetoric as necessarily directed towards a religious end. For him, the role of rhetoric is primarily civic: to advocate in the law courts and deliberate in the Senate. But by Augustine’s own day those expectations had changed. To show how classical rhetoric had developed by the fourth century, I next discuss Second Sophistic, the dominant rhetoric after the fall of the Roman Republic in which Augustine was trained and against which he later rebelled after reading Cicero’s *Hortensius*. Within late Imperial rhetoric, however, there developed two frequently intertwined types of rhetoricians who sought, either consciously or not, to preserve Cicero’s ideal of a wise and eloquent orator. The first, of which Victorinus and the pre-conversion Augustine are representative, is the philosophical rhetor.<sup>65</sup> These rhetoricians attempted to adapt and preserve the Ciceronian ideal by adjusting it to the expectations of a society that increasingly sought a form of salvation away from the world, especially through the Neoplatonic return to the divine. People such as

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<sup>64</sup> Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, ‘Fools and Schools: Scholastic Dialectic, Humanist Rhetoric; from Anselm to Erasmus’, *Medievalia et Humanistica: New Series* 13 (1985), 183.

<sup>65</sup> While technically rhetors such as Victorinus are themselves examples of Second Sophistic, their emphasis on philosophy does seem to mark them apart from the more general rhetorical expectations of the period. This is not to say, however, that philosophical rhetors always remained separate from their popularly celebrated colleagues—often they could produce the same overly-stylised declamations as their less philosophical colleagues.

Victorinus and Martianus Capella (both North Africans) conceived of Cicero's theory as providing a way for the soul to shed itself of worldliness as it rediscovers its own original nature in the divine. In the hands of philosophical rhetors, Ciceronian rhetoric was imbued with a religious quality largely lacking in Cicero's own works. Thus, by Augustine's day Cicero's scheme for explaining the rise and maintenance of the State had been interiorised and adapted to a Neoplatonic worldview: sweet eloquence gives voice to mute wisdom to ennoble the human soul.

The second tradition is represented by the late antique bishop. This often overlooked aspect of late Imperial bishops has been recently recognised by Paul Kolbet, who begins his book by noting, 'The sudden, extraordinary influence of Christian bishops in the fourth and fifth centuries was due in no small part to their ability to make publicly recognised practices and strategies of the Greco-Roman orators and philosophers their own—even as they adapted them to conform to Christian principles'.<sup>66</sup> In the West, such bishops deliberately or not became models of Cicero's ideal orator, in many cases despite their less than sanguine appreciation of Cicero. But their role in society as statesmen who provided for the well-being of their community, i.e. the Church, through their eloquent expression of Scriptural truth came to embody more than anyone else Cicero's ideal. Few others personified that ideal better than Saint Ambrose and it is therefore no coincidence that through him Augustine the rhetor was eventually reconciled to Christianity.

After establishing the wider historical context for Augustine's theology, I will examine Augustine's own consideration of rhetoric in light of Cicero and in comparison to Victorinus. I will seek to demonstrate that Augustine did not reject classical rhetoric, let alone Cicero, but that his own thought and theology were deeply

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<sup>66</sup> Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 1.

influenced by the ideal of a philosophical rhetor. That ideal can be most clearly seen in his treatment of Christian teaching in *De doctrina Christiana* that both in its structure and argument translate that ideal into a Christian context. While Augustine may be willing to disagree with Cicero on questions of style he retains the fundamental picture of a person devoted to wisdom and seeking to make people receptive to that wisdom through eloquence. What partly clouds a historical view of Augustine's reliance on Cicero is that he downplays Cicero's mainly civil rhetoric in favour of one directed towards the inculcation of salvific truth.<sup>67</sup> But this is not a rejection of Cicero himself so much as it is the baptism of late antique Ciceronianism. Where Augustine is original, however, is in his understanding of the source of both wisdom and eloquence: ultimately, for Augustine, the preacher-orator is wise and eloquent primarily because he gives space for God to be wise and eloquent through him.

One of the reasons why the grounding of Augustine's theology in the principles of rhetoric is so important is that they provide a richer context in which to read his theology. There has been a tendency, particularly in some quarters of the Church, to dwell on Augustine's theology of grace in, as it were, splendid isolation. This has been recognised by Paul Kolbet who, drawing upon the work of Stephen Duffy, argues that Augustine's doctrine of grace has been disengaged from its 'original context within the bishop's ministry and his more basic conviction in the incarnation of the divine Word: a Word spoken rhetorically, adapted to the human condition, and meant to persuade us'.<sup>68</sup> He concludes by arguing that '...rhetorical

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<sup>67</sup> This is not to say that there is no civic dimension to Augustine's approach to Christian rhetoric. To the contrary, scholars who emphasise the lack of a civic dimension in Book Four of *doc. chr.*, miss the vital point that Augustine's ecclesiastical orientation is, in fact, the supposedly missing civic aspect of his thought. Fundamentally, Augustine's preacher is to the Church what Cicero's orator is to the Roman Republic.

<sup>68</sup> Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 11.

theory has been so internalised by Augustine that it not only expresses his theological vision, but also informs it. Moreover, even as it is employed, rhetoric itself is revised and infused with theological content'.<sup>69</sup> As Kolbet argues here, Augustine's theology is informed by his rhetorical training, and nowhere is that clearer than in his treatment of human redemption in terms of persuasive delight.

To begin to understand how that delight operates within Augustine's theology, however, one must first understand the world in which that delight operates. Part Two of my study therefore begins by delving into Augustine's enormously rich view of a created existence that is wholly contingent. He argues repeatedly that all of creation derives and continues its existence through an active participation in God's being or goodness. God is the ground of all existence. He is Being itself; everything else has been 'uttered' into existence through his eternal Word: Christ. Or, as Augustine succinctly puts it: 'You do not cause it to exist other than by speaking'.<sup>70</sup> To explain how this works, he develops an idea that would later cause some heated debate among medieval theologians: that God began by uttering into existence an unformed material that existed on the very cusp of nothingness. This material was good because God had created it, but it lacked any form and was therefore almost non-existent. Then, God called the formless material back to himself through his Word and through that conversion gave it all form. And so, creation itself is a kind of divine speech that was uttered into existence and called back into formation through the Father's eternally uttered Word. Speech and persuasion are therefore part of the act of creation itself: to exist means to have been both spoken and persuaded to turn from nothingness.

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<sup>69</sup> Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 11. Although my own study is broadly in sympathy with Kolbet's argument, I believe he does not pursue his insights sufficiently to appreciate the full impact of rhetoric on Augustine's theology.

<sup>70</sup> *conf.* 9.7.9.



Humanity holds a central place within creation and shares in creation's precarious existence on the cusp of nothingness. In that sense, the audience for God's redemptive oratory is a restless one, never stationary but always tending towards either God or death. Outside of heaven, static existence does not exist. Contingent being is thus also an action subject to motivational forces. At the same time, humanity has fallen from perfection, which has created an irresistible bias towards death; fallen humanity finds the devil's charming words sweeter than the Word through whom they were created. Acutely conscious of this human capacity for sin and corruption, Augustine provides a soteriology whereby the participation of the faithful in God is accomplished by means of a prior and necessary participation of the divine in human nature. As with Irenaeus of Lyons and Athanasius, the key to redemption for Augustine is the Incarnation wherein God became man so that men can become God; only this divine initiative can overcome the pride of human sinfulness. By deigning to participate in fallen humanity, the Word enables humanity to turn towards God and away from its tendency towards prideful self-destruction. The entirety of human life is, therefore, dependent on participation: both existence and redemption—equally acts of God's love—spring from that one communion between God and humanity.

All of this is the theoretical theology behind Augustine's approach to the pastoral question of how that redemption and participation work out within human experience. It is one thing to state that by participating in human nature, Christ opened the door for human beings to participate fruitfully in God's own being and eventually to share in his divinity, and another thing altogether to state what this actually means in real terms—and one must remember that most of Augustine's work was directed at congregations either directly through his preaching or indirectly

through his defence of the faith. It is, in fact, precisely in his spelling out of the implications of participatory existence and redemption that he draws from his rhetorical training. A helpful way to think about this is to ask the question: what is the experience of damnation or salvation really like? How does it feel to be on the road to heaven or hell? Interestingly, Augustine's answer is that each involves delight. But for him the peculiar thing about delight is that no one has control over it. In his letter to Simplicianus (from which Peter Brown developed his theory of Augustine's conversion), he asks, 'Who can welcome in his mind something that does not give him delight? But who has it in his power to ensure that something that will delight him will turn up, or that he will take delight in what turns up?'<sup>71</sup> When delight presents itself to the human senses or mind, it overwhelms them, and moves the will. In other words, people are persuaded and converted by delight, and just as Cicero's eloquence takes hold of the audience's mind and compels action, so too does delight take hold of the mind and compel action. The dynamics of this are beyond human control; as Augustine understands it, people do something because it pleases them, but the fact that it does please them is something they can neither understand nor control.

In order to present the fullness of Augustine's concept of delight, I will next discuss in turn the two kinds of delight that contend for control over the human will. I will begin with worldly delight because Augustine, drawing from Romans 7, believes that humanity is already enthralled to it. Worldly delight manifests itself either as the actual delight in illicit activity—a delight in sin—or as an inordinate delight in the temporal that distracts people from seeking God. Both forms of worldly delight enslave the will and direct it towards death. In fact, so powerful is

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<sup>71</sup> *Simpl.* 1.2.21.

this kind of delight that the experience of it forms a habit or chain that is impossible to break without God's grace. For Augustine, delight therefore gives substance to the Pauline idea of bondage of the will to sin.

Part of my argument in this section will be that Augustine's worldly delight can be compared to Cicero's 'babbling stupidity' against which the true orator must contend. In Cicero's myth in *De inventione* he conjectures that in the course of events, men 'who were accustomed to stand on the side of falsehood against truth' employed a charming fluency to woo the people into believing them fit to govern.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Augustine conceives of a diabolical fluency that uses charm and falsehood to beguile people into surrendering the governance of their own will. He has made the devil or sin into Cicero's anti-orator: his charm and false wisdom cause harm. Although Cicero's republic has been supplanted by the individual will, his original logic remains. Sin therefore presents itself as a kind of rhetoric, tempting people with its sweetness and fluency to surrender their will and act in a manner that removes them farther from God. In fact, Augustine's perception of how sin charms people is not altogether different from his perception of Second Sophistic: both offer vanity and falsehood dressed in the fine apparel of groundless delight. In other words, sin is persuasive rather than coercive; people progress towards self-destruction through being gripped by delight and compelled to action.

Set against worldly delight is God's own eternal delight, the source of which Augustine locates in God himself. Drawing upon Ps. 27.4 (26.4), Augustine returns frequently to an image of heaven as where the faithful will contemplate the 'Lord's delight'. I will examine his use of this passage to show that he envisions delight as existing within the Godhead and identifies it most closely with God's goodness. That

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<sup>72</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.3.

identification allows him to perceive all creation—which only enjoys existence by partaking of God’s goodness—as being inherently delightful. His typical way of presenting the delightfulness of creation is as beauty, and this comes out powerfully not only in *De ordine* and *De musica*, in which he speaks of creation as God’s cosmic *carmen*, but also in his various discussions of the measure, number and order imparted to created existence. In fact, the delightful beauty of creation itself shares in God’s oratory by both praising its Creator and calling the inquiring mind to share in that praise.

I will conclude my discussion of spiritual delight by observing Augustine’s definition of the *beata vita*, the happy life, which is the true goal of human life. Within his thought, happiness is not a subjective search in which people individually undertake an Enlightenment ‘pursuit of happiness’. True happiness itself is synonymous with a participation in God; the pursuit of happiness, therefore, is the search for God and that search is propelled by delight. People respond as they do to delight—be it temporal or spiritual—in their quest to find a happiness that is both secure and satisfying. Because of the Fall, humanity has succumbed to the lure of worldly delights; despite that, however, the memory of God continues to haunt the heart, causing it to remain restless.

Finally, to understand how God intervenes to draw the restless heart towards salvation and to free it from bondage to sin, I will discuss the role of the Holy Spirit within Augustine’s theology. The same logic that compels Augustine to believe that there can be no love without delight, leads him to associate a divine delight most closely with the Holy Spirit, whom he identifies as the loving communion shared between the Father and the Son. That eternal delight becomes eloquence when turned towards humanity. By infusing love and delight into the hearts of the faithful by the

outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God overwhelms enslaved wills and draws them back towards a happy participation in his own divine nature. Augustine repeatedly cites Rom. 5.5, where Paul speaks of God pouring the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the faithful, to explain how Christians are saved. But he understands the dynamic of this outpouring through his developing understanding of Romans 7 and 8. The insight Augustine gained from his long meditation on that passage leads him to believe that only by delighting in righteousness can people discover freedom. God cannot coerce people into turning back towards him through fear or violence because this would not allow for human freedom or love. People must want to love God and to live good lives. In order to do that, they must delight in God and goodness. Because they have been enslaved to the delight of sin, God must therefore pour his true and eternal delight into their hearts. Without the outpouring of delightful love, humankind continually delights in its own death. Ultimately, the faithful must enjoy God because their existence and redemption depend on that enjoyment. Any other enjoyment effectively leads to the collapse of one's contingent nature. Boldly stated, therefore, delight determines the status of human existence.

Ultimately God is the orator; he is the wisdom conveyed; he is the eloquence that delights. Humanity has been created by that Author, that Wisdom, and that Eloquence and it has been redeemed by all three as well. As with Cicero's audience, Augustine's humanity is passive: the human will is enslaved either to the soul's detriment to sin or to its everlasting benefit to God. In other words, one or the other will always take hold of the mind; there is no question of individuals being their own master. But because delight is at the heart of human existence in a strange way people are happy with either form of bondage: either happy in their own self-destruction or in their own divinisation. But only the latter will bring with it

satisfaction and rest. In the end, Augustine never forsook rhetoric but rather transformed it into a theology that, like all good rhetorical theory, takes seriously the human condition.

## 2

# The Ideal Orator

Rome was sustained as much by the eloquence of her orators as by the might of her legions. From at least the time of Cicero, rhetoric dominated the intellectual life of Rome; though philosophers might inveigh against sophistry, they never seriously threatened the devotion to *ars rhetorica* by the governing class. Homer and Demosthenes in the East and Virgil and Cicero in the West remained the ideals of Greco-Roman literary culture until the dominance of Christianity in the late fourth century.<sup>73</sup> These authors were ‘burned into the memory’ of the elite from an early age, shaping their language, their ideals, and their culture.<sup>74</sup> Augustine, both a student and later teacher of rhetoric, was no exception. Indeed, he learned his craft in North Africa where, if the works on rhetoric by Marius Victorinus, Martianus Capella, and possibly Fortunatianus are anything to go by, seems to have been a centre of rhetorical learning in Late Antiquity.

Before beginning to discern the ways in which rhetoric may have shaped Augustine’s theology, one has to come to grips with the nature of rhetoric in his day. This is by no means an easy task. Scholars have long debated not only the character of that rhetoric but also Augustine’s attitude towards it. Some have seen Augustine as utterly Ciceronian while others maintain just as vigorously that he subtly rejected

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<sup>73</sup> Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 39.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 39.

Cicero.<sup>75</sup> Others still have taken a middle road, arguing that while Augustine sought to replace Ciceronian rhetoric with a Christian one, he was too beholden to the old orator to leave him behind entirely.<sup>76</sup>

Unfortunately, few of these authors have made a serious attempt to place Augustine within the wider historical and cultural context of classical rhetoric in his own day. Certainly, some have tried to argue that in the *Confessiones* and *De doctrina Christiana*, he rejected not so much rhetoric *per se* as Second Sophistic. But what does that assertion mean? Rhetors and orators in Augustine's day did not define themselves by particular modern categories of styles.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, rhetoric itself cannot so easily be separated from the rest of culture and learning; Roman education from a young age was steeped in grammar and rhetoric. As Christine Morhmann states in her essay on Augustine and eloquence, 'For Augustine and his contemporaries, a "vir eloquentissimus" was a cultivated man, someone who had absorbed the culture of his times and expressed it in his way of life'.<sup>78</sup> Could Augustine actually distance himself from the dominant rhetorical culture without distancing himself from the whole realm of late classical education and learning?

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<sup>75</sup> Pro-Ciceronian authors include Maurice Testard, *Saint Augustin et Ciceron* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1958); Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967); Calvin Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); C.S. Baldwin, 'St. Augustine on Preaching (*De Doctrina Christiana*, IV) in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo: De Doctrina Christiana & the Search for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric*, Enos, Richard Leo and Thompson, Roger, et al. (ed.), (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 187-203. Anti-Ciceronian authors include (to varying degrees), Michael J. Scanlon, 'Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric' *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994) 37-50.39; Ernest L. Fortin, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric', *Augustinian Studies* 5 (1974), 85-100.; Gerald Primmer, 'The Function of the *genera dicendi* in *De doctrina christiana* 4' in *De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*, Duane W.H. Arnold and Pamela Bright, eds. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 68-86.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Morhmann, 'Saint Augustine and the "Eloquentia"' and Kennedy, *A New History of Rhetoric*, 265-270.

<sup>77</sup> As close as they came to defining their own style was in view of Atticism. While Cicero attacked the growing popularity of the Attic style, Atticism was not seriously challenged after the first century A.D.

<sup>78</sup> Morhmann, 'Saint Augustine and the "Eloquentia"', 351.



Just as importantly, when comparing Augustine to Cicero, few scholars address the emergence prior to Augustine's own time of a Neoplatonic adaptation of Ciceronianism, expressed clearly by Marius Victorinus (whose theology and conversion so influenced Augustine) in *Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam*, his commentary on Cicero's, *De inventione*. Likewise, in examining Augustine's apparent contempt for *ars rhetorica*, no one explicitly distinguishes between a *rhetor* and an *orator*. While this may seem a minor point, it is surely of interest that Cicero, the western paradigm of an orator, demonstrates the same contempt for rhetors and their handbooks as does Augustine. Rhetors, teachers of rhetoric, enjoyed a very different status within western Roman society than orators. No self-respecting Roman gentleman ever aspired to be a rhetor; but an orator in the tradition of Cato the Elder, Seneca, and Cicero remained a powerful model throughout the West in Antiquity.

The primary task of this chapter is therefore twofold: to examine rhetoric as defined in the late Republic and particularly by Cicero and also as understood in Augustine's own day and especially in comparison to the ideals of Cicero. In order to see how Ciceronian rhetoric may have influenced Augustine's theology, one must understand the concerns and debates regarding rhetoric during the late Republic. Of particular interest is the distinction made between the rhetors who taught *ars rhetorica* and the Roman orators who spoke in courts and assemblies and deliberated in the senate. This distinction between the two roles within Roman society will shed light on Augustine's own attitudes towards rhetoric found in *Confessiones* and *De doctrina Christiana*. Next, we will examine how the classical debate about the relative merits of rhetoric in comparison with philosophy was carried on in the late Republic. Both topics will provide an introduction to Cicero's own rhetorical theory.

There are three aspects of Cicero's thought that shed light on either Augustine's language about rhetoric or the influence of classical rhetoric on his theology. First, I will examine how Cicero distinguishes between rhetors and orators, and how that distinction connects with his understanding of eloquence. Cicero by and large shared the disdain for rhetorical teachers common among the Roman elite of the late Republic. This influenced his own attitudes towards rhetorical rules and theory in relation to eloquence itself. Second, I will observe how Cicero sought to solve the debate between philosophy and oratory by grounding eloquence in wisdom. Cicero's orator is one in whom the wisdom of philosophy is conjoined with eloquence for the good of the Republic. Influenced by the traditional Roman disdain for what was perceived as a Greek tendency to withdraw from public life to pursue a private life of philosophy, Cicero presents the myth of the heroic proto-orator whose philosophic wisdom and eloquent expression called humanity away from its original barbarism to form civilisation.<sup>79</sup> Finally, I will discuss how Cicero defines eloquence and understands its power over the audience. For Cicero, eloquence is best expressed by the threefold duty of an orator: to speak so as to prove, please, and persuade. An orator's speech must therefore overwhelm the will of the audience so that it will not only prefer the orator to other speakers but also come to desire, praise, and lament what the orator wishes them to desire, praise and lament. All three aspects of Cicero's thought can then be brought together to describe his ideal orator: an image that will have a powerful influence over Augustine.

Having established the primary features of Cicero's rhetorical theory, I will next give some attention to the rhetoric of Augustine's own day. In this section I will illustrate how the collapse of the Republic and the rise of rhetorical schools

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<sup>79</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.2.

transformed rhetoric into something far removed from Cicero's ideal. Judicial and deliberative oratory gave way to epideictic, a rhetoric of praise and blame typically delivered at ceremonial occasions, even as the role of rhetors in Roman society became more fluid. Instead of Cicero's orator/statesman whose wisdom and eloquence serve to preserve the State, the epitome of a late imperial orator is the celebrity, worshiped by his students and adored by his audience. No longer are people to be persuaded through eloquence towards the common good; now the primary purpose of oratorical performance is to enhance the status of the speaker through entertainment.

Finally, by way of joining together the sections on Cicero and on Second Sophistic, I will briefly examine how Christian homiletics in general and the public role of bishops in particular both resisted the lure of Second Sophistic and in many ways epitomised the Ciceronian ideal. One encounters Cicero's orator most convincingly in men such as Ambrose, devoting their public life to edifying their commonwealth, i.e., the Church, by conveying the wisdom of Scripture through the eloquence of preaching. Certainly, Cicero's philosophical wisdom has yielded to Scriptural wisdom, but in every other aspect the ideal holds. Perhaps it was no coincidence that at the very time that the young Augustine was wrestling with Cicero's philosophy he was drawn to Ambrose; in the Bishop of Milan he encountered the orator of *De inventione* and *De oratore* in person.

## **Late Republican Rhetoric**

During the late Republic, the Roman approach to oratory experienced a profound transformation that was part of the Greek influence over Roman intellectual life in the second and first centuries B.C. According to the traditional Roman model,

after receiving a private education in fundamentals, a young man would be apprenticed to an orator at the forum and learn his craft by imitating his elders.<sup>80</sup> Such a system, employing private tutors and forensic apprenticeship, was obviously reserved for the Roman elite. In this respect, such training provided for a distinct, elite culture in which *eloquentia* itself functioned as a status symbol; people would know a patrician not only by dress but also by diction. Just as importantly, such an education was intended to prepare young aristocrats for public service in the Republic; in theory, to be an accomplished orator was to be a statesman.

Starting with the Roman conquest of Greece during the second century B.C., the Roman educational system began to change. Initially, wealthy Romans employed Greek slaves to provide technical instruction in grammar and rhetoric for their young before they entered their apprenticeship in the forum.<sup>81</sup> The emergence in Rome of Greeks skilled in rhetorical theory and technique thus post-dated the well-established role of an orator in Roman civic life.<sup>82</sup> Whereas orators remained an entirely aristocratic phenomenon, rhetors themselves enjoyed only a low status in society.<sup>83</sup> Of the thirty-nine documented grammarians and rhetors in the late Republic, thirty were slaves or freedmen of the most powerful families.<sup>84</sup> Anthony Corbeill interprets this as suggesting that the best tutors were difficult to find and were guarded from other interested parties as a mark of familial prestige.<sup>85</sup> Even after they obtained

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<sup>80</sup> Anthony Corbeill, 'Education in the Roman Republic: Creating Traditions', in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, Yun Lee Too, ed., (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 271.

<sup>81</sup> Ingo Gildenhard, *Paideia Romana. Cicero's Tusculan Disputations. Cambridge Classical Journal. Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society. Supplementary Volume 30.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 29; Corbeill, 'Education in the Roman republic', 271.

<sup>82</sup> In Cicero, *Brutus* 1, he speaks of the traditional Roman orators whose eloquence was natural and unaided by Greek rhetorical techniques.

<sup>83</sup> Jakob Wisse, 'The Intellectual Background of Cicero's Rhetorical Works', in James M. May (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 345.

<sup>84</sup> Corbeill, 'Education in the Roman republic', 270.

<sup>85</sup> Corbeill, 'Education in the Roman republic', 271.

freedom, grammarians and rhetors were barred from establishing their own schools, and generally appear to have continued a client relationship with the families to whom they were formerly enslaved.<sup>86</sup>

Thus from the start, an enormous social divide separated those who deliberated in assemblies or the senate from those who taught rhetoric. Orators generally disparaged rhetors and considered the teaching of rhetorical theory and techniques as a ‘debased’ Greek practice suited only for household slaves.<sup>87</sup> Some, such as Cicero, might deem rhetorical teaching an honourable activity among those ‘whose social position they are appropriate,’<sup>88</sup> but by and large the emergence of rhetors was greeted with suspicion. The tenor of these misgivings was perhaps most forcefully expressed by Cato the Elder who railed against the use of Greek slaves in the education of aristocratic children because to have slaves reprimanding their betters and patricians indebted to slaves for their education overthrew the ‘natural’ social order.<sup>89</sup> Not surprisingly, in 161 B.C. the senate reacted strongly against the growing use of Greek slaves in Roman education by banishing all philosophers and rhetors from Rome.<sup>90</sup>

But despite the best efforts of the senate, rhetors were in Rome to stay. A further development occurred in the late second century when grammar schools were founded.<sup>91</sup> These were followed early in the first century by the first school of rhetoric aimed at low-born citizens and even slaves.<sup>92</sup> The first of these independent faculties of rhetoric styled themselves *rhetores Latini*, suggesting awareness on their

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<sup>86</sup> Corbeill, ‘Education in the Roman republic’, 270.

<sup>87</sup> Wisse, ‘The Intellectual Background of Cicero’s Rhetorical Works’, 345.

<sup>88</sup> Cicero, *Off.* 1.151 (LCL 154): ‘...*quorum ordini conveniunt*’.

<sup>89</sup> Gildenhard, *Paideia Romana*, 30.

<sup>90</sup> Wisse, ‘The Intellectual Background of Cicero’s Rhetorical Works’, 345.

<sup>91</sup> Wisse, ‘The Intellectual Background of Cicero’s Rhetorical Works’, 343.

<sup>92</sup> Wisse, ‘The Intellectual Background of Cicero’s Rhetorical Works’, 343.

part that they were providing something Greek in origin (*rhetoric*) now reoriented towards a Latin speaking world. Such a development horrified traditionalists in the Roman establishment and in 93 B.C. the censors Crassus and Ahenobarbus briefly suppressed the first school of rhetoric.<sup>93</sup> Part of the reason why the elite may have reacted against the creation of rhetorical schools is that they provided training hitherto only available to the elite through private tutors, and thus potentially provided access into the upper echelons of society by low-born citizens.<sup>94</sup> In *De oratore*, Cicero has his character Crassus explain that the reason behind this edict was a concern that the Latin rhetors would make Roman youths too bold.<sup>95</sup> Also, Corbeill argues that rhetors operating as independent contractors were hardly likely to conduct themselves as the elite expected freedmen to behave, and this must have caused tensions in society.<sup>96</sup>

So, during the formative period of Roman rhetoric, one finds a strong social distinction between the teaching and performance of oratory that resulted in the approval of the latter over against the former. The two activities of rhetors especially attacked were their inculcation of rhetorical theory through impractical exercises and the composition of rhetorical handbooks.<sup>97</sup> All of the most vocal critics of rhetorical

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<sup>93</sup> H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, tr. by George Lamb (New York: Mentor Books, 1956), 338; Wisse, 'The Intellectual Background of Cicero's Rhetorical Works', 345. See George Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World*, 90-95, for a good discussion of this period.

<sup>94</sup> Corbeill, 'Education in the Roman republic', 272.

<sup>95</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 3.93-95. Crassus explains there that while he approved of young men's minds being 'sharpened', these Greek schools 'were capable of teaching nothing but boldness, certainly something that must be avoided in itself even when combined with good qualities'. He explains further that once people of 'great learning' appear, he would be happy for the schools to reopen, noting only that should 'they at some time appear, they will be superior even to the Greeks'. The term 'shamelessness' used in this section may refer to demagogy. See Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*, trans. James M. May and Jakob Wisse (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 252, n. 115.

<sup>96</sup> Corbeill, 'Education in the Roman republic', 272.

<sup>97</sup> Wisse, 'The Intellectual Background of Cicero's Rhetorical Works', 347. Wisse notes, however, that these rhetorical handbooks were so widely read that Cicero assumes his reader is familiar with their contents.

teaching were themselves accomplished orators. In the words of Seneca the Elder, writing during the first century A.D., ‘the teaching of the most noble of subjects was restricted to freedmen, and by a quite unsatisfactory custom it was accounted disgraceful to teach what it was honourable to learn’.<sup>98</sup> It is worth noting that this distinction is not one that the Greek East shared. There, a rhetor could be a teacher, an orator, or both.<sup>99</sup>

Handbooks on the rhetorical theory and techniques came in for particular criticism. For example, in *De oratore*, Cicero criticises the systematic rules of these handbooks as utterly impractical for an actual orator in the forum who needs to be able to adjust to the different difficulties cases might present.<sup>100</sup> Later, in his final work on rhetoric, *Orator*, he defends himself from the charge of sinking to the level of a rhetor who produces guides to rhetoric.<sup>101</sup> He writes: ‘For the thought occurred to me that there might be found, not only envious men—but even admirers of my success, who will think it ill becomes one whose achievements have been praised more highly than those of any other man by the senate with the full approval of the Roman people to write so much about the technique (*artificio*) of oratory (*dicendi*)’.<sup>102</sup>

In their criticism of rhetorical handbooks, Roman orators such as Cicero entered a debate about the relative merits of rhetoric that stretched back at least to Plato. The debate centred on the question of how broad a scope could be allowed for rhetorical theory and practice. Beginning with Hermagoras of Temnos in the first

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<sup>98</sup> Seneca, *Con.* 2.pr.5 (LCL 202).

<sup>99</sup> Wisse, ‘The Intellectual Background of Cicero’s Rhetorical Works’, 344.

<sup>100</sup> Jakob Wisse, ‘*De Oratore*: Rhetoric, Philosophy, and the Making of the Ideal Orator’, in James M. May (ed.), *Brill’s Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 378.

<sup>101</sup> Cicero, *Orator*, 140-14.

<sup>102</sup> Cicero, *Orator*, 140 (LCL 415). See also Cicero, *De orat.* 1.146.

century B.C., rhetorical handbooks generally began by dividing rhetorical material into two categories: *theses*, or general questions, and *hypotheses*, or specific questions.<sup>103</sup> *Hypotheses* concerned the specific events, persons and circumstances that typically arose in judicial and political matters. Thus, an orator might need to know about how to address questions surrounding a murder or (to use a favourite subject of Second Sophistic rhetorical exercises) rape.<sup>104</sup> Usually, *hypotheses* were subdivided into three types of oratory: judicial, deliberative, and epideictic.<sup>105</sup> *Theses*, on the other hand, addressed questions of a philosophical or generally moral nature such as ‘Should one marry?’ or ‘What is wisdom?’<sup>106</sup> By including *theses* within the range of rhetorical theory (even though such claims were never supported by any actual theory), such handbooks staked a claim to philosophical questions.<sup>107</sup> Philosophers argued stridently that general questions were beyond the ken of rhetors who lacked both the knowledge and training to address such subjects. Wisdom, they argued, was the profession of philosophers; rhetors and orators ought to keep to their own profession: eloquence.

In broad terms, the debate was between the relative merits of wisdom and eloquence, and it is here that the old argument was caught up in the Roman mistrust of Greek influence on their society. Because Republican oratory was inherently civic and practical—what one might term a political science—Roman theorists judged rhetoric superior to philosophy, which struck them as often impractical and, worse, overly prone to become the sort of private musings that failed to serve the needs of

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<sup>103</sup> James M. May and Jakob Wisse, ‘Introduction’, in Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*, trans. James M. May and Jakob Wisse (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 27-28.

<sup>104</sup> On the use of rape in late Roman rhetorical exercises, see Robert A. Kaster, ‘Controlling Reason: Declamation in Rhetorical Education at Rome’, *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, Yun Lee Too, ed., (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 317-337.

<sup>105</sup> May and Wisse, ‘Introduction’, 28.

<sup>106</sup> Wisse, ‘The Intellectual Background of Cicero’s Rhetorical Works’, 359.

<sup>107</sup> Wisse, ‘The Intellectual Background of Cicero’s Rhetorical Works’, 359.



the commonwealth.<sup>108</sup> No serious re-evaluation of philosophy occurred in the West until religious practices there, affected first by the collapse of the Republic and then by the gradual disintegration of Imperial civilisation, took a metaphysical turn through the influence of Neoplatonism, Christianity and the emergence of mystery cults.<sup>109</sup> By then the civic role of rhetoric had long since diminished while at the same time withdrawal into a comfortable world of leisure (*otium*) had become the ideal of Roman aristocracy.

### **‘...quidam eloquens’: Cicero<sup>110</sup>**

The person who above all others sought both to defend the central role of oratory in civic life and to fuse wisdom and eloquence was Marcus Tullius Cicero. That he was largely unsuccessful in these attempts did nothing to diminish his reputation.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, Quintilian mentions that in his own day, Cicero was more associated with the notion of eloquence than with the historical person.<sup>112</sup> Throughout the western Empire, Cicero’s works remained the core curriculum of rhetorical schools until well after the fall of Rome, though he would have shuddered to know that his earliest work, *De inventione*, would become his most popular legacy.<sup>113</sup> One of the great ironies of late classical rhetoric is that even while it had abandoned the

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<sup>108</sup> Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 153.

<sup>109</sup> On the nature of Roman religion, see Jörg Rüpke (ed.), *A Companion to Roman Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007); Jörg Rüpke, *Religion of the Romans* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

<sup>110</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.12.27 (CCL 32.135).

<sup>111</sup> Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 382, points out that despite Cicero’s best efforts to ‘wean’ the youth from a ‘naive, utilitarian’ idea of rhetoric and encourage them towards a higher notion of oratory, ultimately he convinced few people. The irony of Cicero’s life is that he sought to defend the role of oratory within a Republic that was collapsing around him.

<sup>112</sup> Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.112 (LCL 64): ‘...ut Cicero iam non hominis nomen, sed eloquentiae habeatur’.

<sup>113</sup> In Cicero, *De orat.* 1.5 (LCL 4), he dismisses his earlier work, written when he was around seventeen, as ‘sketchy and unsophisticated’ (*incohata ac rudia*).

forensic focus of Ciceronian oratory, it continued to base its rhetorical training on his theory.<sup>114</sup>

At first glance, Cicero might not seem well-disposed towards the rhetorical developments of his own day. In *De oratore*, he rejects the rigidity of rhetorical rules for parts of a speech.<sup>115</sup> Instead, he argues that oratory must be exceptionally difficult to master since so few have done so despite the ‘the utterly magnificent rewards held out for eloquence’.<sup>116</sup> Such is the difficulty of becoming a true orator that Cicero warns:

They [‘our children’] should not rely on the precepts or the teachers or the methods of practice in general use, but be confident that they can achieve their goals by means that are of a quite different order. It is at least my opinion that it will be impossible for anyone to be an orator endowed with all praiseworthy qualities, unless he has gained knowledge of all the important subjects and arts. For it is certainly from knowledge that a speech should blossom and acquire fullness: unless the orator has firmly grasped the underlying subject matter, his speech will remain an utterly empty, yes, almost childish verbal exercise.<sup>117</sup>

Later, he has one of his interlocutors, Crassus, slightly modify this judgement on rhetorical art by suggesting that formal rhetorical theory might serve to ‘remind the orator of the points of reference for each occasion’ so that he does not stray too far from his goal.<sup>118</sup> But then Crassus adds that no one has become a great orator by following these rules; rather the rules try to capture the essence of great orators. He concludes that although ‘eloquence is not the offspring of art, but art of eloquence....becoming acquainted with it [rhetorical theory] is not unsuitable for a

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<sup>114</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which was thought to have been written by Cicero, and *De inventione* formed the core of rhetorical curriculum until well into the Middle Ages by which time they had been supplemented by Augustine’s *De doctrina Christiana*.

<sup>115</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 2.78-84.

<sup>116</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.16.

<sup>117</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.19-20.

<sup>118</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.145.

gentleman'.<sup>119</sup> So, all in all, Cicero takes a dim view of the teaching of rhetors; good oratory depends less on their art than on natural ability combined with the knowledge of appropriate word choice, arrangement, emotions, history, civil law and statutes and how to regulate one's own body and use humour.<sup>120</sup> Considering this contempt for formal rhetorical instruction, it is no wonder that, as we have seen, he goes to great lengths in *Orator* to distinguish his own tutorials in rhetoric from the menial task of Greek rhetors.<sup>121</sup>

So, instead of providing instruction on how one can become an accomplished orator, Cicero paints a picture of an impossibly ideal orator for students to imitate. In a sense, he is providing an old model for rhetorical training in a new form; instead having them imitate an actual orator (which he doubts exist anymore) he provides a fictional one of his own, whose idealised portrait he hopes will inspire students to become great orators themselves. Although this ideal is the focus of both *De oratore* and *Orator*, one first encounters it in what would become his enormously influential prologue to *De inventione*. Cicero begins the work with a dilemma: 'I have often seriously debated with myself whether men and communities have received more good or evil from oratory and a consuming devotion to eloquence'.<sup>122</sup> After considering how historically orators have both caused harm and brought benefit to

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<sup>119</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.145-146. See Wisse, 'De Oratore: Rhetoric, Philosophy, and the Making of the Ideal Orator', 384 for a good discussion of this.

<sup>120</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.17-18. This knowledge must also be combined with 'an ability to be quick and concise in rebuttal as well as attack, combined with refinement, grace, and urbanity'. On Cicero's theory of *decorum* in oratory, see Emanuele Narducci, 'Orator and the Definition of the Ideal Orator', in James M. May (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 432.

<sup>121</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 144. For a discussion of Cicero's uneasiness with teaching see John Dugan, *Making a New Man: Ciceronian Self-Fashioning in the Rhetorical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 258-260. Wisse, 'The Intellectual Background of Cicero's Rhetorical Works', 346 also points out that Cicero's contempt for rhetors is manifested in the fact that despite treating rhetorical handbooks at some length, not once does Cicero ever refer to a rhetor by name.

<sup>122</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.1 (LCL 2): 'Saepe et multum hoc mecum cogitavi, bonine an mali plus attulerit hominibus et civitatibus copia dicendi ac summum eloquentiae studium'.

‘mighty cities’, Cicero concludes: ‘For my own part, after long thought, I have been led by reason itself to hold this opinion first and foremost, that wisdom without eloquence does little for the good of states, but that eloquence without wisdom is generally highly disadvantageous and is never helpful’.<sup>123</sup> Thus, eloquence must be founded on the ‘study of philosophy and moral conduct’ so that the orator will not be ‘useless to himself and harmful to his country’.

Not satisfied with this exalted consideration of oratory’s civic role, Cicero proceeds by evoking a myth of the proto-orator. He begins by imagining an original state in which people lived little better than animals, lacking wisdom, religion or civil laws:<sup>124</sup>

At this juncture a man—great and wise I am sure—became aware of the power latent in man and the wide field offered by his mind for great achievements if one could develop this power and improve it by instruction. Men were scattered in the fields and hidden in sylvan retreats when he assembled and gathered them in accordance with a plan; he introduced them to every useful and honourable occupation, though they cried out against it because of its novelty, and then when through reason and eloquence they had listened with greater attention, he transformed them from wild savages into a kind and gentle folk.<sup>125</sup>

Cicero concludes: ‘To me, at least, it does not seem possible that a mute and voiceless wisdom could have turned men suddenly from their habits and introduced them to different patterns of life....unless men had been able by eloquence to persuade their fellows of the truth of what they had discovered by reason’.<sup>126</sup> As Dugan points out this proto-orator is an almost messianic agent of civilisation; only by uniting philosophy and oratory in a single person was humanity able to climb out of

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<sup>123</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.1.

<sup>124</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.2.2.

<sup>125</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.1-2.2.

<sup>126</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.2.3 (LCL 6): ‘*Ac mihi quidem videtur hoc nec tacita nec inops dicendi sapientia perficere potuisse ut homines a consuetudine subito converteret et ad diversas rationes vitae traduceret....nisi homines ea quae ratione invenissent eloquentia persuadere potuissent*’.

barbarism into the light of civilisation.<sup>127</sup> May and Wisse indicate that Cicero's use of this myth to undergird his own coupling of wisdom and eloquence would have been recognised as a direct challenge to philosophers who employed a similar myth to claim a superior role for philosophy.<sup>128</sup> The popularity of *De inventione* in late classical rhetorical instruction means that Cicero's version of the myth was hammered into generations of Roman youth.

We encounter Cicero's myth again in *De oratore* 1.33 where he has Crassus ask, 'what other force could have gathered the scattered members of the human race into one place, or could have led them away from savage existence in the wilderness to this truly human, communal way of life, or, once communities had been founded, could have established laws, judicial procedures, and legal arrangements?' Later, in the same work, he (again in the guise of Crassus) advocates calling an orator who joins wisdom with eloquence (*sapientiam iunctam...eloquentiae*) a philosopher.<sup>129</sup> He continues in a vein reminiscent of *De inventione*: 'I myself would prefer inarticulate wisdom to babbling stupidity. But if we are looking for the one thing that surpasses all others, the palm must go to the learned orator'.<sup>130</sup> His reasons for this is that all the knowledge is present in the ideal orator (because he must be knowledgeable in order to achieve the ideal) while philosophical knowledge does not guarantee eloquence. If only philosophers would grant this point, Cicero concludes, then the age old debate between rhetoric and philosophy would be settled; or in Cicero's

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<sup>127</sup> Dugan, *Making a New Man*, 252. Dugan argues that in *Orator*, Cicero abandons his original view of oratory for a less exalted one. Even if this view is correct, Cicero's change of heart seems to have made little impression on those, like Marius Victorinus, who commented on Cicero's ideal orator.

<sup>128</sup> May and Wisse, 'Introduction', 65, n. 28.

<sup>129</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 3.142 (LCL 112). See also Laurent Pernot, *Rhetoric in Antiquity*, trans. W. E. Higgins (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press), 116.

<sup>130</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 3.142-143 (LCL 112): '*...malim equidem indisertiam prudentiam quam stultitiam loquacem*'.

memorable phrase, Socrates' 'rupture, so to speak, between the tongue and the brain' would be undone and wisdom and eloquence once again united.<sup>131</sup>

In *Orator* 11, Cicero claims originality for this attempt to end the rhetoric/philosophy debate through synthesis and acknowledges that his approach will meet with criticism.<sup>132</sup> Certainly, his synthesis failed either to end the age-old debate or to prevent Roman rhetoric from slipping into the 'babbling stupidity' he so despised. Nor must his presentation of wisdom have been very convincing to philosophers. Despite his exalted language about philosophy, his characterization of wisdom at times seems to amount to little more than the necessary knowledge of a particular legal case and of human psychology for swaying the opinion of the judge and audience. Jakob Wisse argues that against Greek philosophers, particularly Plato, in *De oratore* Cicero argues that philosophy does not carry any inherent moral force; philosophy by itself could not make a bad person good.<sup>133</sup> Instead, in *De oratore* 3.55, he has Crassus argue that virtues must be joined to eloquence and philosophy. The importance of philosophy is to enable the orator effectively to manipulate the audience through knowledge of human character and behaviour.<sup>134</sup> It would seem therefore that Cicero had mainly a utilitarian view of wisdom that would not have convinced a serious Platonist.

Likewise, Cicero's conjoining of wisdom and eloquence is entirely aimed at serving the commonwealth. There is very little metaphysical in his portrait of the

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<sup>131</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 3.61.

<sup>132</sup> On the possible roots for Cicero's approach in his time spent at the Academy, see Wisse, '*De Oratore: Rhetoric, Philosophy, and the Making of the Ideal Orator*', 392.

<sup>133</sup> Wisse, '*De Oratore: Rhetoric, Philosophy, and the Making of the Ideal Orator*', 393. If Wisse is correct, then Cicero eventually changed his mind on this point, arguing (as best as one can tell from preserved fragments) in *Hortensius* that philosophy is essential for ennobling the human soul and making it aware of the divine.

<sup>134</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.60. In *Orator* 12, Cicero seems to suggest that philosophy's role vis-à-vis rhetoric is merely to provide richness and ornamentation to a speech. See, Dugan, *Making a New Man*, 255.

ideal orator, other than providing a Platonic ideal for actual men to imitate.<sup>135</sup> The benefit of uniting philosophy and rhetoric has little to do with enabling either the orator's soul or that of each of his auditors to ascend to the realm of the blessed, as important as that ascent might be to Cicero.<sup>136</sup> Rather, his ideal orator is a statesman or, at the very least, an effective lawyer who serves the public good. He is the one who enables and preserves civilisation without which people are little better than animals. Cicero's theory is above all else civic-minded.

In his book on Augustine's understanding of a 'just society' Robert Dodaro draws a similar conclusion about Cicero's rhetoric, albeit drawing from his *De re publica*, that helps to illustrate the nature of Cicero's orator.<sup>137</sup> He describes Cicero's orator / statesman as one 'skilled at communicating ideas yet also capable of bridging the gap between erudition and its practical application to political life'.<sup>138</sup> Both wisdom and eloquence, therefore, are directed towards the public; orators are ideally 'outstanding men' (*virī optimi/excellentes*) whose position and ability will allow them to purify Rome of its decadence and to restore the commonwealth.<sup>139</sup> Because the good of the commonwealth is the orator's chief concern, Cicero emphasises the importance of practical knowledge over the speculative: *hypothesis* over *thesis*. Cicero, however, allows for and even commends orators who do delve into

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<sup>135</sup> In Cicero, *Orator* 8-10 Cicero clearly explains that he is attempting to describe a Platonic ideal that has no true copy in this world. The purpose of his impossible ideal can only be grasped by the mind and can only be imperfectly realised through imitation. Dugan, *Making a New Man*, 252 argues that Cicero's real intent is to chart a course between the rhetoric of Isocrates and Demosthenes.

<sup>136</sup> For example, see Cicero, *De re publica* 6.

<sup>137</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 19-24. Dodaro's excellent account of Cicero's presentation of the ideal orator would be strengthened, I think, by greater attention given to Cicero's works on oratory. He makes a passing reference to *De oratore* but otherwise confines his study almost entirely to *De re publica*. Having said that, Dodaro should be commended for attempting to understand an aspect of Augustine's thought—his political theology—by accounting for the influence of rhetoric, and Cicero in particular, on him.

<sup>138</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 19.

<sup>139</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 23.

speculative wisdom because it makes him esteem the divine over the desire for wealth and glory.<sup>140</sup> But philosophy here is primarily self-oriented; its sole purpose is to make an ‘excellent man’ even better so that he can be of even more benefit to the commonwealth.

Before turning our attention to the development of rhetoric after Cicero, it is necessary to define what precisely Cicero means by *eloquentia*. While the purpose of almost all of Cicero’s rhetorical works is to describe in great detail the nature of eloquence—that is, the mechanics of *inventio* and *elocutio*—for our purposes it is sufficient to focus again on his ideal.<sup>141</sup> Generally speaking, Cicero differentiates between oratory and eloquence. Oratory is simply speaking so as to persuade; Cicero’s usual term for this is *dicendi copia*, or fluency of speech.<sup>142</sup> Such speech may be edifying or harmful. What transforms *dicendi copia* into *eloquentia* is ethics.<sup>143</sup> In *De oratore* 3.55, Cicero judges that although all virtues are technically equal (a Stoic axiom), *eloquentia* is ‘more beautiful and splendid in appearance’ than the others because ‘it unfolds the thoughts and counsels of the mind in words, in such a way that it can drive the audience in whatever direction it has applied its weight’. Because of this power, *eloquentia* must be joined to ‘integrity and the highest measure of good sense’ lest it cease to be good oratory and become a weapon ‘in the hands of madmen’. Thus, *eloquentia* is fundamentally ethical speech.

But such speech must also be effective and so Cicero devised his three duties of an orator. Drawing upon Aristotle’s division of rhetoric into *logos*, *pathos*, and

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<sup>140</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 20.

<sup>141</sup> Although in *De doctrina Christiana*, Augustine does comment upon and revise Cicero’s three styles of speech, I will not discuss his recommendations for plain, middle, and high styles of delivery since they have little direct bearing on Augustine’s theology of redemption.

<sup>142</sup> See, for example Cicero, *De inv.* 1.3; *De orat.* 1.170, 215, 230. Marius Victorinus comments on this distinction in his commentary on *De inventione*, explaining that Cicero wishes to distinguish those ‘skilful’ in speech who have not achieved true eloquence. See *In Cic. Rhet.* 1.1.69-74.

<sup>143</sup> I owe a debt of gratitude to Ingo Gildenhard for drawing my attention to this fact.



*ethos*, he first puts forward his *officia oratoris* in *De oratore*: ‘The method employed in the art of oratory, then, relies entirely on three means of persuasion: proving that our contentions are true, winning over the audience, and inducing their minds to feel any emotion the case may demand’.<sup>144</sup> Earlier in the same work, Crassus puts bluntly the purpose of these three duties: ‘I think nothing is more admirable than being able, through speech, to have hold of people’s minds, to win over their inclinations, to drive them at will in one direction, to draw them at will from another’.<sup>145</sup> In *Orator* 69, Cicero returns to his *officia oratoris*, this time using even clearer language: ‘The man of eloquence (*eloquens*) whom we seek...will be one who is able to speak in court or in deliberative bodies so as to prove, to please and to sway or persuade. To prove is the first necessity, to please is to charm, to sway is victory; for it is the one thing of all that avails most in winning verdicts’.<sup>146</sup> In effect, Cicero gives a twofold purpose to eloquence: to capture the audience’s attention and to persuade them of the orator’s point of view. Unless the people listen to the speaker, he cannot influence them through his words; on the other hand, there is no point in gaining their attention unless he can then move them through his words to do as he wills. Note here that Cicero thinks of the audience as passive. Ideally, the orator is the active agent, turning the audience’s will to his own. But the magic of eloquence is that the sweetness of his words makes the audience *of their own free will* agree with the speaker. In Cicero’s myth, barbaric humanity at first ‘cries out’ against the orator’s wisdom until his wisdom and eloquence capture their attention and transforms them into civilised men and women. Thus, eloquent oratory is very much a matter of wills: through the sorcery of words, the orator ‘induces’ the audience blithely to turn control

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<sup>144</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 2.115 (LCL 280): ‘...ut probemus vera esse, quae defendimus; ut conciliemus eos nobis, qui audiunt; ut animos eorum, ad quemcumque causa postulabit motum, vocemus’.

<sup>145</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.30.

<sup>146</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 69 (LCL 356).

of their wills over to his. Armed as he was with such an extraordinary view of an orator's power, one deepened through his own experience, one can perhaps understand why Cicero believed so deeply that 'the foundation of eloquence...is wisdom'.<sup>147</sup> As will be shown later, this view of the power of eloquence, particularly in combination with wisdom, provided Augustine with basis for his own understanding of the effects of delight on free will.

Gathering up the various strands of Cicero's thought, therefore, one is presented with an ideal orator who has obtained wisdom through his own study of philosophy, civil law, and human behaviour and united this with a largely natural aptitude for eloquent speech. Morally upstanding, this orator seeks to gather the people together through his eloquence and then impart his wisdom for the good of society and civilisation through a style of speech intended to overwhelm the wills of those who listen. The audience itself is assumed to be both passive and unlearned, whether in terms of a particular judicial case or in the necessary insight for the good of the Republic. In the end, it is this ideal orator in whom wisdom is made accessible through an eloquence that draws together and enamours those who come under its spell.

Since much of what has been argued here may seem remote to Augustine's theology, it is important to note by way of conclusion to this section three important factors. First, while the debates and concerns of the late Republic were not identical to the debates and concerns of the late fourth and early fifth century Empire, the earlier debates were mediated to later generations through Cicero's own works. If a later rhetor, for example, were seeking to restore utility and wisdom to oratory by turning, at least in part, to Cicero, his theory would be influenced by Cicero's

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<sup>147</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 70.

concerns and prejudices. Second, Cicero employs terms such as *sapientia* and *eloquentia* that were still very current in Augustine's day. In other words, Victorinus or Augustine understood (or at least thought they did) what Cicero was saying when he wrote about either concept and could, therefore, follow his arguments. But, the definition of both *sapientia* and *eloquentia* had in reality changed dramatically by their own day, and this could not but influence *how* they understood Cicero (which may be very different from how Cicero intended his work to be understood or, for that matter, how modern scholars understand Cicero). Finally, in reacting to the rhetoric of their own day, the only accessible model for someone like Victorinus or Augustine was Cicero, and so again they could not help but be influenced by his presuppositions. But before we can examine how the two North Africans translated Cicero's rhetoric into their own terms, we must first examine how rhetoric developed during the nearly four centuries that separate Cicero from Augustine.

## **Late Roman Rhetoric**

As has already been noted, late Republican oratory was inherently forensic and deliberative. Training among the elite in rhetoric was aimed at furnishing them with the skills to debate in the forum and ultimately in the Senate itself. Although orators such as Cicero mention epideictic oratory in their works on rhetoric, for the most part their focus remained on the deliberative and judicial. One of the most influential rhetorical handbooks of the first century, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, is a prime example of this, devoting most of its teaching to judicial and deliberative oratory. Cicero himself passes quickly over the epideictic, which he sees as a minor

form of oratory less deserving of formal precepts than other forms of speech, such as giving testimony, that have never been distinguished as separate genres.<sup>148</sup>

The collapse of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Empire had a profound effect on the Roman approach to rhetoric. No longer did the forum or the Senate play a meaningful role in the decision-making of the State. So, in a single generation the *raison d'être* of Roman oratory, particularly as Cicero had envisioned it, became less apparent, and so too the original reason for the Roman educational system. This is not to suggest that forensic oratory vanished altogether. People such as Tertullian and Augustine reveal that forensic rhetoric continued to be taught throughout Late Antiquity. But it became much less emphasised among the aristocracy. At the same time, rhetorical training became much more accessible with the establishment of rhetorical schools in the West. These two factors combined to transform rhetoric in the West in at least three dramatic ways. First, the role of rhetors in society changed; second, with a diminished practical role in Roman civic life, oratory itself became dominated by the epideictic; and third, because of that epideictic turn, the contrast between philosophy and rhetoric, between wisdom and eloquence, became starker.

The rhetoric of this period is known as Second Sophistic. Although that term was coined by Philostratus of Lemnos to describe the Greek declaimers who were more interested in the artistry of orations than in argumentation, it now normally refers to the cultural and literary movement that began in first-century Greece and flourished from the second through fourth century. In its strictest sense, Second Sophistic refers only to the Greek rhetoric of that period; however, such are the

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<sup>148</sup> In *De orat.* 2.43-50, Cicero doubts whether epideictic should even be described as a genre of speech; if so (due to the authority of Aristotle) then one ought to recognise that it is 'less essential' than deliberative and judicial. Later (2.340b-349), he speaks at greater length about the nature of epideictic but still in a dismissive tone.

similarities between Second Sophistic and later Latin rhetoric that many scholars have used the term to describe all Imperial rhetoric: both Greek and Latin.

Whatever the term used, late Roman rhetoric has enjoyed not a small number of critics. Writing at the start of the second century A.D., Juvenal turned his satire on the Greek, sophistic culture invading Rome:

What of the fact that the nation excels in flattery, praising the talk of an ignorant patron, the looks of one who is ugly, comparing the stalk-like neck of a weakling to Hercules' muscles as he holds the giant Antaeus aloft well clear of the ground, admiring a squeaky voice which sounds as wretched as that of a cock, which seizes his partner's crest in the act of mating?<sup>149</sup>

Juvenal's assessment has generally been shared by modern scholars. Peter Brown calls rhetoric in Late Antiquity 'creatively impoverished' and concludes that 'allusive, steeped in vocabulary and examples of a distant age, the formalised speech of the upper classes was not designed to express sudden challenges and novel sentiments, and still less to indulge in unwelcome plain-speaking'.<sup>150</sup> According to Graham Anderson, Second Sophistic was 'a sort of academic debating society with a touch of grand opera—but with a difference: it is as if the prima donna has to improvise the arias as well as the cadenzas, and in the language of Dante for good measure; and if there is not hissing and booing on this occasion there is certainly a hint of backstage backbiting'.<sup>151</sup> Anderson also argues that as the Empire became more autocratic, rhetorical conventions became more outlandish and that while Second Sophistic claimed to be able to speak about philosophical matters, they did so only in a superficial way meant for entertainment rather than instruction.<sup>152</sup> Kaster

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<sup>149</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.* 3.86-91.

<sup>150</sup> Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 42.

<sup>151</sup> Graham Anderson, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1993), 59.

<sup>152</sup> Anderson, *The Second Sophistic* 41; 137-40. Pernot, *Rhetoric in Antiquity*, 191 also states that Second Sophistic used philosophy superficially, relying on commonplaces for their philosophical content.

points out that as early as the first century, critics attacked the practice of declamation that was divorced from reality, employing themes and characters ‘who seemed to have stepped from the stage of New Comedy’, in a ‘hot-house’ atmosphere far removed from the gravity of law courts and assemblies.<sup>153</sup>

Yet, Kaster also points out that as a culture of declamation endured for more than six hundred years, it must have fulfilled an important function within Greek and Roman society.<sup>154</sup> He suggests that its primary role was to inculcate ‘approved values’ into young, aristocratic males, and that while the themes declaimed might be eccentric, the arguments employed were conventional.<sup>155</sup> Kennedy makes one of the strongest cases for the integrity of late classical rhetoric by drawing attention to the fact that many Second Sophistics held chairs of rhetoric in Greek cities, served as Roman diplomats, and pled court cases. They were also employed by cities to advocate their interests before the emperor.<sup>156</sup> Finally, Anderson concludes with faint praise: ‘But if the goal was to pretend to be in the fifth century B.C., however contrived and perverse such an ideal might seem to us, then the Second Sophistic was well on its way to achieving it. If the aim was to invest present literature with a sense of continuity with the classical past, then again the illusion was largely successful’.<sup>157</sup>

One way to look at the transformation of rhetoric after the fall of the Republic is as a professionalisation of rhetors even as rhetoric became increasingly dominated by the culture of declamation. Despite the best efforts of ‘traditionalists’ in the last days of the Republic to prevent the establishment of rhetorical schools, by the late

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<sup>153</sup> Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 323.

<sup>154</sup> Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 324.

<sup>155</sup> Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 325. See also James M. Farrell, ‘The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*’, *Augustinian Studies* 39.2 (2008), 266.

<sup>156</sup> Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 230.

<sup>157</sup> Anderson, *The Second Sophistic*, 237.

Augustan age they had become typical. Grammarians and rhetors functioned in most cities of the Empire as the backbone of the Roman education system. Unlike in the late Republic, however, the chief purpose of this education was not to prepare the wealthy for a life of profitable civic service in the forum and Senate where they would be expected to deliver speeches on political matters. Instead, while rhetoric was a necessary means of entry into the imperial administration, the primary purpose of rhetorical teaching was to define the elite over against ordinary people.<sup>158</sup>

Rhetorical schools could only be found in an ‘archipelago of cities’ particularly open to Greek influence, where they served the interests of the local governing class and those wealthy enough to afford to travel there from the provinces.<sup>159</sup> Through an education in grammar and rhetoric, the rhetorical schools created a common aristocratic culture, standardised formal communication and created the illusion that those so educated were as superior to the ordinary person as humans are to cattle.<sup>160</sup>

The rhetors themselves played a different role in Roman society than they did in Cicero’s day. No longer bound to particular families, they taught in a city’s forum, typically in exedras, or small, semicircular recesses that opened out onto porticoes.<sup>161</sup> The rhetor’s duty was to teach the complex system of rhetorical rules developed in Greece during the age of the sophists.<sup>162</sup> Their goal was avowedly to cultivate fluency, ornament, and style through the imitation of classical standards.<sup>163</sup> The students, in turn, were supposed to become people who could ‘charm’ and ‘overawe’

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<sup>158</sup> Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 39.

<sup>159</sup> Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 37. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 408, suggests that by the fourth century every city maintained one or more rhetors at public expense.

<sup>160</sup> Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 39-41.

<sup>161</sup> Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 382. This is probably the environment in which Augustine himself worked in North Africa, Rome and Milan.

<sup>162</sup> Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 382.

<sup>163</sup> Anderson, *The Second Sophistic*, 237.

through speech; as Peter Brown states, in their own eyes they were learning something that ‘carried with it something of the ancient thrill of sorcery’.<sup>164</sup> But unlike in Cicero’s day, the point of this education was to prepare students to persuade not so much through argumentation as through literary flair and wordplay.

Rhetors enjoyed a higher standard of living than either pedagogues or grammarians, and the most successful rhetors could even, through the patronage of their former students, attain the highest offices of the Empire.<sup>165</sup> Beginning in the reign of Vespasian, chairs of rhetoric were established in Rome and later Athens, where they could, as in the case of Quintilian, obtain both prestige and wealth.<sup>166</sup> Still, the teaching of rhetoric generally did not provide an enormous income, and the distinction between a proper orator and a rhetor remained, though less starkly than in former times. This distinction can be found in Marius Victorinus’s commentary on Cicero, where he writes: ‘A rhetor is he who teaches letters and hands on the skills of eloquence; a sophist is one from whom the practice of speaking is learnt; an orator is he who in private and public causes fully and perfectly uses eloquence’.<sup>167</sup> Thus, while a great man such as Symmachus or Sidonius Apollinaris might employ every Attic device of late Roman rhetoric in his letters or oratory, he would not have considered himself a rhetor. Again, this is a distinction almost never made by those studying Augustine’s criticism of rhetoric.

Rhetors could, however, enjoy a position in society utterly foreign to that of the first Latin rhetors; they could become the ancient world’s equivalent to

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<sup>164</sup> Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 43.

<sup>165</sup> Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 381-382.

<sup>166</sup> Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 405. Marcus Aurelius established one chair of rhetoric and four of philosophy in Athens, providing an income of 40,000 sesterces p.a. for the chair of rhetoric opposed to the 60,000 for each philosophy chair.

<sup>167</sup> Marius Victorinus, *In Cic. Rhet.* 1.pr.70-73 (CCL 132.7): ‘*Rhetor est qui docet litteras atque artes tradit eloquentiae; sophista est apud quem dicendi exercitium discitur; orator est qui in causis priuatis ac publicis plena et perfecta utitur eloquentia*’.



celebrities.<sup>168</sup> Anderson describes the devotion showed by students to their teachers as a ‘frenzied loyalty’ that was bordering on a personality cult.<sup>169</sup> Large crowds were drawn to their performances, and the greatest of rhetors could travel freely around the Empire putting on oratorical entertainments not unlike present-day rock concerts. A description from the *Vitae Sophistarum* provides a delightful glimpse into this world of the ancient superstar:

The lower orders are awestruck at your performance, your voice, your walk, your pacing about, your intoning, your sandals, and your infamous expression ‘what’ersoever’; and when they see you sweating and gasping they are bound to believe that you are a formidable opponent in debate....And if anyone comes up to you, make amazing claims about yourself, go over the top in your self-glorification, and make yourself objectionable to him: ‘What was the son of Paian in comparison with me?’ or ‘Perhaps just one of the ancients can compete with me!’ and other things of the kind.<sup>170</sup>

As with today’s ill-behaved celebrities, the crowds keenly consumed such affectations. An accomplished rhetor could become enormously rich and, through his devoted ‘fans’, tremendously influential. Thus, by Augustine’s day, the ideal orator in the popular imagination was no longer Cicero’s wise and eloquent statesman but a flashy entertainer.

The main reason for the dramatic difference in the two ideals is that rhetorical teaching had shifted from the judicial and deliberative to the epideictic. During the first century, the rhetorical curriculum became standardised, aimed at recreating the idealised style of classical Greece (thus, in the East rejecting two hundred years of linguistic development and in the West conforming Latin to a classical Greek structure) through the imitation of classical texts.<sup>171</sup> Marrou points out how enduring and uniform this curriculum remained: the same subjects of declamation keep

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<sup>168</sup> Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 230.

<sup>169</sup> Anderson, *The Second Sophistic*, 22.

<sup>170</sup> *Vitae Sophistarum*, 572 quoted by Anderson, *The Second Sophistic*, 57.

<sup>171</sup> Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric*, 152.

reappearing over a very long period of time.<sup>172</sup> Instead of teaching students how to deliver a speech in a legal case or in a political assembly, rhetors taught them to deliver speeches of praise or blame that normally treated subjects from mythology or classical history. A description of one such Second Sophistic rhetor paints a clear picture of what such performances were like:

He would appear before [his audience] not with a condescending or conceited air, nor with the manner of someone in fear of them, but as was appropriate for a combatant going into the fray to win reputation for himself and knowing full well that he would not fail. He used to talk from his chair in an agreeable manner, but when he was on his feet for the performances his orations had more polish and vigour....He had a very melodious voice and a charming diction, and he would often slap his thigh in order to spur on both himself and the audience. Moreover he was also an expert in the use of 'figured speech' and ambiguity. But he was still more impressive in handling the more demanding themes, and especially those concerned with the Medes, involving treatment of Darius and Xerxes....he used to act out the arrogance and frivolity of the barbarian character. It is said that on these occasions he would sway about more than usual, as if in some Bacchic frenzy...<sup>173</sup>

As this passage illustrates, the oratory itself was highly-stylised, making use of figured speech and ambiguity, and focused on mythological or historical subjects. A favourite theme of late classical oratory was the re-enactment of mythological or historical scenes with the orator playing the part of the various characters. Such performances were entirely for entertainment and a far cry from the sober oratory of Cato the Elder, Crassus and Cicero.

The result of the late imperial approach to rhetoric was a divorce between wisdom and eloquence. One must stress, however, that such a judgement is not one shared by the rhetors themselves. By and large they considered themselves eminently qualified to include philosophical questions in their performances.<sup>174</sup> Graham Anderson describes several sophists who passed between philosophy and rhetoric

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<sup>172</sup> Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 384.

<sup>173</sup> *Vitae Sophistarum*, 519 quoted by Anderson, *The Second Sophistic*, 55-56.

<sup>174</sup> Anderson, *The Second Sophistic*, 137-138; Pernot, *Rhetoric in Antiquity*, 191.

with ease. Yet, the use of philosophy is purely for ornament or, worse, as fodder for *ad hominem* attacks on philosophers as when one sophist attacks Plato:

Now, then Plato, did you ever lead the Athenians or any other people, Greek or barbarian, towards the noblest goal? [...] You could not say that you did. For you did not lead them at all. And what about your teacher and comrade Socrates? Neither did he.<sup>175</sup>

Anderson adds that, not surprisingly, the rhetors won these pretended debates between themselves and long deceased philosophers.<sup>176</sup> Completely gone is Cicero's civic dimension to eloquence or his belief that stylistic delivery must ground its content in philosophy. Generally speaking, such orators depended on commonplaces (*topica*) for their philosophical ornament; the primary focus therefore was not instruction or argument but rhetorical ornamentation.

Again scholars such as Kaster and Kennedy have warned against too harshly criticising late Roman rhetoric simply because it is so foreign to modern sentiments. That is probably true and worth keeping in mind when studying the literature of Late Antiquity. On the other hand, as will be seen in the next chapter, the criticism shared by ancient philosophers and modern scholars alike reflect closely Augustine's own conclusions about the rhetoric of his day. In this respect, to a certain extent it does not so much matter whether late Roman rhetors were as facile and haughty as they have been portrayed as it does that many perceived them as such and perhaps none more so than Augustine after his conversion.

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<sup>175</sup> Libanius, *Or.* 2.86f. quoted in Anderson, *The Second Sophistic*, 141.

<sup>176</sup> Anderson, *The Second Sophistic*, 141.

**‘...cuius...eloquia strenue ministrabant...populo tuo’: Bishops<sup>177</sup>**

Despite the decline of the theatres in which orators might approximate Cicero’s civic-minded orator who employs his wise eloquence to the advantage of the State (and his own reputation), Cicero’s ideals continued to be taught by rhetors to generations of aristocratic youths. But as there were fewer avenues in the increasingly autocratic empire for either forensic or deliberative oratory, this training invariably turned to the epideictic, focusing on oral delivery or an already written, rehearsed and memorised speech.<sup>178</sup> Whether it is the overblown oratory of a Second Sophistic or the tediously stylised letters of a great man such as Symmachus, almost all examples of pagan Roman oratory after the first century are far removed from the ideals of the Roman Republic. In general, the nearest one finds to an oratory that combines wisdom and eloquence is among the writings of philosophers or would-be philosophers-kings such as Marcus Aurelius.

And yet, ironically, within the Roman world there arose a movement that shared Cicero’s concern for wise oratory: Christianity.<sup>179</sup> Certainly, both the Christian source of wisdom—Scripture—and the style of oratory—preaching—would have been entirely foreign to Cicero; but preaching to convert is not altogether different from speaking to persuade. So, from the very beginning, Christians were not above employing rhetorical techniques in order to express doctrine as can be seen, for example, in the occasional oratorical flair of the Pauline epistles.

In her book, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*, Rita Copeland demonstrates how

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<sup>177</sup> *conf.* 5.13.23 (CCL 27.70).

<sup>178</sup> John D. Schaeffer, ‘The Dialectic of Orality and Literacy: The Case of Book 4 of Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*’, *PMLA* 111:5 (1996), 1137.

<sup>179</sup> For the development during this period of philosophical rhetors who also sought to preserve Cicero’s ideal, see the following chapter.

classical rhetoric found a new dynamism in Christian homiletics. Training in rhetorical principles functioned to regulate affectivity, the style, and form of preaching. Only now, *inventio*, the process of determining what to say and how best to say it, became grounded in biblical exegesis.<sup>180</sup> *Inventio* thus becomes a hermeneutical process, or *modus proferendi*, through which the preacher might engage with the wisdom of Scripture and determine how to convey that wisdom most effectively.

Yet, many Christians were uncomfortable with preachers and theologians too blithely embracing classical education. According to Eugene Kevane, for many early Christians the classical system of education represented the ‘ripened social condition and expression of human sinfulness, idolatry and alienation from the One True God’.<sup>181</sup> Some, such as Justin Martyr and later the Cappadocian Fathers could incorporate profane learning in their writings, either employing stylised rhetoric or profane allusions in their writings. Although Basil’s *To the Young, on How They Should Profit from Greek Writing*, warns against mythology, atheism, and immorality, he still finds edification in Homer, Hesiod, and Plato.<sup>182</sup> On the other hand, Tertullian, who was trained as a lawyer and thus deeply versed in forensic rhetoric, seems to reject recourse to classical learning, even while employing rhetorical techniques to express this opinion.<sup>183</sup> Cyprian, an accomplished rhetor, never again referred to classical literature after his conversion (though, again, he

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<sup>180</sup> Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, 154.

<sup>181</sup> Eugene Kevane, ‘Paideia and Anti-Paideia: The *Proemium* of St Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*’, *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), 157.

<sup>182</sup> George A. Kennedy (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 1: Classical Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 336.

<sup>183</sup> Kennedy, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, 337, however, argues that Tertullian’s famous question, ‘What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?’ should not be understood as a rejection of Classical culture but as an attack on Gnosticism.

continued to use rhetorical forms, expressions, and convictions),<sup>184</sup> and Jerome famously rejected Cicero when in a dream St Peter called him a Ciceronian rather than a Christian.<sup>185</sup> Despite their avowed rejection of profane learning, each of these authors is among the finest examples of the classical style of rhetoric.<sup>186</sup>

Whatever the particular attitudes of these Church Fathers to classical learning they still fulfilled remarkably the role of Cicero's ideal orator. Whereas Cicero's orator is a virtuous man who expresses wisdom eloquently for the edification of the Republic, Christian preachers are men who can express Scriptural wisdom eloquently for the edification of the Church. In both cases the orator plays a central role in the life of the community, grounds his oratory in wisdom, and expresses that wisdom in such a way as to change hearts. The similarities between the two become even more obvious with the rise, during the fourth century, of patrician-bishops. Like Cicero's orators, these were great men of society, delivering their oratory before the people in assemblies (the Church), legal courts and the Imperial centres of power for what they perceive to be the public good.<sup>187</sup> Much of their power and influence were due to their knowledge and eloquence. By turning to Augustine's account of Ambrose of Milan, we can see clearly not only how patrician-bishops exemplified Cicero's ideal orator but also that Augustine recognised this in his fateful encounter with Ambrose in A.D. 384.

The first description we are given of the Bishop of Milan recalls Cicero's orator. Augustine describes Ambrose as one 'whose words actively ministered to

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<sup>184</sup> Kennedy, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, 338.

<sup>185</sup> Jerome, *ep.* 22.30. See Murphy, *Medieval Rhetoric*, 53 and Mohrmann, 'St Augustine and the *Eloquentia*', 356-357. He also accused Rufinus of being a closet Ciceronian. See Jerome, *Apol.* 1.30.

<sup>186</sup> Kennedy, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, 339 refers to Lactantius in particular as the best example of Ciceronian rhetoric in Late Antiquity.

<sup>187</sup> Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 1, also indicates other ways in which they fulfilled the role of patron: aiding the poor, founding hospitals, convening courts, and ransoming prisoners.

your people the fruit of your sustenance and the gladness of oil and the sober intoxication of your wine'.<sup>188</sup> How interesting that Augustine should put it in this way. Neither Ambrose's office, wisdom nor even his celebration of the sacraments ministers to the people; instead it is his *eloquia*. The phrase *eloquia strenue ministrabant* recalls Cicero's orator using his eloquence for the good of the people and stands in marked contrast to the eloquence, which Augustine had learned and taught, that was directed towards self-glorification. Moreover, that eloquence conveys to the people God's abundant crop, glad oil, and intoxicating wine, all of which are metaphors for God's wisdom.

Augustine himself, however, is initially immune to this wisdom. He stands apart from it and in his confusion is completely unreceptive to it. He is, in fact, not unlike the barbaric people in the prologue of Cicero's *De inventione*. Cicero's final judgement of these uncivilised human beings neatly sums up Augustine's description of himself before his conversion: 'And so through their ignorance and error blind and unreasoning passion satisfied itself by misuse of bodily strength, which is a very dangerous servant'.<sup>189</sup> Like them, Augustine presents himself up to this point as restlessly wandering: moving through Books One to Nine from youthful ambition through Manichaeism to a desire to become like Cicero's philosophical rhetor.<sup>190</sup> He refers to himself as finding no rest 'in pleasant groves, nor in games or songs, nor in sweet-scented places, nor in exquisite feasts, nor in the bedroom or bed, nor finally in

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<sup>188</sup> *conf.* 5.13.23 (CCL 27.70): '...cujus tunc eloquia strenue ministrabant adipem frumenti tui, et laetitiam olei, et sobriam vini ebrietatem populo tuo'.

<sup>189</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.2.2.

<sup>190</sup> See Catherine M. Chin, 'Christians and the Roman Classroom: Memory, Grammar, and Rhetoric in *Confessions X*', *Augustinian Studies* 33:2 (2002), 161-182. Chin presents Augustine before his conversion as 'wandering' (like Aeneas in Virgil) through his memory, only finding rest at his baptism. Chin does an excellent job of showing how Augustine's view of *memoria* is deeply influenced by rhetoric. But, possibly because she fails to distinguish between a rhetor and an orator, she concludes that Augustine's movement through Books 1-9 of *Confessiones* is a movement towards a rejection of rhetoric itself.

books and poetry'.<sup>191</sup> Also, at his arrival in Milan, he is in no state to receive the sort of wisdom that will turn him into a better man. He is still a man shrouded in 'clouds of muddy carnal concupiscence',<sup>192</sup> following the 'driving force' of his seething impulses,<sup>193</sup> boiling with conflicting passions,<sup>194</sup> wandering away in conceit and 'carried about by every wind'.<sup>195</sup> Wisdom alone is therefore impotent, as Augustine demonstrates by his initial rejection of the Scriptural wisdom and subsequent foray into the error of Manichaeism.<sup>196</sup> So, again like Cicero's barbarians, he must be drawn to that wisdom by a great man in whom wisdom and eloquence cohabit; that man is Ambrose.

It should be no surprise, therefore, that Augustine initially is drawn to Ambrose by the bishop's eloquence: 'I used enthusiastically to listen to him preaching to the people, not with the intention which I ought to have had, but as if investigating his eloquence (*facundiam*) to see whether it merited the reputation it enjoyed and whether his fluency was better or inferior than it was reported to be'.<sup>197</sup> He adds that Ambrose's eloquence quickly beguiled him even though he remained contemptuous of his subject-matter. At this point, his 'delight was in the charm of his diction'. Again, this is like Cicero's barbarians who, though they are initially drawn to the orator's eloquence, 'cry out' against his wisdom. But the eloquence has them trapped, they cannot resist, and so they eventually succumb to the wisdom it conveys. Augustine continues:

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<sup>191</sup> *conf.* 4.7.12.

<sup>192</sup> *conf.* 2.2.2.

<sup>193</sup> *conf.* 2.2.4.

<sup>194</sup> *conf.* 4.7.12.

<sup>195</sup> *conf.* 4.14.23.

<sup>196</sup> *conf.* 3.5.9.

<sup>197</sup> *conf.* 5.13.23 (CCL 27.70).



I was not interested in learning what he was talking about. My ears were only for his rhetorical technique; this empty concern was all that remained with me after I had lost hope that a way to you might lie open to me. Nevertheless together with the words which I was enjoying, the subject matter, in which I was unconcerned, came to make an entry into my mind. I could not separate them. While I opened my heart to noting the eloquence with which he spoke, there also entered no less the truth which he affirmed, though only gradually.<sup>198</sup>

If Ambrose is Cicero's ideal orator, then here Augustine is Cicero's ideal audience: utterly charmed by the orator's eloquence and passively receptive to his wisdom. Augustine cannot resist Ambrose's eloquent wisdom because he cannot separate the charm from the subject-matter. And so, like Cicero's barbarians, he is converted; only now it is not to the civic virtues of the Roman Republic but to the sanctity of the Church.

Yet, at the heart of Augustine's account lurks a profound divergence from Cicero's ideal. Though Ambrose can use his eloquence in an entirely Ciceronian manner either by publicly defying the perceived harmful policies of the State or by debating in writing with a great man such as Symmachus, in this instance his eloquence is used to convey a metaphysical wisdom aimed at salvation. Such use of eloquence was mostly foreign to Cicero, and to understand how Cicero's rhetoric could be turned towards such a 'religious' exercise, we must now turn our attention to another man of eloquence: Marius Victorinus.

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<sup>198</sup> *conf.* 5.14.24.

### 3

## The Philosophical Rhetor

### Marius Victorinus

Very little is known about Caius Marius Victorinus (c. 300- c. 370). Other than his own works,<sup>199</sup> our only early sources are Augustine himself (primarily from Book Eight of the *Confessiones*), Jerome's *De viris illustribus* and a few inscriptions.<sup>200</sup> Like Augustine, he was from North Africa and later moved to Rome to further his career as a rhetor, eventually becoming chair of rhetoric, a position created by the Emperor Vespasian, and once occupied by Quintilian.<sup>201</sup> Such was his success as a professor of rhetoric that he was made a member of the lowest order of senatorial rank and given a statue in either the Roman forum or the Forum of Trajan.<sup>202</sup> In many ways, Victorinus embodied the Ciceronian ideal: he apparently taught and wrote about philosophy and rhetoric with equal facility and was particularly noted for his translation of Greek philosophy into Latin. In fact, Augustine's reading of these

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<sup>199</sup> For a list of the extent works of Victorinus (too numerous to list here), see F.F. Bruce, 'Marius Victorinus and His Works', *The Evangelical Quarterly* 18 (1946), 135-136. His works has generally been broken down into three categories: rhetoric, philosophy and theology. If the traditional chronology for these works is to be accepted, then his commentary on Cicero's *De inventione* (see below) was last writing before his conversion.

<sup>200</sup> For biographical sketches of Victorinus, see R. A. Markus, 'Part V: Marius Victorinus and Augustine' in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 331; Stephen Andrew Cooper, *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16-40; F.F. Bruce, 'Marius Victorinus and His Works', *The Evangelical Quarterly* 18 (1946), 132-153; and Pierre Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses œuvres*. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1971). Cooper correctly notes that Victorinus was a teacher of rhetoric rather than an orator and states that the distinction remained an important one in Victorinus's day.

<sup>201</sup> Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 450.

<sup>202</sup> Augustine places the statue in the Forum of Rome (*conf.* 8.2.3) while Jerome has it in the Forum of Trajan. It is perhaps not too fanciful to imagine that Augustine's own rhetorical career may have followed a similar track had he not converted.

Latin translations caused him, while still unconverted, to seek out Simplicianus to learn more about the ‘one time rhetor in the city of Rome’.<sup>203</sup> It is a curious fact that Augustine’s early discovery of Greek philosophy occurred through the works of two rhetoricians: Cicero and Victorinus.<sup>204</sup>

A large number of Victorinus’s works have survived, especially those written while he was a pagan rhetor in Rome on rhetoric and philosophy. Victorinus was mediated to the medieval world through Augustine, Boethius, and Cassiodorus, and his grammatical and rhetorical works—particularly *Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam*—continued to be studied well into the Middle Ages. Augustine, however, makes no mention of Victorinus’s rhetorical works, and so one cannot be certain whether he ever studied them, though it seems likely that he would have at least known of them considering the similarity between his and Victorinus’s background.<sup>205</sup> Even if Augustine did not study *Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam*, that work still represents an example of how Cicero’s *De inventione* (which would have formed at least part of the basis for Augustine’s education) was being read and interpreted in Late Antiquity. As will be shown, Victorinus’s Neoplatonic interpretation of Cicero bears many resemblances to Augustine’s own thought.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *conf.* 8.2.3.

<sup>204</sup> In *conf.* 9.13, Augustine also mentions an unspecified Neoplatonist in Milan, a man ‘puffed up with monstrous pride’ who introduced him to Victorinus’s translations of the Platonists. This may have been Manlius Theodorus, a retired courtier, who McLynn believes was part of a collection of Neoplatonist courtiers then residing in Milan. See McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 240-242.

<sup>205</sup> While Rita Copeland writes that Augustine obtained the Ciceronian idea of eloquent wisdom through Victorinus, there is no direct evidence for this. It is equally possible that Augustine discovered this balance through his own reading of *De inventione*, *Hortensius* and Neoplatonic philosophy. See Rita Copeland, ‘Wycliffite Ciceronianism? The General Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible and Augustine’s *De doctrina Christiana*’ in Constant J. Mews, Cary J. Nederman, and Rodney M. Thomson (ed.), *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 191.

<sup>206</sup> Although there were other arguably more influential rhetors in Late Antiquity, such as Dio Chrysostom, Victorinus’s appeal lies in his Ciceronian and North African background.

By all appearances, Cicero's *De inventione* was used as a rhetorical textbook in the West during the fourth century, perhaps because it made Greek thought more accessible to those unable to read Greek.<sup>207</sup> Pierre Hadot suggests that *Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam* should therefore be seen as an important example of 'professorial activity' during that period.<sup>208</sup> If this is so, then, as will be seen, Victorinus's commentary suggests that Cicero was being read and interpreted in some quarters through a Neoplatonic lens and as a result reordered towards goals foreign to Cicero's original intention.<sup>209</sup> The civic dimension receded as a concern for a return of the individual soul to the divine grew in prominence. Michael Leff refers to this Neoplatonic adaptation of Ciceronianism as part of the growing 'spiritualism' of Late Antiquity, by which he means a shift in priority away from the civic towards the 'contemplative and absolute'.<sup>210</sup> Thus, classical rhetoric was redirected to meet the spiritual needs of the late Roman West. Paul F. Gehl offers a possible further explanation for this development by noting that during Late Antiquity rhetoric took an 'orthopractical' approach to language, by which he means a 'tendency to assign practical ethical or spiritual value to the lessons learned in studying grammar, rhetoric, or other aspects of language'.<sup>211</sup> Thus, the liberal arts came to be seen not merely as the means toward a well-rounded education but even more as the necessary foundation for an ascent towards wisdom. Gehl traces the origins of this development

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Rhetors such as Dio Chrysostom, while interesting in their own right (as will be seen), drew more upon the Greek rhetorical tradition than upon figures such as Cicero. Victorinus's rhetoric, therefore, represents the type of rhetorical world with which Augustine was most familiar.

<sup>207</sup> Hadot, *Marius Victorinus*, 77.

<sup>208</sup> Hadot, *Marius Victorinus*, 73.

<sup>209</sup> While in the course of his life, Cicero would become a kind of philosophical dilettante, pursuing wisdom wherever it might be found, he was influenced most strongly by Scepticism, which he learned while studying at both the Old and New Academies.

<sup>210</sup> Leff, 'Saint Augustine and Martianus Capella', 236.

<sup>211</sup> Paul F. Gehl, 'Latin orthopraxes' in *Latin Grammar and Rhetoric: From Classical Theory to Medieval Practice*, Carol Dana Lanham (ed.), (London: Continuum, 2002), 1.

in the West to Cicero's *De inventione* and *De oratore* with their argument that wisdom must be transformed into language through eloquence for it to be useful.<sup>212</sup>

A prime example of such an approach to rhetoric and philosophy is Augustine's rough contemporary, Martianus Capella (*fl.* 5<sup>th</sup> c.), a native of North Africa whose *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* greatly influenced the development of the seven liberal arts during the Middle Ages.<sup>213</sup> In that work, Capella allegorically portrays the marriage of wisdom and eloquence achieved through the study of the seven liberal arts.<sup>214</sup> Although, as with Cicero, he conceives of wisdom and eloquence as joined hand-in-hand, unlike Cicero the purpose of this union is not to benefit the commonwealth but to enable the individual soul to return step-by-step to the celestial world. The liberal arts are now directed less towards producing statesmen who can wisely govern the Empire (already in a state of collapse in the West) than towards driving the ascent of the purified soul towards union with the divine. Ultimately, Capella's allegory seeks to demonstrate divine approval for the coupling of wisdom and eloquence whereby one can achieve immortality.<sup>215</sup>

Although Victorinus avoids Capella's intense and often strange allegorising<sup>216</sup> and retains a strong civic dimension to his interpretation of Cicero, the same Neoplatonic assumptions are at play in *Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam*.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Gehl, 'Latin orthopraxes', 3; David L. Wagner, 'The Seven Liberal Arts and Classical Scholarship' in David L. Wagner (ed.), *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 19.

<sup>213</sup> See David L. Wagner (ed.), *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

<sup>214</sup> Gehl, 'Latin orthopraxes', 4.

<sup>215</sup> Michael C. Leff, 'Saint Augustine and Martianus Capella', 243.

<sup>216</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 78 famously commented that 'the universe, which has produced the bee-orchid and the giraffe, has produced nothing stranger than Martianus Capella'.

<sup>217</sup> *In Cic. Rhet.* is a much neglected work and has yet to be translated. No one has studied it in detail to determine how it may have influenced Augustine (if he even knew of it). In fact, the only author even to mention it in relation to Augustine is Rita Copeland, 'Wycliffite Ciceronian?', 191-192. All translations of Victorinus are my own.

Victorinus's combination of Ciceronianism and Neoplatonism has been much noted. John O. Ward proposes that Victorinus interprets the prologue of *De inventione* as explaining how the soul is emancipated from corporeal bondage by the mediation of wisdom through eloquence.<sup>218</sup> Rita Copeland contends that Victorinus conceives of the uniting of eloquence with wisdom as the 'manifestation of the inner substance of wisdom'.<sup>219</sup> Eloquence 'embodies' wisdom as the human body embodies the soul. Victorinus redefines Cicero's wisdom as the soul's search to be liberated from its corporeal bondage through the arts, especially eloquence.

Pierre Hadot, however, provides the most detailed examination of Victorinus's rhetorical theory. He argues that Victorinus not only approves of Cicero's uniting of wisdom and eloquence but more profoundly reinterprets Cicero's definition of *natura* in such a way as to transform Cicero's vision profoundly. Drawing upon Stoic thought, Cicero had defined virtue as 'a habit of mind in harmony with reason and the order of nature'.<sup>220</sup> For Victorinus, however, 'virtue is a state of the soul conformed to reason according to nature'.<sup>221</sup> The difference between the two definitions become clearer in Victorinus's explanation of what he means by this: 'The soul is immortal; if it is immortal, it has descended from the divine; if it has descended from the divine, it is perfect'.<sup>222</sup> But now the otherwise perfect soul is

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<sup>218</sup> John O. Ward, 'From Antiquity to the Renaissance: Glosses and Commentaries on Cicero's *Rhetorica* in James J. Murphy, *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 43.

<sup>219</sup> Copeland, 'Wycliffite Ciceronian?', 191.

<sup>220</sup> Cicero, *De Inventione*, 2. 159: '*Virtus est animi habitus naturae modo atque rationi consentaneus*'. See Hadot (1971), 82.

<sup>221</sup> *In Cic. Rhet.* 1, pr., 36-37 (CCL 132.6): '*Virtus est animi habitus naturae modum rationi consentaneus*'.

<sup>222</sup> *In Cic. Rhet.* 1, pr., 38-40 (CCL 132.6): '*Anima immortalis est; si immortalis est, a diuinis descendit; si a diuinis descendit, perfecta est*'.

trapped in the body and made oblivious of its own true nature.<sup>223</sup> Hadot suggests that Victorinus substitutes Cicero's Stoic understanding of a natural soul with a more Neoplatonic understanding of an eternal soul imprisoned in a corporeal body.<sup>224</sup> Virtue, for Victorinus, is therefore a return of the soul to its original nature. According to Hadot, the effect of this reinterpretation is to transform Cicero's triad *natura*, *studium*, and *disciplina*: *natura* now refers to the transcendent state of the soul separated from the body, and *studium* and *disciplina* refer not to exercise and teaching but to the two aspects of philosophy—contemplation and moral asceticism—that restore the soul to its original state.<sup>225</sup> Contemplation and asceticism allow the soul to recall its original nature and compel it to move towards its original perfection through its growth away from the body through wisdom. *Sapientia* in Cicero, therefore, ceases to be primarily a kind of useful knowledge for the edification of the commonwealth and instead becomes the philosophy needed to drive a Neoplatonic *reditus*. For Victorinus, eloquence is the form in which wisdom manifests itself, and to this extent even philosophers are ultimately orators because they express their philosophy with words.<sup>226</sup> Wisdom does not need eloquence (eloquence does not make wisdom other than it already is) but without eloquence wisdom cannot affect imprisoned soul; Victorinus agrees with Cicero that without eloquence wisdom is otherwise mute.<sup>227</sup> True eloquence, then, is wisdom expressed through words and speech; any other form of rhetoric is simply *dicendi copia*.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> *In Cic. Rhet.* 1, pr., 40-42 (CCL 132.6): 'Sed acies quamvis perfectae animae quodam corporis crasso tegmine inretitur et circumfunditur, et ita fit ut quendam oblivionem sui capiat...' The passage where this is found is redolent of Plotinus, *Enneads*, 1.6.5.

<sup>224</sup> Hadot, *Marius Victorinus*, 82.

<sup>225</sup> Hadot, *Marius Victorinus*, 83. See also Copeland, 'Wycliffite Ciceronian?', 191.

<sup>226</sup> Hadot, *Marius Victorinus*, 81.

<sup>227</sup> Hadot, *Marius Victorinus*, 86.

<sup>228</sup> *In Cic. Rhet.* 1.1.69-74; Hadot, *Marius Victorinus*, 87.

At the heart of Victorinus's reading of Cicero, therefore, is the Neoplatonic understanding of a transcendent soul imprisoned in the body.<sup>229</sup> His ultimate concern is very different from Cicero's in *De inventione*: the thriving commonwealth is no longer the end of good philosophy and rhetoric, but merely an outgrowth of soul turned back towards their original nature and gathered together into a city. Victorinus almost always keeps Cicero's civic dimension in sight, but now civilisation is formed primarily through the calling of barbaric humanity away from oblivion into the memory of its original state. The result of his Neoplatonic interpretation of *De inventione* shapes too the way in which he understands Cicero's myth about the origin of civilisation. Victorinus begins by defining Cicero's proto-orator as 'one who knows both divine and human matters well'.<sup>230</sup> This orator was set in the midst of an original humanity, the occluded souls of which were imprisoned in the body, and further oppressed through their life of 'plunder' and 'bad morals'.<sup>231</sup> People lived entirely in the present, detached from individual and collective memory, and therefore oblivious to their own true nature.<sup>232</sup> Such is the state of humankind, concludes Victorinus, without memory: because of the brevity of life, only memory can overcome bestial existence.<sup>233</sup> He compares the soul to wine that retains or loses its strength and quality through the decanter in which it is kept. In his interpretation of Cicero's myth, the human soul, decanted into ignorant and beastly bodies, lost its

<sup>229</sup> Victorinus's description of an 'imprisoned' soul uses many of the same images found in Plotinus, *Enneads*: see, for example, 1.6.5 and 6.8.4.

<sup>230</sup> *In Cic. Rhet.* 1.1, 149 (CCL 132.12): '*...sapiens est enim qui diuina atque humana optime nouit*'.

<sup>231</sup> *In Cic. Rhet.* 1.2, 8-13 (CCL 132.14): '*Ergo mundo constituto erant homines nimis impediti corpore et in quibus uis animae obruta atque oppressa esset; tunc necessario raptu uiuebant et malis moribus, oppressa animae bono, circa res omnes uiribus corporis abutebantur*'.

<sup>232</sup> *In Cic. Rhet.* 1.2, 25-32 (CCL 132.14-15): '*Illi, in quibus uis animae mole corporis oppressa delitescit, non memoriae student, sed ferino ritu subsidia singulis prospiciunt diebus. Sic Sallustius: 'Et quoniam uita ipsa qua fruimur breuis est, memoriam nostri quam maxime longam efficere conuenit, non pecorum more uiuere, quae natura prona atque uentri oboedientia finxit', ut isti homines fuerunt qui sibi 'uictu fero uitam propagabant*'.

<sup>233</sup> *In Cic. Rhet.* 1.2, 31-32.



own potency; as a result, humanity wandered aimlessly like scattered cattle.<sup>234</sup> This would have been the unending state of the human soul had Cicero's proto-orator not appeared. Victorinus describes this sage as one in whom the soul had not been entirely blinded; its continued harmony with its own original nature allowed the orator to recognise the divinity that lay inside all people.<sup>235</sup> This knowledge would have been useless to all but himself, however, had the sage not also been given the gift of eloquence whereby he could 'draw men through teaching from living as beasts to a knowledge of the divine'.<sup>236</sup> And so by his eloquence, he was able to impart wisdom—or a knowledge of the soul's original state—to those otherwise unreceptive to his teaching. Victorinus concludes from Cicero's story that eloquence has a threefold function: it compels, gathers, and informs; it compels the unwilling to become docile so that they can then be gathered together and formed into a civilised people through instruction.<sup>237</sup> The instruction itself is the philosophy of wisdom whereby savage humanity is 'gently tamed and led from their beastly lives' towards perfection.<sup>238</sup>

Victorinus' commentary reveals that four centuries after the death of Cicero, well-trained rhetors could still adapt his rhetorical theory, developed for the aristocracy of a crumbling republic, to meet the concerns of their own day. Cicero's basic conviction remains in place: wisdom and eloquence are united in the ideal

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<sup>234</sup> *In Cic. Rhet. 1.2, 54-57 (CCL 132.16): 'Anima ita est ut uinum. Nam quemadmodum uinum pro uase in quo est habitum aut retinet aut amittit uiolentiam, proinde anima, si optimum et castum corpus offenderit, seruat naturam, sin alias, uelut amittat'.*

<sup>235</sup> *In Cic. Rhet. 1.2, 58-64 (CCL 132.16): '...extitit quidam uir magnus in quo anima suam retineret naturam et qui intellegeret omnes homines habere in se quiddam diuinum, sed id uitio corporis opprimi atque deperire; quod si fuisset elicatum, maximas inde commoditates hominibus posse contingere'.*

<sup>236</sup> *In Cic. Rhet. 1.2, 85-93.* Victorinus mentions that many believe that Cicero's proto-orator was actually Saturn, Plato, or Aristotle, but he himself dismisses such speculation.

<sup>237</sup> *In Cic. Rhet. 1.2, 104-105 (CCL 132.17): '...ut nunc primo compelluntur homines, post congregantur, deinde in unamquamque rem inducuntur utilem atque honestam'.*

<sup>238</sup> *In Cic. Rhet. 1.2, 176-191 (CCL 132.20): 'Ergo homines ex immanibus ac feris mites rediti ac mansueti, paulatimque honestum atque utile didicerunt'.*

orator for the good of others. But the civic no longer remains the chief interest of the ideal orator. Neoplatonic presuppositions and interests have now transformed him into someone who can advertise how imprisoned souls can return through wisdom to their original state within the divine. That is the orator's primary interest; in a sense, civilisation is the by-product of his success. Victorinus's approach both personalises Ciceronianism and gives the ideal orator a spiritual role; he is now a kind of guru-statesman. Someone like Victorinus, who combined philosophical learning with rhetorical training, could provide the tools of enlightenment that would free people to seek to rise above this world. That Martianus Capella's work seeks to fulfil much the same role, albeit in a significantly more allegorical form, suggests that a less facile form of Second Sophistic existed alongside more flamboyant examples. There is not an ounce of the celebrity in Victorinus (except ironically perhaps in his theatrical conversion to Christianity); not unlike Augustine, his concern is for converting souls to the divine.

Paul R. Kolbet's book, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls* helps to shed further light on the goal of the rhetoric as advocated by Victorinus and Capella.<sup>239</sup> He argues that within Second Sophistic there were rhetors who could direct their rhetorical and philosophical training towards the healing of souls.<sup>240</sup> He points to Dio Chrysostom as an example of just such a philosophical rhetor who understood himself as a physician administering the cure of philosophical medicine to the souls of his listeners.<sup>241</sup> This seems to have involved his convincing people that they waste their

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<sup>239</sup> Like Peter Brown in his *Power and Persuasion*, Kolbet concentrates almost entirely on the Greek tradition of philosophical rhetors, barely mentioning Victorinus and never Capella. He does examine the importance of Cicero to Augustine's thought, but by comparing Augustine primarily to Greek rhetors, he does not note that they would not have been influenced by Cicero. Augustine, it should be remembered, never cites any work of rhetoric other than Cicero's.

<sup>240</sup> Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 21.

<sup>241</sup> Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 21.

lives in the pursuit of ‘money and reputation and certain pleasures of the body, while no one is able to rid himself of these and set his own soul free’ instead of the good life which comes through the dispelling of ‘ignorance and confusion of mind’.<sup>242</sup> What Dio illustrates, argues Kolbet, is a classical ‘psychagogy’ which he defines as ‘pertaining to how a mature person leads the less mature to perceive and internalise wisdom for themselves’.<sup>243</sup> In order effectively to achieve this inculcation of philosophy, the mode of teaching must be adapted to the state of the recipient and the nature of the occasion. Kolbet concludes, ‘Thus, as a contemporary investigative category, psychagogy is a distinctive use of rhetoric for philosophic or religious ends’.<sup>244</sup> Both Kolbet’s description of Dio Chrysostom and his definition of psychagogy describe Victorinus’s concern in composing *Explanationes in Ciceronis Rhetoricam*. Indeed, the *corpus* of Victorinus’s works—both pagan and Christian—manifests a mind directed totally to the teaching of rhetoric and philosophy for the good of the human soul. That his career as a rhetor was committed to the healing of souls through the preaching of philosophy may explain why, before his conversion, he repeatedly (though perhaps naughtily) told Simplicianus that he was really a Christian.<sup>245</sup>

Victorinus (and Capella) illustrates that during the fourth and fifth century there were philosophical rhetors attempting to preserve and employ Cicero in a manner that went beyond the imitation of style. If Augustine were to reorient Cicero’s philosophical rhetoric (either consciously or subconsciously) to the demands of Christian theology, then much of that work of adaption would have been already completed by the likes of Victorinus. Indeed, Victorinus’s own commentary suggests

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<sup>242</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 13.13-14.

<sup>243</sup> Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 8.

<sup>244</sup> Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 8-9.

<sup>245</sup> *conf.* 8.2.4.

that Augustine probably never studied Cicero's works in a way that modern scholars have assumed: the Neoplatonic interpretation was likely at least subconsciously in place from the beginning. The absence, therefore, of a civic or forensic rhetoric in *De doctrina christiana*, so noted by modern scholars, may simply have never occurred to Augustine. In the end, although the gulf between Cicero's civic-minded orator and Augustine's preacher may have been a large one, the gulf between Victorinus's and Augustine's was much less so.

Finally, Victorinus and the appearance of philosophical rhetors help further explain Augustine's reaction to Ambrose. If a young and confused rhetor arriving in Milan in 384 were looking around to find a close embodiment of Victorinus's Neoplatonic orator, who better to fill that role than Ambrose? As discussed in the previous chapter, Ambrose ministered to his people through his wisdom and eloquence. But the wisdom he conveyed is less like Cicero's civic knowledge and more like Victorinus's contemplative and ascetic wisdom that heals and reorients souls towards God. In other words, Victorinus neatly fills the gap between Cicero and Augustine. Now, all the elements are in place—wisdom, eloquence, and salvific truth—for philosophical wisdom to undergo one final transformation and become simply theology.

## Augustine and Cicero

The literature about Augustine's opinion of rhetoric in general and Cicero in particular is vast, though almost all of it is focused either on the *Confessiones* or on Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana*.<sup>246</sup> There is no need here to rehearse all the

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<sup>246</sup> See, for example, Mohrmann, 'St. Augustine and the Eloquentia', 351-70; Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*; Kevane, 'Paideia and Anti-Paideia'; Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 43-89-; Fortin, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric'; Ralph

arguments or their central concern with how Augustine may or may not have adapted classical rhetoric for an emerging medieval world. My interest has little to do with his own rhetoric *per se* or how much that rhetoric relied on Cicero but instead on how he adapted Ciceronian principles to his own understanding of soteriology. It will be my contention that consciously or not Augustine believed that philosophy and rhetoric are most perfectly united in Christian theology and that while bishops might, after a fashion, fulfil Cicero's ideal orator, more profoundly God alone most perfectly realises that role. In order to establish these arguments, I will first undertake to show that Augustine neither rejects rhetoric itself (despite the appearance of doing so in the *Confessiones*) nor the underlying Ciceronian conviction that wisdom and eloquence ought to be united. What he does reject is what he perceives to be the facile pomposity of Second Sophistic and, in a thoroughly Ciceronian fashion, the usefulness of rhetorical theory itself. Eloquence for Augustine—as for Cicero—transcends the art of rhetoric. Although, after his conversion, Augustine may have become less enthusiastic about rhetors he never rejected the need for orators; indeed, in the guise of preachers they are central to the life of the new commonwealth: the

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Flores, 'Reading and Speech in St. Augustine's *Confessiones*', *Augustinian Studies* 6 (1975), 1-13; Mark D. Jordan, 'Words and Word: Incarnation and Signification in Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*', *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980), 177-196; Gerald A. Press, 'The Subject and Structure of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*', *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980), 99-124; Raymond D. DiLorenzo, 'Ciceronianism and Augustine's Conception of Philosophy', *Augustinian Studies* 13 (1982), 171-176; Raymond D. DiLorenzo, 'Non pie quaerunt: Rhetoric, Dialectic, and the Discovery of the True in Augustine's *Confessiones*', *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983), 117-127; Kathy Eden, 'Hermeneutics and the Ancient Rhetorical Tradition', *Rhetorica* 5 (1987), 59-86; Kathy Eden, 'The Rhetorical Tradition and Augustinian Hermeneutics in *De doctrina Christiana*', *Rhetorica* 8:1 (Winter 1990), 45-63; Michael J. Scanlon, 'Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric' *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994) 37-50; Primmer, 'The Function of the *genera dicendi*'; Schaeffer, 'The Dialectic of Orality'; Martin Camargo, 'Non solum sibi sed aliis etiam': Neoplatonism and Rhetoric in Saint Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*', *Rhetorica* 16:4 (1998), 393-408; Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, 151-156; Chin, 'Christians and the Roman Classroom'; Farrell, 'The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine's *Confessiones*'; C.S. Baldwin, 'St. Augustine on Preaching' in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo: De Doctrina & the Search for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric*, Richard Leo Enos and Roger Thompson, et al. (eds.), Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 187-203;.

Church. But his image of an orator is much more like that of Victorinus: a person through whom wisdom and eloquence can draw people towards the divine.

## Augustine's Education

Augustine provides a wealth of information about his education in rhetoric, though always with a polemical bent. In most ways it was a standard course of studies beginning at a young age with grammar and ending with rigorous training in rhetoric.<sup>247</sup> As with many provincials, he received his grammatical education close to home before being sent off to a city—in his case, Carthage—to begin his training in rhetoric.<sup>248</sup> He describes his rhetorical education by stating, ‘My studies which were deemed respectable had the objective of leading me to distinction as an advocate in the law courts’.<sup>249</sup> Those studies undoubtedly centred on Cicero—almost definitely *De inventione* and likely either *De oratore*, *Orator* or both—and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which was believed to have been written by Cicero.<sup>250</sup> C.S. Baldwin points out that in all of his works, Augustine never quotes or cites a rhetorician other than Cicero.<sup>251</sup> Although Augustine claims the he was a quiet and studious pupil in the midst of a rowdy bunch of classmates, he also admits that his devotion to the ‘books on eloquence’ had a less laudable purpose: ‘I wanted to distinguish myself as

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<sup>247</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 35-29 provides a brief but evocative account of Augustine's education.

<sup>248</sup> *conf.* 3.1.1.

<sup>249</sup> *conf.* 3.3.6.

<sup>250</sup> Victorinus states that *De inventione* is aimed at providing *ars rhetorica* while *De oratore* is aimed at forming orators. In Augustine's *ep.* 118.34, he mentions that he is perfectly capable of commenting on *De oratore* and *Orator*, but will refrain from doing so lest he appear as a ‘trifler in his own eyes’. *De doctrina Christiana* also betrays a good knowledge of *De oratore*. Harald Hagendahl takes Augustine and Capella's emphasis on Cicero as evidence that Cicero must have formed the basis for Carthaginian rhetorical instruction. See Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 533. See also Farrell, ‘The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine's *Confessions*’, 270-271.

<sup>251</sup> Baldwin, ‘St. Augustine on Preaching’, 190.

an orator for a damnable and conceited purpose, namely delight in human vanity'.<sup>252</sup> He does not here imply anything about the books on eloquence themselves; his criticism is directed towards his own ambition: he was learning rhetoric in a typical Second Sophistic fashion to become well-respected and loved. Not unlike teenagers today, he wanted to be a celebrity.

In the course of his training in 'the eloquence wholly necessary for carrying conviction in one's cause and for developing one's thoughts', Augustine practised declamation by delivering fictitious speeches.<sup>253</sup> He mentions reciting a speech of 'Juno in her anger and grief' for which he and his classmates received marks for their style and *pathos*.<sup>254</sup> Looking back on his lessons, Augustine was repelled by the focus on style over truth, and claims that he was actually being trained to be more confident in expressing falsehood. But he qualifies his criticism: 'I bring no charge against the words which are like exquisite and precious vessels, but the wine of error is poured into them for us by drunken teachers'.<sup>255</sup> In other words, he does not criticise so much the actual eloquence taught as the failure to unite that eloquence with truth. His disdain is for the priorities of Second Sophistic, the prizing of style over substance, self-promotion and praise over the pursuit of truth. His conclusion is that such an education led him towards vanity and a greater concern for the good opinion of his peers than for truth.<sup>256</sup> Expectations were that through his training he

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<sup>252</sup> *conf.* 3.4.7. Note that Augustine does not use the term 'orator' himself but instead speaks of excelling in the eloquence that he was studying.

<sup>253</sup> *conf.* 1.16.26.

<sup>254</sup> *conf.* 3.17.27.

<sup>255</sup> *conf.* 1.16.26.

<sup>256</sup> *conf.* 1.19.30. See also Michael J. Scanlon, 'Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric', 39.

would be able to use eloquence ‘to gain access to human honours and to acquire deceitful riches’.<sup>257</sup>

During his rhetorical education, Augustine encountered ‘a book by a certain Cicero, whose language (but not his heart) almost everyone admires. That book of his contains an exhortation to study philosophy and is entitled *Hortensius*’.<sup>258</sup> This passage has been the subject of much debate: both Augustine’s phrase ‘a certain Cicero’ and his juxtaposing of ‘language’ and ‘heart’ have received conflicting commentary from scholars.<sup>259</sup> Some interpret this passage as entirely negative, arguing that Augustine distances himself from the old orator by praising his style while not, from a Christian perspective, his heart.<sup>260</sup> According to this interpretation, Augustine upholds Cicero as a typical example of those who, like his own teacher, promoted style over truth. But this does not make sense within the larger context: Cicero’s *Hortensius* introduced Augustine to philosophy, the substance his own education had omitted. A better interpretation of this passage is that Augustine believes his contemporaries seek to imitate Cicero’s style without any regard for his actual theory, particularly his promotion of philosophy; such an emphasis on style

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<sup>257</sup> *conf.* 1.9.14. See Calvin L. Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 11.

<sup>258</sup> *conf.* 3.4.7 (CCL 27.30): ‘...cuiusdam Ciceronis, cuius linguam fere omnes mirantur, pectus non ita’.

<sup>259</sup> See, for example, Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 579; Henry Chadwick, *Saint Augustine: The Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 38, n. 10; James J. O’Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 2: 165 proposes that Augustine here is criticising Cicero’s pride and ambition. Todd Breyfogle, ‘No Changing Nor Shadow’ in Kim Paffenroth and Robert P. Kennedy (ed.), *A Reader’s Companion to Augustine’s Confessions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 232, n. 33 agrees with this point.

<sup>260</sup> While Henry Chadwick, *Confessions*, 38, n. 10 comments that ‘a certain Cicero’ ought not to be taken in a negative way, he does understand the second part of the passage as a criticism: ‘The antithesis between Cicero’s style and his heart (*pectus*) is genuinely negative: to a Christian, Cicero belonged to another culture’.



over substance is, in fact, the very thing he accuses his original education of inculcating.<sup>261</sup>

*Hortensius*,<sup>262</sup> a now lost work in praise of philosophy, written by a despondent Cicero after the death of his daughter, had an enormous impact on the young Augustine:

The book changed my feelings. It altered my prayers, Lord, to be towards yourself. It gave me different values and priorities. Suddenly every vain hope became empty to me, and I longed for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour in my heart. I began to rise up to return to you....I was impressed not by the book's refining effect on my style and literary expression but by the content.<sup>263</sup>

At first glance, Augustine seems to be saying that *Hortensius* transformed him from being a budding rhetor into a budding philosopher. Of course, that he would go on from reading *Hortensius* to become a rhetor belies this first impression. This passage comes immediately after Augustine has criticised his youthful goal of obtaining the adoration and success that would feed his human vanity. After reading *Hortensius* that goal changes: now he longs for the 'immortality of wisdom'; he says to God that he no longer desired vanities, but burned 'with longing to leave earthly things and fly back to you'.<sup>264</sup> The 'immortality of wisdom' is itself an interesting phrase. Behind it may lie a passage from *Hortensius* that he later preserves for posterity in *De Trinitate*: 'it must be supposed that the more these souls keep always to their course,

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<sup>261</sup> It is surely noteworthy that later Augustine dedicated his first work, the now lost *De pulchra et apto*, to the then famous Roman orator, Hierius, whom Augustine admired because he was also 'extremely knowledgeable in the study of philosophical questions'. See *conf.* 4.14.21.

<sup>262</sup> See Paul McKendrick, *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, Ltd., 1989), 109-111, for an attempt to provide an outline for *Hortensius* through remaining references and fragments. John Hammond Taylor, S.J., 'St. Augustine and the *Hortensius* of Cicero' *Studies in Philology* 60:3 (1963), 487-498, argues that the influence of *Hortensius* had more to do with Augustine's mood than with the merits of Cicero's work itself.

<sup>263</sup> *conf.* 3.4.7.

<sup>264</sup> *conf.* 3.4.7.

that is to reason and to eager inquiry, and the less they mix themselves up in the tangled vices and errors of men, the easier will be their ascent and return to heaven'.<sup>265</sup> But it also suggests a similar outlook to that of Victorinus. In reality, Cicero performs for Augustine precisely the role of Victorinus's orator-sage by turning Augustine from this world towards the divine through his eloquent wisdom. He was assigned *Hortensius* as a model for eloquence but discovered there a transforming wisdom. As a result, Augustine did not suddenly become a philosopher but a true Ciceronian attuned to the discovery of wisdom through eloquence.<sup>266</sup>

Any doubt about this Ciceronian turn is laid to rest by the very next episode in the *Confessiones*. Probably because of his own background, Augustine's first step in his pursuit of wisdom 'wherever found',<sup>267</sup> is to study Scripture. But he is immediately repelled by its style: 'It seemed to me unworthy in comparison to the dignity of Cicero'.<sup>268</sup> Raymond DiLorenzo points out that Cicero defines *dignitas* as *auctoritas*, which explains why Augustine initially rejects Scriptural wisdom.<sup>269</sup> Lacking the eloquence that his tastes have been trained to discern, he cannot imagine how the Bible can contain wisdom. His expectations are that while eloquence can be present without wisdom (as in the case of his pre-*Hortensius* education), expressed wisdom cannot be divorced from eloquence. Indeed, his later criticism of himself at

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<sup>265</sup> *trin.* 14.26. See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 40 for further discussion.

<sup>266</sup> See Troup, *Temporality*, 15-16. Troup correctly argues that *Hortensius* began Augustine's conversion from Second Sophistic. Breyfogle, 'No Changing Nor Shadow', 42-47 provides a good discussion of this passage as a kind of aborted ascent that should be read in light of Augustine's later contemplative ascent in Ostia.

<sup>267</sup> *conf.* 3.4.8. The freedom to pursue wisdom 'wherever found' is a distinctly Sceptic notion much endorsed by Cicero to whom it gave permission to employ and modify attractive teachings from different philosophical schools.

<sup>268</sup> *conf.* 3.5.9.

<sup>269</sup> DiLorenzo, 'Ciceronianism and Augustine's Conception of Philosophy', 175.

this stage in his life is not that he expected wisdom to be eloquent but that he was too proud to recognise the true eloquence contained in Scripture.<sup>270</sup>

Despite his new interests, Augustine left his education behind to become a teacher of the ‘art of rhetoric’ (*artem rhetoricam*), instructing his students in much the same way as he had been.<sup>271</sup> He admits that, motivated by greed, he tried to teach the ‘tricks of rhetoric’ not that his students could convict an innocent person but that they might save the life of a guilty one. If Victorinus’s distinction between *De inventione* and *De oratore* (the former studied for rhetorical theory and the latter for providing an oratorical ideal) was a common one, then one can assume that Augustine’s reference to his teaching *ars rhetorica* implies that he taught his students either *De inventione* or *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (or both).<sup>272</sup> He provided his students not so much with the overarching Ciceronian rhetorical theory but with the rhetorical ‘tricks’ that would make them successful declaimers. In other words, despite his personal pursuit of wisdom, his greed and ambition pushed him to become a fairly standard, though promising, Second Sophistic rhetor. Considering his own relatively modest background, this is not entirely surprising. The opportunities for one like him to become anything like Cicero’s orator were remote; such a role was still largely reserved for the aristocracy (Victorinus’s example notwithstanding).

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<sup>270</sup> Breyfogle, ‘No Changing Nor Shadow’, 232, n. 37 misses the nuance of Augustine’s later reflection, arguing that at this age Augustine could not recognise wisdom ‘however inelegantly expressed’. This is something Augustine never actually does; what he criticises his younger self for doing was failing to recognise the true elegance that runs deeper than mere style: the elegance of wisdom itself.

<sup>271</sup> *conf.* 4.2.2 (CCL 27.40).

<sup>272</sup> See Chin, ‘Christians and the Roman Classroom’, 165-166 and Farrell, ‘The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*’, 271-275. Catherine M Chin argues that Augustine’s discussion of memory in Book Ten of the *Confessiones* is very similar to that of *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Likewise, Farrell demonstrates how Augustine’s review of the motive behind the theft of the pear in Book One conforms to the *Ad Herennium*’s teaching about forensic rhetoric. Farrell argues that this suggests that Augustine had come to know forensic invention intimately and therefore must have taught either *De inventione*, *Ad Herennium* or both. For further discussion of this point, see chapter five.

Instead, he joined the ranks of rhetors educating young men and living off the funds provided by the Imperial government and student fees.

With this in mind, one can easily understand why Augustine later decided to move to Rome. By his own admission, he went in search of ‘promised higher fees and a greater position of dignity’.<sup>273</sup> Rome had the potential of introducing him to the kind of aristocratic patronage that might lead to a higher office like that enjoyed by Victorinus, which is in fact what happened. Other than his personal involvement in Manichaeism, there is no suggestion whatsoever that he attempted to become anything like Cicero’s orator, even though he had by then come under the spell of the Academics (again probably through the influence of Cicero).<sup>274</sup> Despite the profound influence of *Hortensius*, he largely continued along his original course of seeking ‘delight in human vanities’. The disconnection between Augustine’s private beliefs and his public profession must have increased his dissatisfaction with life in Rome. Fortunately for him, he did finally come to the attention of an accomplished orator, Symmachus, who sent Augustine to Milan to become a ‘teacher of rhetoric’.<sup>275</sup> At that point, it must have seemed like his life would be entirely devoted to working as a rhetor.

Augustine’s account of this period in his life presents a fascinating picture of a young rhetor attempting to pursue his career and form his beliefs in Late Antiquity. On the one hand, he faced the powerful expectation to become a typical rhetor, training young men in rhetorical techniques derived from various handbooks. His colleagues, such as those who warned him about Roman students, would have been just this sort of teacher, and one can only imagine how many rhetorical performances

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<sup>273</sup> *conf.* 5.8.14.

<sup>274</sup> *conf.* 5.10.19.

<sup>275</sup> *conf.* 5.13.23.

Augustine watched, critiqued, and discussed with those colleagues. His life was given almost entirely over to the ‘fluency of speech’ that Cicero despised but by Augustine’s day had come to be identified with eloquence. On the other hand, Augustine had been deeply affected by his reading of *Hortensius*, which had imparted to him an appreciation for eloquent wisdom, or a rhetoric ennobled by the content of philosophy. He was a practising Manichaean, appreciative of the eloquence of their leaders, though increasingly sceptical about the wisdom of their beliefs. In fact, he had begun to follow Cicero’s path towards Academic Scepticism. Interestingly, there is no evidence that he had begun to read the works of philosophers themselves, except for Aristotle’s *Categories*.<sup>276</sup> Like most other rhetors he seems to have initially derived his philosophical knowledge through commonplaces and Cicero himself.<sup>277</sup> It was also not atypical, again as Cicero himself demonstrates, for rhetors to downplay their own profession in comparison to philosophy. It was a standard way for a rhetor to distinguish himself from all the others whom, he believed, taught only sophistry. No doubt Augustine’s colleagues would have found any expression on his part of being a true devotee of wisdom rather than of empty eloquence as arrogant as Augustine later found them.

## Augustine’s Conversion

If the above portrait has any merit, then Augustine arrived in Milan as a man pursuing a life that did not agree with his deeper beliefs and, therefore, lacking the very kind of inner ‘quietude’ that Cicero the Sceptic promoted. If this is so, then in

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<sup>276</sup> In Late Antiquity, the most accessible introduction to Aristotle’s *Categories* was Porphyry’s *Isagoge*, which was translated into Latin by none other than Victorinus.

<sup>277</sup> Besides *Hortensius*, Augustine had studied Cicero’s *Academica* and *Tusculan Disputations* from which he gained much of his philosophical knowledge. See Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 511.

one respect Augustine's conversion to Christianity can be seen as the reintegration of his two conflicted selves. And it is at least noteworthy that the same conversion that compelled him to give up teaching a form of rhetoric in which he did not really believe, culminated in his becoming the kind of eloquent orator—first as a priest and then as a bishop—that *De inventione*, *De oratore* and *Hortensius* had taught him to admire. This is not to claim that Augustine converted because he realised that the Church offered him a chance to be the kind of orator that his station in life might have otherwise precluded. To the contrary, Augustine's first decision in converting was to withdraw into a life of leisure, to become, as it were, like the elder Cicero who, withdrawn from public life, composed *Hortensius*.<sup>278</sup> But it remains fascinating that Augustine would eventually come to exemplify Cicero's ideal in a way that likely would have remained beyond him had he never converted. Even if it should be shown that he did reject rhetoric altogether, his manner of life as priest and bishop belies the conviction of his words. But as will now be argued, he never rejected rhetoric, only the empty eloquence and rhetorical legerdemain in which he had long before lost faith. To the end of his life, however, he remained convinced that wisdom is best expressed eloquently not least because he had learned from experience that falsehood so often is.

As already argued in the previous chapter, Ambrose attracted Augustine because he embodied Cicero's ideal by ministering to people through his eloquent words of wisdom. Ambrose is precisely the kind of man after which Augustine sought. Earlier he had thought that the Manichaean Faustus might be that person. He describes him as one by whom 'many were captured as a result of his smooth talk'

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<sup>278</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 116.

and that he was famous for his ‘soft eloquence’.<sup>279</sup> He was reputed also to be a wise man, capable of answering all of Augustine’s difficult questions. But Augustine was disappointed:

When he came, I found him gracious and pleasant with words. He said things they usually say, but put it much more agreeably....My ears were already satiated with this kind of talk, which did not seem better to me because more elegantly expressed. Fine style does not make something true, nor has a man a wise soul because he has a handsome face and well-chosen eloquence (*decorum eloquium*). They who had promised that he would be so good were not good judges. He seemed to them prudent and wise because he charmed them by the way he talked.<sup>280</sup>

Faustus therefore epitomises the kind of rhetor that Augustine despised, whose empty eloquence wins people solely through charm without expressing any deeper wisdom. In fact, Faustus turns out to have been a fairly typical Second Sophistic rhetor: he was learned in only ‘grammar and literature’ while ‘ignorant’ of the other ‘liberal arts’.<sup>281</sup> His popularity was due to a polished delivery that came from the daily practice of declamation. Augustine presents this picture of Faustus very carefully to underscore his belief that he was precisely the type of man the pre-*Hortensius* Augustine aspired to become. Furthermore, he exemplifies the false orator of Cicero’s *De inventione*, whose ‘fluency of speech’ is united with falsehood to draw people towards their ruin. In Faustus’s case, Augustine simply comments that his charming manner of speaking was a ‘great trap of the devil!’<sup>282</sup> Not surprisingly, Augustine’s encounter with Faustus results in his beginning to doubt the wisdom of Manichaeism.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> *conf.* 5.3.3.

<sup>280</sup> *conf.* 5.6.10 (CCL 27.61-62).

<sup>281</sup> *conf.* 5.6.11. Augustine claims that Faustus had only read a few Ciceronian orations (popular as stylistic models), a few books of Seneca and the few Manichaean works that had been translated into Latin.

<sup>282</sup> *conf.* 5.3.3.

<sup>283</sup> Farrell, ‘The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*’, 276 argues that Augustine’s encounter with Faustus caused Augustine to realise that eloquence is no guarantor of wisdom. But Augustine’s reaction to *Hortensius* implies that this realisation came earlier. The reason

Augustine, however, mentions *eloquentia* in a short digression in the midst of his description of Faustus. He thanks God that he had already learned that truth does not depend on eloquence:

Already I had learnt from you that nothing is true merely because it is eloquently (*eloquenter*) said, nor false because the signs coming from the lips (*signa labiorum*) make sounds deficient in a sense of style. Again, a statement is not true because it is enunciated in an unpolished idiom, nor false because the words are splendid. Wisdom and foolishness are like food that is nourishing or useless. Whether the words are ornate or not does not decide the issue. Food of either kind can be served in either town or country ware.<sup>284</sup>

While this can certainly be read as a criticism of eloquence, in reality Augustine is not arguing anything with which either Cicero or Victorinus would disagree. He is making two claims. First, that wisdom remains wisdom whether or not it is expressed with rhetorical flourish. Victorinus states much the same thing when he comments that eloquence adds nothing to wisdom.<sup>285</sup> This stands in contrast to Second Sophistic which, as Augustine (and modern scholars) understood it, claimed that style is of paramount importance. For Augustine, eloquence is nothing more than a vehicle, either of truth or falsehood. His second implicit claim, however, is that wisdom must be expressed in some manner in order for it to be received. He uses the curious phrase ‘signs of the lips’ that is reminiscent of Cicero’s distinction between the *voluntas*, the will of the speaker or writer, and the *signa* or *scriptum*, the words by which the will is expressed.<sup>286</sup> Augustine is here suggesting that *eloquentia* is *signum*

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why Augustine fails to be impressed with Faustus is because he had expected him to combine wisdom and eloquence. His failure to meet that expectation disappoints Augustine. This point is recognised by Raymond DiLorenzo, who argues that Faustus’s failure to live up to the ideal of *Hortensius* makes him representative of empty eloquence. See DiLorenzo, ‘Non pie quaerunt’, 119.

<sup>284</sup> *conf.* 5.6.10 (CCL 27.62).

<sup>285</sup> Eden, ‘Hermeneutics and the Ancient Rhetorical Tradition’ and ‘The Rhetorical Tradition and Augustinian Hermeneutics’.

<sup>286</sup> See, for example, Cicero, *De inv.* 2.40.116; 44.128; 49.144-147. Kathy Eden, ‘Hermeneutics and the Ancient Rhetorical Tradition’, 75-79 provides an excellent discussion of this aspect of Cicero’s thought.



rather than *res*. Wisdom, no matter the form in which it is presented, is the substance; the Second Sophistics and Faustus's admirers err in responding to *eloquentia* as though it were the *res* rather than simply a *signum*.

Augustine offers Faustus as a foil to Ambrose. Both are religious leaders famous for their eloquence. But Augustine approached each person for different reasons: on the one hand, he listened to Faustus for his reputed wisdom only to encounter empty rhetoric, and on the other, he listened to Ambrose for his reputed eloquence to find, despite his deep prejudice, the wisdom for which he had yearned.<sup>287</sup> Again, Ambrose fulfils the ideals of a philosophical rhetor: most of his time was devoted either to the public role of edifying his people through his eloquent wisdom or to the private practice of imbibing wisdom through his silent reading.<sup>288</sup> Thus, his whole life was directed towards redirecting the souls of his listeners through eloquent wisdom towards God. And his eloquence was so powerful that, again like Cicero's proto-orator, those who listened could not help but eventually consume his wisdom.

Augustine's encounter with Ambrose began his process of conversion to Christianity. Interestingly, it was during this unsettled time that Augustine turned from Cicero's Academic Scepticism to study the books of the Platonists themselves, albeit in Victorinus's Latin translation.<sup>289</sup> Simplicianus, perhaps unaware of

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<sup>287</sup> DiLorenzo argues that Ambrose is persuasive because his preaching fulfils the ideals of Cicero's perfect rhetoric in which eloquence and wisdom are combined to reach people at the point of their convictions. See DiLorenzo, 'Ciceronianism', 176.

<sup>288</sup> *conf.* 6.3.3. Ralph Flores argues that Ambrose transformed Augustine's ideas about reading and speech by showing him that allegorical reading creates a 'mode of speech whose eloquence and wisdom are inseparable'. In other words, allegorical interpretation provided Augustine with the means of looking beyond the literal words themselves to perceive a deeper, spiritual significance. See Flores (1975), 5-6.

<sup>289</sup> *conf.* 8.2.3. Except for a few brief quotes in Boethius, all of Victorinus's translations of Neoplatonic philosophy have been lost. Only his translation of Porphyry's *Isagoge* remains. See Bruce, 'Marius Victorinus and His Works', 139 for a brief discussion of Victorinus's remains.

Augustine's flirtation with Scepticism, congratulated him that he 'had not fallen in with the writings of other philosophers' since in Neoplatonism 'God and his Word keep slipping in'.<sup>290</sup> Although during the past hundred years much has been made of the impact of Neoplatonism on Augustine's thought, the debate has overlooked how his discovery of Plotinus (through the translation of a famous rhetor!) would have drawn Augustine even closer to the intellectual background of Victorinus and Capella; like them he was becoming a thoroughly Neoplatonic Ciceronian. Of course, *Hortensius* itself, with its concern for freeing the soul from the entanglements of this life so that it may ascend to the divine, would have prepared him for this development. But Augustine states explicitly that in reading the 'books of the Platonists' he was 'admonished to return' into himself where he became aware of a transcendent light that he recognised as true Being.<sup>291</sup> In other words, Victorinus's translations compelled him to reach out for the kind of virtue as defined by Neoplatonism and Victorinus: a soul conforming itself to its original nature and seeking to ascend toward the divine. Whatever the impact, however, Augustine's time as a Neoplatonic Ciceronian was short-lived as it quickly, though not without anguish, gave way to his complete conversion to Christianity.

The approach of that conversion caused Augustine to decide that he could not continue to work as a rhetor. The primary reason for this is that he no longer cared for the riches and vanity after which he had sought throughout his adult life. His whole mind turned towards wisdom and discovering God as he began to mimic the elder Cicero who withdrew from a public life of oratory to a private life of philosophy. But this was a gradual process for Augustine. He writes, 'I made a decision in your sight not to break off teaching with an abrupt renunciation, but

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<sup>290</sup> *conf.* 8.2.3.

<sup>291</sup> *conf.* 7.10.16.

quietly to retire from my post as a salesman of words in the markets of rhetoric'.<sup>292</sup> He continued for a time to work as a rhetor, to 'sell' the 'art of public speaking',<sup>293</sup> but now he did so only to avoid public scandal and to use his impending vacation as a quiet way to retire from public life.<sup>294</sup>

One should note the words and phrases Augustine uses to describe his decision to give up his career as an Imperial rhetor. He is dismissive not of rhetoric itself but of rhetors and their craft; he never claims that he no longer esteemed oratory at the time of his conversion, but he saw little worth in teaching *ars rhetorica*, or at least, doing so to earn a living and to seek honour.<sup>295</sup> Indeed, he doubts that oratory is something that really can be taught, sounding very much like Cicero who was equally dismissive about whether *eloquentia* could actually be inculcated through the teaching of rhetorical technique.<sup>296</sup> In fact, as will be shown, Augustine's attitude towards his former career is strikingly similar to that of first-century B.C. patricians towards the new-fangled rhetorical schools. Ultimately, what Augustine rejects, like Cicero, is a cheap eloquence that he perceives as little more than verbal trickery.

### ***De doctrina Christiana***

Augustine initially sought a more secluded life by withdrawing to Cassiciacum to live a life of intellectual leisure 'such as might have satisfied Cicero'.<sup>297</sup> But the approaching armies of Maximus made northern Italy an increasingly precarious place to live, and so he planned to return to North Africa to

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<sup>292</sup> *conf.* 9.2.2.

<sup>293</sup> *conf.* 8.6.13.

<sup>294</sup> *conf.* 9.2.3-4. Augustine's excuse for delaying his conversion—to avoid drawing attention to himself—stands in marked contrast to Victorinus's own conversion as described in *conf.* 8.2.5

<sup>295</sup> See Farrell, 'The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine's *Confessions*', 269.

<sup>296</sup> See, for e.g., Cicero, *De orat.* 1.145-146.

<sup>297</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 116.

form a kind of monastic community with his mother, son, and closest friends.<sup>298</sup> On the one hand, during this period (386-391), he seems to have rejected any role for himself as a philosophical rhetor; all indications are that he hoped to spend the rest of his life as a monastic or Christian philosopher surrounded by his books and friends and in pursuit of wisdom and God. Such was not an uncommon decision in the West during Late Antiquity when many landed families transformed their villas into monastic communities in the midst of an increasingly insecure and crumbling civilisation.<sup>299</sup> On the other hand, during this same period he composed *De musica*, which he planned to be the first book in a series on the seven liberal arts,<sup>300</sup> and composed his first works of controversy. Augustine's ambition in composing *De musica* was very much in the vein of philosophical rhetoric, as demonstrated by Martianus Capella's work, and his decision to become engaged in Manichean and Donatist controversies allowed Augustine to return to the very sort of debate for which he had been long trained.

Augustine's reputation and training could not go unnoticed in North Africa and so, according to his own later account, he was tricked into being ordained and shortly thereafter consecrated a bishop. Despite his efforts to live a more philosophical life, he now embarked on a career that would lead him to embody Cicero's ideal orator. That he saw himself in this light is suggested not only by the

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<sup>298</sup> *conf.* 9.8.17. See also Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 126.

<sup>299</sup> See Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999), 236; Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2003), 82-110. It is interesting to think that had Augustine remained in the more turbulent Italy, he may well have achieved his early ambition of *otium* as episcopal office may have remained beyond his reach. As the security of Empire collapsed, an increasingly aristocratic episcopacy became valued for its political influence, which could be employed to preserve civic life and, when needed, to protect cities from invading barbarians. But North Africa was, until late into Augustine's life, one of the few remaining parts of the Western Empire where law and order remained relatively secure and unmolested (except for the ever-constant problem of Berber raiders).

<sup>300</sup> *Ret.* 1.5; 1.10.

attention he gave to preaching, and (like Cicero with his orations) his publication of those sermons for wider consumption, but also by his continued engagement in theological controversy and the care he took in his involvement in the law courts. Indeed, the sheer bulk and scope of Augustine's writing stand in testimony of the inherently oratorical nature of his episcopacy and the full flight he gave to the whole range of his training. Several further activities suggest that he almost immediately tried to fulfil his priestly and episcopal duties as an orator. First, he sought to engage Manicheans and Donatists in a series of rhetorical debates. In 392, shortly after his ordination, he publically debated for two days with the Manichean leader Fortunatus.<sup>301</sup> Later, in a letter written in 396 or 397, he laments that a Donatist bishop is afraid to engage in a public debate with him, 'a mere beginner'.<sup>302</sup> At about the same time, however, he did debate with another Donatist bishop, Fortunius.<sup>303</sup> Augustine's description of the start of the debate reveals just how much his life could resemble that of a Second Sophistic rhetor:

But after we had settled down in his home, no small crowd assembled because of the rumor spread about. We, however, saw that there were very few in that whole crowd who desired that the issue be treated in a useful and salutary manner and that so important a question on so important an issue be discussed with wisdom and piety. But the rest had assembled for the spectacle of our quarrel, as it were, in a manner of the theatre rather than for instruction toward salvation with Christian devotion.<sup>304</sup>

This passage is wonderfully revealing because it shows the conflicting sides of late antique rhetoric. Augustine and Fortunius aspire to a debate that will express wisdom and piety in a 'useful and salutary manner' but the people simply want a show. By

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<sup>301</sup> See *Contra Fortunatum Manichaeum Disputatio*.

<sup>302</sup> *ep.* 34.6. Apparently, Proculeian, the Donatist bishop, refused on the grounds of Augustine's 'learning in fine literature', which he himself had not studied.

<sup>303</sup> *ep.* 44.

<sup>304</sup> *ep.* 44.1.

now, Augustine has achieved the fame of a successful rhetor and so draws crowds of people looking for an entertaining rhetorical debate. But both he and Fortunius have no interest in such theatrical displays; they wish to offer through their rhetoric a wisdom that is good for the souls of both the participants and their audience. This cannot have been very different from the aspirations of Augustine when he served as an Imperial rhetor in Milan.

Second, Augustine at this time produced the work for which he is arguably most famous, *Confessiones*, which is less an autobiography than an outstanding epideictic work that seeks through praise and blame to persuade his audience to seek God.<sup>305</sup> In his *Retractationes*, he states clearly that the books of this work ‘praise the just and good God for my evils and my good acts, and lift up the understanding and affection of men to Him’.<sup>306</sup> Raymond DiLorenzo argues that Augustine offers the *Confessiones* as a ‘rhetorical demonstration’ by God himself, through Augustine’s thoughts and words, for the purpose of reforming the spiritual life of the reader.<sup>307</sup> Similarly, Peter Candler calls the *Confessiones* a ‘grammar of participation’ whereby Augustine seeks not only to provide autobiographical information to the reader but also to transform him by rhetorically compelling him towards an ascent towards God.<sup>308</sup> Thus, Augustine conceives of his life before and leading up to his conversion as a form of rhetoric, and relates it in such a way as to allow the reader to share in his

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<sup>305</sup> Scanlon, ‘Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric’, 41. Scanlon explains that epideictic rhetoric is not concerned primarily with the ‘affectivity of good and evil’ through promoting praise or blame.

<sup>306</sup> *Ret.2.6* .

<sup>307</sup> Raymond D. DiLorenzo, “‘Divine Eloquence and the Spiritual World of the Praedicator’”: Book XIII of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*’, *Augustinian Studies* 16 (1984), 76.

<sup>308</sup> Peter M. Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 53.

own process of turning from temporal delights towards the heavenly delight of God.<sup>309</sup>

Finally, in 396 Augustine began to write the treatise that would help to transform rhetoric in the West: *De doctrina Christiana*.<sup>310</sup> There has been a great deal of debate about how indebted Augustine was to Cicero for his argument and whether he ultimately accepted Cicero's theory, rejected it, or transformed it. Many of these studies have focused primarily on Augustine's adaption of Cicero's three styles of speech—plain, middle, and grand—and argued either for or against Augustine's over-reliance on Cicero. While these debates are important for those trying to understand the development of rhetoric from the classical to medieval period, Augustine's adaption of rhetorical technique does not directly impact upon this study. Of greater concern is what Augustine does with Cicero's emphasis on eloquent wisdom or philosophical rhetoric and how his approach to that subject relates to Augustine's theology. As will now be shown, Augustine advocates a kind of preacher that is very similar to Victorinus' interpretation of Cicero's ideal orator. It is worth mentioning that almost all those who have stressed Augustine's departure from Cicero in Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana* have failed to note how Ciceronianism developed in Late Antiquity; only Rita Copeland notes the similarity between Augustine and Victorinus.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> For an excellent discussion of 'confession' as a form of rhetoric, see DiLorenzo 'Divine Eloquence and the Spiritual World of the Praedicator', 123-127. Peter Candler argues that the *Confessiones* are a 'grammar of participation' by which Augustine wishes to transform the reader through his or her participation in his own autobiographical *reditus*. Augustine's use of 'I' and 'we' are meant to make Augustine's voice the reader's voice. See Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction*, 67.

<sup>310</sup> John O. Ward, 'From Antiquity to the Renaissance', 41, calls *De doctrina Christiana* the '*Magna Carta*' of medieval rhetoric and places it between the works of Victorinus and Rabanus Maurus in the adaption of classical rhetoric for Christian use.

<sup>311</sup> Surprisingly, this is found in her essay on Wycliffe. See Copeland, 'Wycliffite Ciceronian?', 191-192.

Christine Mohrmann is fairly typical of those who see *De doctrina Christiana* as ultimately a rejection of Cicero and the introduction of an entirely new Christian culture. She argues that Augustine's separation of eloquence from rhetoric was unheard of in the ancient world and she is particularly struck by his insistence that eloquence can be developed by reading good models better than through acquiring and applying a system of rhetorical rules.<sup>312</sup> Drawing heavily upon Marrou, she views Augustine's separation of eloquence from the 'rules and precepts of the rhetoricians' as an entirely novel development in rhetoric and ultimately a refutation of Cicero.<sup>313</sup> She concludes, 'For Augustine the Christian orator serves not the spoken word but truth, and this truth is in the first instance to be drawn from Scripture, which he must read over and over again and which must be his model and source of oratory'.<sup>314</sup>

Next, Adolf Primmer argues in an otherwise perceptive essay that Augustine agrees with Cicero's practice but not with his theory.<sup>315</sup> Much of Primmer's support for this dwells on Augustine's courteous correction and adjustment of Cicero's three styles of speech. But he also notes more fundamental differences between the two. For example, he contends that while Cicero claims that he is prouder of his achievement as a wordsmith than as a politician and counsel, and further argues that an orator must above all else inspire admiration so that the audience will prefer to listen to him rather than his opponent, Augustine argues that a preacher ought not to

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<sup>312</sup> Morhmann, 'St Augustine and the Eloquentia', 360. Morhmann (p. 361) does, however, note that Augustine was 'unable to free' himself entirely from Cicero since he borrowed his three types of speech. Although Primmer places Morhmann among those scholars who argue that Augustine 'baptised' Cicero, the thrust of her essay seems to indicate that, other than Augustine's reliance on the three kinds of speech, she detects more dissimilarity than similarity between the two authors. See Primmer, 'The Function of the *genera dicendi*', 69.

<sup>313</sup> Morhmann, 'St Augustine and the Eloquentia', 360-361. Morhmann in fact argues that Augustine's support for the three styles of speeches amounts to his 'only real borrowing from Cicero'.

<sup>314</sup> Morhmann, 'St Augustine and the Eloquentia', 362.

<sup>315</sup> Primmer, 'The Function of the *genera dicendi*', 72.



over-estimate his own role in what is really God's grace in converting the audience.<sup>316</sup> One of the most noteworthy differences between the two in Primmer's mind is that Cicero is intent on success in the law court while Augustine is intent on the preacher enabling the listener to receive God's wisdom.<sup>317</sup> Their different concerns shape their approach to rhetoric and the relative importance of styles of speech. So, whereas Cicero emphasises an appeal to emotion in order to sway the court, Augustine emphasises the wisdom that is taught.

Ernest Fortin, however, is perhaps the strongest critic of those who see little originality on Augustine's part. In his essay, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric', he argues that Augustine has profoundly transformed Cicero by asserting the priority of teaching over pleasing and persuading and by investing the word *docere* and *doctrina* with a meaning utterly foreign to Cicero.<sup>318</sup> Fortin contends that for Cicero the purpose of teaching is to educate a judge about the act of and motivation for a crime and to draw his attention to how various laws relate to the case.<sup>319</sup> The sole purpose of an orator's instruction is to make the judge aware of the facts in such a way as to persuade him to the orator's point of view. Instruction is therefore subordinated to persuasion in such a way as to make credibility more important than truth. Fortin notes that Cicero does not advocate actual falsehood or believe that truth is unimportant but only concedes pragmatically that the truth is very often evasive.<sup>320</sup> Fortin does recognise that there is another side to Cicero that is interested in the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric. He even mentions that Cicero's ideal orator is 'someone in whom the accomplishments of the statesman and

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<sup>316</sup> Primmer, 'The Function of the *genera dicendi*', 72, 77.

<sup>317</sup> Primmer, 'The Function of the *genera dicendi*', 75-76.

<sup>318</sup> Fortin, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric', 87.

<sup>319</sup> Fortin, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric', 88.

<sup>320</sup> Fortin, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric' 89. Cicero's Scepticism, of course, would have caused him to be even chancier of absolute claims to truth.

the philosopher coalesce and are brought to a higher level of perfection'.<sup>321</sup> But he fails adequately to pursue this line of investigation. Instead, he focuses on the difference between Cicero and Augustine's definition of *docere/doctrina*, arguing that for Augustine instruction is a preacher's highest duty and that such teaching is directed towards salvation rather than subordinated to persuasion.<sup>322</sup> Fortin concludes: 'In and of itself it ['saving truth'] has the power to transform the individual who apprehends it. It is one and the same act both theoretical and practical and thus transcends the dichotomy between thought and action or between instruction and persuasion on which the classical understanding of rhetoric was predicated'.<sup>323</sup>

Finally, like Primmer and Fortin, Michael Scanlon notes that for Cicero teaching is the least important duty of an orator because the purpose of rhetoric is the political and forensic search for justice.<sup>324</sup> He argues that Cicero believed that instruction ought to be left to the philosophers rather than orators whose primary concern is with plausibility rather than truth.<sup>325</sup> Augustine, on the other hand, emphasises the duty of instruction since he conceives of the preacher as merely a vehicle for transmitting truth.<sup>326</sup> Eloquence and persuasive force are to be found not in style but 'in their content'.<sup>327</sup>

Some of the criticism expressed above can be readily answered because they fail to do full justice to Cicero's own thought. For example, Mohrmann's contention about the uniqueness of Augustine's separation of eloquence from rhetoric fails to

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<sup>321</sup> Fortin, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric', 90. Fortin cites *Orator* 63 as evidence that Cicero believes that teaching is primarily the role of philosophers.

<sup>322</sup> Fortin, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric', 92.

<sup>323</sup> Fortin, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric', 93.

<sup>324</sup> Scanlon, 'Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric', 44.

<sup>325</sup> Scanlon, 'Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric', 44. Fortin, 'Augustine and the Problem of Ciceronian Rhetoric', 92, points out that Augustine 'deletes' all references to Cicero's idea of 'plausibility'.

<sup>326</sup> Scanlon, 'Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric', 44.

<sup>327</sup> Scanlon, 'Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric', 44.

account for Cicero's repeated questions about the usefulness of the rhetorical theory found in handbooks.<sup>328</sup> Likewise, her view of the novelty of Augustine's argument about the superiority of rhetorical models over handbooks is unsupported by actual classical rhetoric. Augustine's argument, in fact, is much more a reclamation not just of Cicero's rhetoric but also traditional Roman method of learning oratory, which was based on the conviction that imitation of senatorial orators was superior to instruction by lowly rhetors.<sup>329</sup> Augustine, of course, differs from the others in offering Paul, Cyprian and Ambrose rather than Virgil and Cicero himself as models, but otherwise his advice is strikingly conservative. In a sense, he is replacing the old senatorial model with a new Christian one; only now the senator is a saint.<sup>330</sup>

Similarly, the other critics exaggerate Augustine replacement of *probare* with *docere* in his reference to Cicero's *officia oratoris*. In the notes to her critical edition of Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana*, Sister Thérèse Sullivan points out that Cicero repeatedly uses *docere* in the place of *probare* in his own works.<sup>331</sup> So, Augustine's decision to use *docere* rather than *probare* does not in itself mean that he was intending to adjust Cicero's theory. But as Primmer, Fortin and Scanlon demonstrate, Augustine's ultimate concern—the expression of salvific truth—is very different from Cicero's more forensic interest. In this sense, *docere* does make more sense since Augustine's preacher is teaching truth rather than seeking to demonstrate a point. What these critics detect is the eclipse of a civic dimension in Augustine's approach to rhetoric and that absence obviously dramatically affects Augustine's

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<sup>328</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.145-146. See Wisse, 'De Oratore', 384 for a good discussion of this.

<sup>329</sup> See, for e.g., Cicero, *De orat.* 1.145 and 2.80-82.

<sup>330</sup> It is worth noting however that two of his models—Cyprian and Ambrose—were educated in Ciceronian rhetoric and that their works often exemplify Ciceronian style in Late Antiquity.

<sup>331</sup> Thérèse Sullivan, 'Latin Text, Translation, and Commentary of Book IV of *De Doctrina Christiana*' in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo: De Doctrina & the Search for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric*, Richard Leo Enos and Roger Thompson, et al. (eds.), Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 92.

representation of Cicero's *officia oratoris*. But their very emphasis of this point highlights that they have not discerned how Cicero's rhetoric had already been transformed by philosophical rhetors such as Victorinus before Augustine's own time. In their analysis of Augustine's attitude towards Cicero, they omit the passage of nearly four centuries and the development of rhetoric during that period. This failure to read *De doctrina Christiana* in its wider historical context may explain why historians of rhetoric like Kennedy, Murphy, Ward and Copeland do not detect the same stark difference as do some theologians. A much better approach to understanding what Augustine's is attempting to do in *De doctrina Christiana* is not to compare it directly to Cicero but indirectly through someone such as Victorinus who had by Augustine's time already adjusted Cicero's rhetoric to the expectations of Late Antiquity.

To put this argument another way, in his days of learning rhetoric and working as a professional rhetor, Augustine had two possible ways of using Cicero. The more popular way was to read Cicero's works primarily as models of style, paying less attention to his overall theory than to how he expressed himself, particularly in his collected orations. In other words, Augustine could have been like those Second Sophistics who admired Cicero's language but not his heart. The other way was that of people like Victorinus who in a sense read Cicero through the lens of *De inventione*. Of course, Victorinus esteemed Cicero's style, but his greater interest was for the heart of Cicero's theory (as he understood it): namely, to express wisdom through eloquence by uniting philosophy and rhetoric to assist the imprisoned soul to become mindful of, and return to, the divine. Broadly speaking, therefore, Augustine could have employed Cicero primarily as a model of style or as a means of clearly

expressing redemptive truth.<sup>332</sup> Before encountering *Hortensius*, he was being trained to refer to Cicero entirely for style. However, Augustine's response to *Hortensius*, his delving into Neoplatonism, but above all his conversion and new role as a Christian preacher prepared him marvellously for the latter approach. Before even setting pen to paper, therefore, Augustine would naturally have thought of Cicero's theory as a way of leading souls to God. Fundamentally then, all Augustine really needed to do was translate something like Victorinus's theory into a Christian context. And this is precisely what he does.

That he had Cicero's eloquent wisdom in mind from the start is suggested by the fact that although he did not complete the book until 427, from the outset he planned to address two topics: *inventio* and *elocutio*.<sup>333</sup> In his very important essay on the subject and structure of *De doctrina Christiana*, Gerald Press criticises those scholars who have looked only at Book Four to compare Augustine to Cicero<sup>334</sup> and notes that Augustine's division of rhetoric into *inventio* and *elocutio* marks a return to Aristotle and Cicero.<sup>335</sup> *De doctrina Christiana*, therefore, takes a conservative turn 'to a much older and more content-oriented rhetorical tradition'.<sup>336</sup> Another way of understanding Augustine's approach is to recognise that Books One to Three are concerned with wisdom and Book Four with eloquence.

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<sup>332</sup> Although the pagan Victorinus would not have thought of philosophical rhetoric in terms of redemption, his scheme, wherein the soul is 'freed' from bondage to the body so it may return to the divine is a kind of redemption.

<sup>333</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.1.1 Primmer, 'The Function of the *genera dicendi*', 68 points out the interesting coincidence that Augustine wrote Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana* after thirty-five years of preaching while Cicero wrote *Orator* after the same number of years of speaking in the senate and the forum.

<sup>334</sup> Gerald A. Press, 'The Subject and Structure', 118.

<sup>335</sup> Press, 'The Subject and Structure', 119. John Schaeffer, 'The Dialectic of Orality', 1134, argues that *De doctrina Christiana* represents Augustine attempt to return to the orally based rhetoric of Republic Rome.

<sup>336</sup> For a good discussion of the rhetorical foundation for Augustine's argument, see Press, 'The Subject and Structure', 120.

But this is also where Augustine makes his first adjustment. For Cicero, invention is primarily concerned with ‘the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one’s cause plausible’.<sup>337</sup> For Victorinus, invention is primarily about Neoplatonic wisdom and knowledge about the soul’s original nature. For Augustine, however, invention is concerned with two matters: things (*res*) to be discovered from Scripture, which are ultimately about the twofold commandment to love God and neighbour, and the signs (*signa*) by which those things (*res*) are understood.<sup>338</sup> In other words, Augustine transforms Cicero’s forensic knowledge and Victorinus’ Neoplatonic truths into a Christian theology that draws its wisdom entirely from Scripture.<sup>339</sup>

For both Victorinus and Augustine, however, the discernment of truth through *inventio* places a new emphasis on teaching rather than on demonstration. A wisdom that provides salvific truth (be that a Neoplatonic *reditus* or a Christian doctrine) is one that must be taught rather than proven. The emphasis, as noted by Scanlon, is no longer on plausibility of a forensic narrative but on expressing transformative truths. But this is not as far removed from Cicero as is frequently believed. Behind all of Cicero’s forensic focus stands his enormously influential image of the proto-orator who attracts savage humanity through his words and teaches them higher truths with his wisdom. Cicero himself may not have returned often to this image in his later works, but that image remained powerful precisely because *De inventione* became his most studied and influential work. The proto-orator therefore arguably loomed larger in late antique rhetorical theory (at least of those philosophical rhetors like

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<sup>337</sup> Cicero. *De inv.* 1.7.9.

<sup>338</sup> See Press, ‘The Subject and Structure’, 114.

<sup>339</sup> Copeland, *Rhetoric*, 154 argues that this amounts to a ‘hermeneutical action’ whereby *inventio* is directed towards the ‘exegetical act’ itself. Similarly, Kathy Eden, ‘The Rhetorical Tradition’, 47-53 demonstrates how Augustine turns the old distinction between *voluntus* and *scriptum* towards a process of distinguishing God’s intention through a proper reading of Scripture.

Victorinus) than Cicero's more developed portrayal of orators in either *De oratore* or *Orator*.

Gerald Press argues that the result of Augustine's transformation of *inventio* is that rhetoric takes on an important religious role.<sup>340</sup> This is the same feature of *De doctrina Christiana* noted by Primmer, Fortin and Scanlon. But this development was really nothing new, as Victorinus' commentary and Capella's allegory demonstrate. All of philosophical rhetoric had become religious insofar as it was concerned with personal 'salvation' from the bondage of earthly existence (be that through a Neoplatonic *reditus* or Christian teaching); the focus was not on the forum but on the divine.<sup>341</sup> With the decline of law courts and councils in Late Antiquity, classical rhetoric was at least partly either directed towards entertainment or 'burdened with a profoundly spiritual mission, nothing less than the ethical formation and reform of individuals and societies'.<sup>342</sup> Augustine is obviously attempting to provide the latter, though now grounded in a wisdom manifested through Scripture.

Since the reception of wisdom is essential for 'ethical formation', the expression of that wisdom must be directed towards facilitating that reception. In discussing *elocutio*, Augustine begins from precisely the same point as Cicero in *De inventione*: the use of rhetoric to give 'conviction to both truth and falsehood'.<sup>343</sup> Behind this statement lurks Cicero's argument that eloquence apart from wisdom is never helpful and often harmful. If, as Augustine fears, Christian preachers avoid rhetoric because it is profane, then they will unnecessarily arm those who lead people into falsehood:

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<sup>340</sup> Press, 'The Subject and Structure', 121.

<sup>341</sup> Leff, 'Saint Augustine and Martianus Capella', 236.

<sup>342</sup> Gehl, 'Latin orthopraxes', 1.

<sup>343</sup> *doc. chr.* 2.3.

...who could dare to maintain that truth, which depends on us for its defence, should stand unarmed in the fight against falsehood? This would mean that those who are trying to give conviction to their falsehoods would know how to use an introduction to make their listeners favourable, interested, and receptive, while we would not; that they would expound falsehoods in descriptions that are succinct, lucid, and convincing, while we would expound truth in such a way as to bore our listeners, cloud their understanding, and stifle their desire to believe...<sup>344</sup>

Augustine's description here of eloquence making people 'favourable, interested and receptive' or employing language that is 'succinct, lucid, and convincing' is entirely dependent on Cicero. In a sense, Augustine is here asking why some would allow false teachers to use effective Ciceronian techniques but not Christian preachers? The entire passage brings to mind the introduction to *De inventione* with a proto-orator set against false orators, both employing eloquence but the former doing so to express wisdom and the latter falsehood. In effect, Augustine is arguing against those who would disarm Cicero's sage, making him a man of wisdom unable to express that wisdom in a compelling fashion.

The opening passage of Book Four serves also to place eloquence in its rightful place. Opposed to those who stress style over substance, Augustine makes clear that eloquence must be entirely in service to wisdom. What makes eloquence good or bad is not a matter of stylistic flourish but whether it expresses truth or falsehood. Augustine's eloquence is, therefore, similar to that of Victorinus: it is directed towards compelling, gathering, and informing others so as to lead them towards perfection.<sup>345</sup> Any eloquence that fails to accomplish this is of little value, no matter how pleasing it may be. Eloquence is therefore entirely subordinate to wisdom.

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<sup>344</sup> *doc. chr. 2.3.*

<sup>345</sup> Victorinus, *In Cic. Rhet.* 1.2, 176-191.



But that does not make eloquence inconsequential. Augustine believes that eloquence remains essential because it affords ‘delight’. And that delight must be conveyed, either through the eloquence of the preacher or, failing that, through the eloquence of Scripture itself. Augustine says of an inarticulate preacher: ‘For by his proofs he delights, even though he cannot delight by his bare statements’.<sup>346</sup> Better still, however, is someone who wishes to ‘speak eloquently as well as wisely’ as this will certainly be more ‘beneficial’ for the edification of the recipient.<sup>347</sup> It is at this point that Augustine first advocates imitating ‘eloquent speakers’ for learning how to speak sweetly, though he allows for the study of rhetoric by ‘wise speakers as well as eloquent ones’.<sup>348</sup> The reason why eloquence is important for Augustine is precisely for the same reason that it is important for philosophical rhetors such as Victorinus: it facilitates the healing of souls. Augustine explains:

Eloquent speakers give pleasure, wise ones salvation (*Quo enim eloquenter dicunt, suaviter, qui sapienter, salubriter audiuntur*)....We often have to take bitter medicines, and we must always avoid sweet things that are dangerous: but what better than sweet things that give health, or medicines that are sweet? The more we are attracted by sweetness, the easier it is for medicine to do its healing work. So there are men of the church who have interpreted God’s eloquent utterances (*diuina eloquia*), not only with wisdom but with eloquence as well...<sup>349</sup>

Except perhaps for the reference to ‘God’s eloquent utterances’, this whole passage could be approved by any late antique philosophical rhetor. What else is Victorinus’s version of Cicero’s ideal orator but someone whose sweet words make the bitter taste of medicine more palatable? In both Cicero and Victorinus, in fact, the sweetness of eloquence not only attracts the multitudes but keeps them fixed on the

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<sup>346</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.5.8 (CCL 132.121): ‘*Probando enim delectat qui minus potest delectare dicendo*’.

<sup>347</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.5.8.

<sup>348</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.5.8.

<sup>349</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.5.8.

orator even when they initially are repulsed by the wisdom he offers. This is precisely the role of eloquence for Augustine.

This becomes even clearer in Augustine's most explicit invocation of Cicero: 'It has been said by a man of eloquence, and quite rightly, that the eloquent should speak in such a way as to instruct, delight, and move their listeners'.<sup>350</sup> He explains that what is most essential is instruction as it relates directly to the wisdom discovered in Scripture whereas delight and persuasion are matters of style. He continues,

A hearer must be delighted so that he can be gripped and made to listen, and moved so that he can be impelled to action. Your hearer is delighted if you speak agreeably, and moved if he values what your promise, fears what you threaten, hates what you condemn, embraces what you commend, and rues the thing which you insist he must regret, and if he rejoices in what you set forth in your preaching as something joyful, pities those whom by your words you present to his mind's eye as miserable, and shuns those whom with terrifying language you urge him to avoid.<sup>351</sup>

Perhaps what is most remarkable about this passage is how much in harmony it is with Cicero's own thinking. Just as in Cicero, the listeners are entirely passive, their attention devoted to the delightful speaker and their will given wholly over to his will. The exercise in eloquence is, of course, applied to the expression of salvific wisdom, but the role of the preacher remains an impressive one. It is as though the combination of wise instruction, delight, and emotional appeal cast an overpowering spell on the audience. Ultimately, eloquence makes the bitter medicine of wisdom not just sweeter but irresistible.

Augustine, however, qualifies his appeal to Cicero by suggesting that instruction or instruction and delight can be effective without an overt appeal to the

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<sup>350</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.12.27 (CCL 132.135): '*Dixit ergo quidam eloquens. et uerum dixit, ita dicere debere eloquentem, ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat...*'

<sup>351</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.12.28. Augustine reiterates this point in *doc. chr.* 4.13.29.

emotions. If the listener is ‘persuaded’ (*suadetur*) or hands over his or her will to the expressed wisdom then the task has been accomplished.<sup>352</sup> On the other hand, if the speaker instructs and delights but fails to win assent, then the listener must still be ‘conquered’ through persuasion. Interestingly, Augustine takes a subtly different approach to delight. He argues that it is not always essential for the preacher to delight the listeners, which suggests that *delectatio*—Cicero’s second duty of an orator—is unimportant. But this is not, in fact, the case. Delight is actually essential, but that delight may (indeed, ought) to arise from the wisdom itself more than through the eloquence of the speaker:

Nor is giving delight a matter of necessity, since when truths are being demonstrated by a speaker—this relates to the task of instruction—it is not the aim of the eloquence or the intention of the speaker that the truths or the eloquence should in themselves produce delight; but the truths themselves, as they are revealed, do produce delight by virtue of being true.<sup>353</sup>

In this case, the role of the preacher is merely to enable the listener to become aware of wisdom’s delight through his exposition of that wisdom. That wisdom itself can be delightful is an important insight that, as will be shown in the second part of this paper, goes right to the heart of Augustine’s rhetorical theology.

Very little of Augustine’s proposal would have been foreign to a philosophical rhetor within the Ciceronian tradition. The controlling conviction in Augustine’s discussion of eloquence is the need to express wisdom for the well-being of the listeners. As with Victorinus, the role of eloquence is to compel the attention of those ignorant of wisdom and to make that wisdom pleasant and desirable. Like both Cicero and Victorinus, the listeners themselves are passive once eloquence has laid hold of their wills. In this respect, the goal of any kind of rhetoric, however much it

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<sup>352</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.13.29 (CCL 132.136).

<sup>353</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.12.28.

may fail to conform to Cicero's ideal, is a conquest of the will. Only by overwhelming the will and making it both receptive and obedient to wisdom can the soul be directed towards God.<sup>354</sup>

Where Augustine diverges from Cicero and Victorinus, however, is in his conception of the orator himself. Augustine writes:

He should be in no doubt that any ability he has and however much he has derives more from his devotion to prayer than his dedication to oratory; and so, by praying for himself and for those he is about to address, he must become a man of prayer before becoming a man of words (*orator antequam dictator*). As the hour of his address approaches, before he opens his thrusting lips he should lift his thirsting soul to God so that he may utter what he has drunk and pour out what has filled him....So let the person who wishes both to know and to teach learn everything that he needs to teach, and acquire the skills in speaking appropriate to a Christian orator; but nearer the time of his actual address let him consider that there is more suitable advice for a holy mind in what the Lord says: 'Do not worry about what to say or how to say it; for you will be given word to speak when the time comes. For it is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father who speaks within you. If the Holy Spirit speaks in those who are delivered to their persecutors for Christ's sake, why should he not also speak in those who deliver Christ to their pupils?'<sup>355</sup>

Augustine plays on words here, making *orator* one who prays instead of one who speaks (*dictor*), to make an astonishing point about oratory. After all that he has said about the importance of the preacher discovering wisdom and expressing it eloquently, he now states that the preacher is actually a vehicle of God's own expression of wisdom and eloquence. It is not so much the orator's study of wisdom or his use of style (as important as both activities are) as the Holy Spirit's inspiration that makes a preacher capable of uttering eloquent wisdom. God provides the words and the expression by speaking within and through the preacher.

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<sup>354</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.17.34.

<sup>355</sup> *doc. chr.* 4.15.32 (CCL 132.138-139).

Ultimately, this notion of an inspired preacher is where Augustine departs from classical rhetoric. Although John Schaeffer argues that this amounts to Augustine's replacement of the classical muse with the Holy Spirit, Augustine's claim actually delves more deeply than Schaeffer indicates.<sup>356</sup> Augustine initially hints at the reason when he states that truth itself can delight without any need of help from eloquence. This suggests that the orator must not unnecessarily inject his own feeble stabs at eloquence if they distract from the more perfect delight found in truth itself. Better that he prays to God so that he can reveal the truth's own delight rather than make it sweeter with his own fabricated eloquence. In the end, Augustine takes philosophical rhetoric farther than ever imagined by either Cicero or Victorinus: ultimately, perfect wisdom and eloquence are to be found not in the person of an orator—however wise and eloquent he may be—but in the only conceivable perfect orator: God himself. To understand this point, we must now turn to Augustine's theology.

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<sup>356</sup> Schaeffer, 'The Dialectic of Orality and Literacy', 1139.

## 4

# Participation

At first glance, Augustine's concept of participation would seem to have little to do with his theological use of rhetoric or with delight. Yet, only by grasping his understanding of both created reality and redemption can one avoid misconstruing how rhetoric and delight operate within his theological framework. Rhetoric actually lies at the heart of Augustine's concept of participation and existence. Indeed, God resembles nothing so much as Cicero's ideal orator, but unlike Cicero's orator, God does not speak to the other, an audience in no way connected to or dependent upon the speaker. Rather, God delivers his oratory to a world whose goodness derives from and participates in his own divine goodness. Indeed, that world is itself 'uttered' and so its relation to God's oratory is both more penetrating and determinative than anything imagined by Cicero. God's oratory produces and forms human existence, calls all people towards salvation, and establishes their eternal beatitude. Conversely, the failure to heed his eloquence, to turn back towards God both at the moment of creation and in human redemption, results in ruin and misery. But conceiving of a divine oratory within a participative world does not really require Augustine to depart from Cicero's rhetorical scheme. God the Ideal Orator may operate within an infinitely larger theatre and the stakes of the contest may transcend anything Cicero ever envisioned, but these serve primarily to expand and transform Cicero's scheme; wisdom and eloquence are as much a part of God's identity as Cicero's ideal orator.

An appreciation for how Augustine's scheme of participatory existence and redemption works requires a close reading of the appropriate texts. Studies that specifically address the topic of participation, however, have generally focused too myopically on two words: *participo* and *deificari*.<sup>357</sup> Ever the rhetor, Augustine was entirely capable of explaining his thought without limiting himself to a couple of words. In fact, his approach was far deeper than such a cursory examination reveals; what is required is a reading that takes into account both context and development. In the following discussion, therefore, I will seek both to explain the role of participation within particular texts and to show Augustine's development of participation in his later works.

## Participatory Existence

One of the earliest discussions by Augustine of participatory existence comes in chapter four of his anti-Manichaean text, *De moribus Manichaeorum* (388), where he attempts to prove the goodness of all creation against Manichaean dualism. He begins his treatise by suggesting that supreme goodness corresponds to supreme existence, which is immutable, incorruptible, and outside the bounds of time. He reminds the reader that the very word *esse* signifies something that is immutable and self-contained—he will develop this further in later writings—and thus whatever is contrary to God is not so much evil as non-existent.<sup>358</sup> This corresponds with the

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<sup>357</sup> For example, see Gerald Bonner, 'Augustine's Conception of Deification', *Journal of Theological Studies* 37:2 (1986) 369-386; David Vincent Meconi, 'St. Augustine's Early Theory of Participation', *Augustinian Studies* (1996) 81-98; David Vincent Meconi, S.J., 'The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St Augustine's *Confessions*', *Augustinian Studies* 29:2 (1998) 61-75; and David Vincent Meconi, S.J., 'Becoming Gods by Becoming God's: Augustine's Mystagogy of Identification', *Augustinian Studies* 39:1 (2008) 61-74.

<sup>358</sup> Augustine's first discussion of *esse* and *non esse* is found in *De beata vita* 2.8. For a helpful discussion of that text, see Emilie Zum Brunn, *Le dilemme de l'être et du néant chez Saint Augustin: des premiers dialogues aux 'Confessions'*, (Amsterdam : B.R. Grüner, 1984) 19-24.

classic Neoplatonic spectrum with God as Supreme Being at one end and nothingness at the other, and a particularly effective apologetic against Manichaeism.

What then of creation itself? In chapter four, Augustine introduces the idea of participation to explain how creation both exists and depends wholly on God:

There is one good in itself and in the highest sense, that is, by its own nature and essence and not by participation in some other good. And there is another good that is good by participation, deriving its good from the supreme good which, however, continues to be itself and loses nothing. This good, as we have said before, is a creature to whom harm can come through defect, but God is not the author of such defect, since He is the author of existence and, as I say, of being.<sup>359</sup>

This concept of God as the *summum bonum* endowing creation with goodness through participation results in a paradoxical understanding of the Creator's relationship with creation. On the one hand, since only God is goodness itself (in the classical statement, God is what he has) he is wholly other than his creation; on the other hand, since creation obtains its goodness and existence through its continuous participation in God (who loses nothing in the bestowal) he must also be immanent.<sup>360</sup> In short, creation's goodness and existence depend on a gracious participation in God's transcendent being. And since existence depends on a fruitful participation in God, Augustine defines 'hurt' as a 'falling away' (*defectum*) from God. This sets the stage for Augustine's take on the nature of evil: it is nothing more than the privation of goodness, a growing distance between the creature and its Creator.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> *mor.* 2.4.6 (CSEL 90.92).

<sup>360</sup> Meconi, 'St. Augustine's Early Theory of Participation', 93.

<sup>361</sup> See, for example, *ord.* 2.4.11 where Augustine argues that even the wicked have a place in God's order, though because they have tended away from God towards nothingness they inhabit an inferior place in that order to those who have turned towards God. Since God continues to possess them (even though they do not possess God), they continue to exist. See Zum Brunn, *Le dilemme de l'être*, 26 for a discussion of this passage.



The concept of participatory existence and goodness next appears in *De vera religione* (391) where Augustine explains the content of the Catholic faith. He begins with participation, this time using ‘life’ to indicate existence: ‘There is no life which is not of God, for God is supreme life and the fount of life’.<sup>362</sup> This statement is followed by an argument very similar to that found in *De moribus Manichaeorum*: no life is evil except insofar as it ‘inclines towards death’ (*vergit ad mortem*).<sup>363</sup> Augustine argues that death is ‘wickedness’ (*nequitia*), which derives its name from nothingness (*ne ququam*).<sup>364</sup> He continues: ‘A life, therefore, which by voluntary defect falls away from him who made it, whose essence it enjoyed, and, contrary to the law of God, seeks to enjoy bodily objects which God made to be inferior to it, tends to nothingness’ (*vergit ad nihilum*).<sup>365</sup> This is simply a rephrasing of the argument of *De moribus Manichaeorum*: existence or life or goodness comes through participation in God who is Supreme Being, Life, and Goodness. Evil or wickedness is a falling away from God, an inclination towards nothingness. In agreement with Plotinus, therefore, Augustine conceives of created existence as unstable and mutable. Only God is immutable. The constant change endured by creatures can only be a growth towards fullness of being through a deeper participation with God or a collapse into oblivion by falling away from him.

A few lines later Augustine develops his scheme by stating that creatures also have their form through God ‘who is the uncreated and most perfect form’.<sup>366</sup> Both body and spirit are therefore good. Corporeal bodies draw their existence and form by participating in the divine form (*species*), a thought which at this point he leaves

<sup>362</sup> *ver. rel.* 11.21 (CCL 32.200): ‘*Nulla uita est, quae non sit ex deo, quia deus utique summa uita est et ipse fons uitae...*’

<sup>363</sup> *ver. rel.* 11.21 (CCL 32.200).

<sup>364</sup> *ver. rel.* 11.21 (CCL 32.200).

<sup>365</sup> *ver. rel.* 11.21 (CCL 32.200).

<sup>366</sup> *ver. rel.* 11.21 (CCL 32.200): ‘*...et qui forma est infabricata, atque omnium formosissima.*’

unexplained except to state that every form derives from God.<sup>367</sup> In order to understand what lies behind Augustine's contention about form, one must turn to two chapters of his *De diversis quaestionibus* 83: q. 23, 'On the Father and the Son' and q. 46, 'On the Ideas', both written around 391. In the first, Augustine further develops the argument laid out in the two earlier works by considering various creaturely characteristics enjoyed through participation: 'Everything chaste is chaste by chastity, and everything eternal is eternal by eternity, and everything beautiful, beautiful by beauty, and everything good, good by goodness'.<sup>368</sup> He continues in a similar vein to consider wisdom and likeness. The underlying assumption is greatly coloured by Platonism with each property representing an Idea, though Augustine finds their source in God.<sup>369</sup> Thus, God is himself chastity, wisdom, beauty, and goodness. It is by participating in these properties that a creature can be said to be chaste, wise, beautiful and good.

In q. 46 Augustine elaborates his approach to the Platonic Ideas. While he admits that Plato, a pagan philosopher, was the first to employ the term *ideas*, he contends that the philosopher did not himself invent the concept as it can (in his view) be found among the wisdom of 'various people'.<sup>370</sup> Next, after displaying his rhetorical training by distinguishing between the literal translation of Plato's Greek terms (*formae* or *species*) and the popular usage of the term 'reasons' (*rationes*),<sup>371</sup> he

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<sup>367</sup> *ver. rel.* 11.21 (CCL 32.201).

<sup>368</sup> *diu qu.* 83 23.

<sup>369</sup> For a good discussion of Plato's theory of Forms, see T. H. Irwin, 'The Theory of Forms', in Gail Fine (ed.), *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 143-170. Plato himself seems unclear whether or not the Forms were created by a Demiurge. Although almost all of his discussions of the Forms state that they have existed eternally, he seems to suggest their creation by a Demiurge in the *Republic*. For an introduction to this subject, see David Melling, *Understanding Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 150-157.

<sup>370</sup> *diu qu.* 83 46.1.

<sup>371</sup> *diu qu.* 83 46.2 (PL 40.30). While Augustine does not himself note this, the role of Christ as the Word (*logos*) through whom creation comes into existence would naturally make the

defines the 'ideas' as 'fixed and unchangeable... not themselves formed, and being thus eternal and existing always in the same state, are contained in the Divine Intelligence'. All creation receives its form 'in accord with these ideas'. In other words, only by participating in the perfect Form or Idea do objects obtain form. Such a definition is, of course, entirely consonant with Platonic thought.<sup>372</sup> But Augustine does make a distinction. Whereas in Plato, the Ideas are themselves eternal, Augustine is careful to bind the 'reasons' to God himself:

As for these reasons, they must be thought to exist nowhere but in the very mind of the Creator. For it would be sacrilegious to suppose that he was looking at something placed outside himself when he created in accord with what he did create. But if these reasons of all things to be created or [already] created are contained in the Divine Mind, and if there can be in the Divine Mind nothing except what is eternal and unchangeable, and if these original and principal reasons are what Plato terms ideas, then not only are they ideas, but they are themselves true because they are eternal because they remain ever the same and unchangeable. It is by participation in these that whatever is exists in whatever manner it does exist.<sup>373</sup>

Thus, in q. 46 Augustine introduces a further development in his understanding of participatory existence: creatures derive their being (*esse*) by participating in God's Being and their form (*forma, species, or ratio*) by participating in the Ideas found in the Divine Mind.<sup>374</sup>

What underlies this approach to existence is Augustine's complex conception of the divine act of creation. According to Marie-Anne Vannier, Augustine explained the relationship between Creator and creation by reinterpreting the scheme of

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connection between *formae* and *logoi* more apparent than for a non-Christian Neoplatonist. See the next section for a discussion of Christ's role in Augustine's concept of participation.

<sup>372</sup> See, for example, Plato, *Phaedo* 78c10-e4.

<sup>373</sup> *diu qu.* 83 q. 46.2.

<sup>374</sup> See Bonner, 'Augustine's Conception of Deification', 373. The earliest reference to both creatures' creation and formation through God is *ver. rel.* 7.13: 'When this Trinity is known as far as it can be in this life, it is perceived without the slightest doubt that every creature, intellectual, animal, and corporeal, derives such existence as it has from that same creative Trinity, has its own form, and is subject to the most perfect order'.

*conversio-formatio* found in Plotinus' *Enneads*.<sup>375</sup> Briefly, Plotinus conceived of all things emanating from the eternal and immutable first principle or the One. Those things that emanate from the One—the Divine Intellect followed by intellect followed by soul followed by matter—emerge from the perfectly generous productivity of the One.<sup>376</sup> The contemplative conversion of the lower towards the higher level forms each level of being: thus, the Divine Intellect turns towards (*conversio*) the One, the intellect towards the Divine Intellect, and so forth. Dominic O'Meara sums this up succinctly: 'As intellect exists as a contemplation of the One, and as soul exists as a contemplation of intellect, so is nature a contemplation of soul whose consequence, a kind of by-product, is the world'.<sup>377</sup> The lowest form of this contemplative conversion is 'nature', defined as the power of the soul to organise matter.<sup>378</sup> Matter itself exists on the brink of nothingness. By this means, everything at its own level of existence emanates from and participates in the first principle.

Although Augustine retained Plotinus' general pattern of formation by conversion to describe the manner in which creatures participate in God, his interpretation of Genesis 1-2 compelled him to introduce into that pattern the act of creation *ex nihilo* that results in a relationship between a deliberate Creator and his creatures.<sup>379</sup> According to Vannier, this concept of *creation-relation* became Augustine's substitute for the Neoplatonic idea of reintegration into the first principle.<sup>380</sup> In other words, whereas within Neoplatonism, the generative 'First

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<sup>375</sup> Marie-Anne Vannier, '*Creatio*', '*Conversio*', '*Formatio*', *chez s. Augustin*, (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1991), 73.

<sup>376</sup> Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.4.1; V.4.2.27-33; V.1.6.28-35.

<sup>377</sup> Dominic J. O'Meara, *Plotinus, An Introduction to the Enneads*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75.

<sup>378</sup> O'Meara, *Plotinus*, 75.

<sup>379</sup> Vannier, '*Creatio*', '*Conversio*', '*Formatio*', 73.

<sup>380</sup> Vannier, '*Creatio*', '*Conversio*', '*Formatio*', 73. Interestingly, in discussing a substitute for the more commonly used 'emanation', O'Meara, *Plotinus*, 61, immediately rules out the word

Principle' is ignorant of that which emanates from it, the Biblical account of creation portrays a God intimately involved in a world he freely, deliberately and lovingly created. The Christian doctrine of creation is therefore such a radical departure from Neoplatonism that it effectively overthrows the Neoplatonic scheme. Augustine replaces this with his own scheme by which the created order emerges through a divine creation (*creatio*), conversion (*conversio*) and formation (*formatio*). As will be shown, God's utterance is integral to each stage of Augustine concept, thus providing the act of creation with a rhetorical character.

### ***Creatio and Formatio***

Despite the divergence between Christian and Neoplatonic notions of existence, Augustine conceived of creation in a manner that did not entirely part company with Platonism. Instead of Plato's pre-existent chaotic material from which God fashions everything or Plotinus' Divine Intelligence (*Nous*) productively overflowing the One into self-reflective existence, Augustine interpreted Genesis as speaking of a two-staged *creatio ex nihilo*. God begins by creating *ex nihilo* a great formless mass not unlike Plato's initial chaotic material (*hyle*): the heavens and the earth mentioned in the first two verses of Genesis. This notion came to Augustine very early; at the very beginning of his *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos* (388-389) he writes: 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth; now the very earth which God made was invisible and formless'.<sup>381</sup> While this actually states no more than do the first two verses of Genesis, Augustine found the idea of the formless world intriguing: 'So then the first thing to be made was basic material, unsorted and

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'creation' as it would introduce 'with it Christian ideas not relevant to Plotinus'. In the end, O'Meara opts for the term 'derivation'. Vannier also states (p. 3) that 'creation' is an idea entirely absent from Greek thought.

<sup>381</sup> *Gn. adu. man.* 1.3.5.

unformed, out of which all the things would be made which have been sorted out and formed; I think the Greeks call it *chaos*'.<sup>382</sup> He describes the nature of this formlessness in a little more detail in *De vera religione*:

‘Therefore, if the world was made out of some unformed matter (*materia*), the matter was made out of absolutely nothing. If it was as yet unformed, still it was at least capable of receiving form. By God’s goodness it is “formable”. Even the capacity for form is good’.<sup>383</sup>

In his later writings, Augustine retained his conviction that creation involved a two-staged process (conceptual stages, that is, rather than temporal).

Although Augustine develops this line of thought only slightly in *De Genesi ad litteram, imperfectus liber*,<sup>384</sup> he devotes much of Book 12 of the *Confessiones* to expounding his ‘provisional understanding’<sup>385</sup> of creation and the nature of ordered reality. In 12.2.2, one again encounters Augustine’s conviction that God began the work of creation by fashioning a formless material from which to make heaven and earth.<sup>386</sup> Next, he recounts his difficult struggle with the idea of formlessness, admitting that he could not picture what a ‘nothing something’ could be like.<sup>387</sup> But he does know that the formless material must have had the capacity to receive form, and that since this capacity could not be self-generative, it had to have come from

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<sup>382</sup> *Gn. adu. man.* 1.5.9.

<sup>383</sup> *ver. rel.* 18.36. ‘Matter’ is perhaps not the best translation here as it suggests only material creation. The rest of the passage makes clear that Augustine has in mind here anything that ‘comes from’ God and has form: i.e., both spiritual and material creation. Later theologians call Augustine’s formless material ‘potential existence’. For example, see Bonaventure, *II Sent.* d. 12, a. 1, q. 3 and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Pt. 1, q. 66, a. 1.

<sup>384</sup> *Gn. litt. imp.* 4.11. All he really adds is the statement that the formless material had three qualities: that it was created to be transformed into the heaven and the earth, that it was initially formless, and that it was entirely subject to the craftsman-God. On this last point, one sees perhaps the influence of Plato’s *Timaeus*, in which God is conceived as a craftsman who works upon the co-eternal primordial material. Plotinus himself found this metaphor of God as a craftsman distasteful and went to great lengths to avoid this conclusion by developing his idea of the One’s ‘generous productivity’. See O’Meara, *Plotinus*, 71-72.

<sup>385</sup> *conf.* 12.13.16.

<sup>386</sup> *conf.* 12.2.4.

<sup>387</sup> *conf.* 12.6.6.

God. Since God is the source of *formatio*, proximity to him determines the form and beauty of the creature: ‘Out of nothing you made heaven and earth, two entities, one close to you, the other close to being nothing; the one to which only you are superior, the other to which what is inferior is nothingness’.<sup>388</sup>

Augustine is clear however that this initial, formless material appeared through God’s utterance. He expresses this idea most clearly in *Confessiones* 11 where he discusses how the eternal Word is spoken by God. At once he discounts that God’s voice in the creation account could be same as it was at Jesus’ Transfiguration, for there ‘the syllables sounded and have passed away, the second after the first, the third after the second, and so on in order until, after all the others, the last one came, and after that the last silence followed’.<sup>389</sup> God’s Word must be eternal and unchanging. Drawing on John 1.1., he concludes: ‘The word is spoken eternally, and by it all things are uttered eternally. It is not the case that what was being said comes to an end, and something else is then said, so that everything is uttered in a succession with a conclusion, but everything is said in the simultaneity of eternity’.<sup>390</sup> And so, all of creation is spoken eternally by God as Augustine makes clear: ‘You do not cause it to exist other than by speaking’.<sup>391</sup> That which is uttered, exists contingently by participating in God’s own eternal utterance: the Word. The Word also determines both the beginning and the end of a creature. Augustine is

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<sup>388</sup> *conf.* 12.7.7. See also *Conf.* 12.8.8.

<sup>389</sup> *conf.* 11.6.8.

<sup>390</sup> *conf.* 11.7.9 (CCL 27.199): ‘...*et eo sempiternae dicuntur omnia: neque enim finitur quod dicebatur, et dicitur aliud ut possint dici omnia; sed simul ac sempiternae omnia. Alioquin jam tempus et mutatio, et non vera aeternitas, nec vera immortalitas*’.

<sup>391</sup> *conf.* 11.7.9 (CCL 27.199): ‘...*et fit quidquid dicitur ut fiat; nec aliter, quam dicendo, facis: nec tamen et simul et sempiternae fiunt omnia quae dicendo facis*’.

For further discussion see Raymond D. DiLorenzo, “Divine Eloquence and the Spiritual World of the Praedicator”: Book XIII of St. Augustine’s *Confessiones*, *Augustinian Studies* 16 (1984), 75-88. DiLorenzo argues that in Book 13 of the *Confessiones*, Augustine uses an allegorical interpretation of the seven days of creation to convey rhetorically the ‘luminous eloquence’ that speaks and converts all things into formed existence.

forced to this conclusion by the logic of conceiving of an unchanging and eternal Word uttering that which is changeable and mortal. He writes: ‘...everything which begins to be and ceases to be begins and ends its existence at that moment when, in the eternal reason where nothing begins or ends, it is known that it is right for it to begin and end. The reason is your Word...’<sup>392</sup>

In all the above accounts Augustine presents a developed vision of created existence beginning with God’s creation of a formless material out of which heaven and earth and all that each contains were formed. Since even the formless material was good, Augustine suggests that it necessarily contained the *capacity* for form, and by *Confessiones* 12, he has articulated that the source for the *formatio* must be the Trinity. Yet, as Vannier contends, he seems not to have mastered the mechanics of precisely how formed existence emerged from the formless primordial material.<sup>393</sup> Drawing again from the Divine *fiat* in the Genesis account, here and there he uses the verb ‘call’ (*vocatus*) to describe this later formation.<sup>394</sup> But the creaturely response—the *conversio*—is only implied; it explicitly emerges in Augustine’s thought in his final commentary on Genesis: *De Genesi ad litteram*.

For the moment, however, one should simply note that a vision of creation as uttered cannot but add deeper dimension to Augustine’s rhetorical theology. If one conceives of redemption in terms of a rhetorical contest between God and the devil, then the idea that those whose souls are being contested are themselves the embodied utterance of the eternal Word means that the outcome of the contest will decide the life, felicity, and very nature of those souls. To respond to God’s oratory is to move towards a deeper participation in him and a fuller life because that same voice has

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<sup>392</sup> *conf.* 11.8.10.

<sup>393</sup> Vannier, ‘*Creatio*’, ‘*Conversio*’, *Formatio*’, 73. Vannier makes the point that in *Gn. adv. man.*, Augustine has yet to ‘master’ his scheme without really developing her assertion.

<sup>394</sup> See, for e.g., *Gn. adv. man.* 1.9.15.



determined humankind's own existence. Another way to look at this is as God's uttered creatures tending, as words do, towards nothingness. For those words to abide, they must be called from their inclination towards nothingness back towards God himself. And it is this very logic that leads Augustine to conceive of not just a redemptive recalling (which we will examine shortly) but also an initial calling back from the verge of oblivion that is part of the creative act itself: *conversio*.

### ***Conversio***

In Plotinus's scheme of emanation each level of being is actualised when it turns back (*conversio*) towards the One, or more immediately the next higher being, and in that contemplation achieves self-realisation. This is the manner in which each level of existence participates, literally partakes of, the higher, and such participation is necessary for the lower order's existence. Although Augustine began with *creatio ex nihilo*, an idea utterly foreign to Plotinus, he was committed to realising that Biblical notion within a wider Neoplatonic framework. The missing link in his thought is *conversio*, the contemplative turn that results in formation.

Even in Augustine's earliest commentaries on Genesis the elements are all present. Although he begins with creation, the end result is formation out of formlessness and the cause for this is the *fiat lux* or God's creative call. In fact, it is strange that, except for in *Conf.* 13.3.4, Augustine never explicitly states that *formatio* resulted from the formless material's response to God's call and return to him. Yet, in *Confessiones* 13 the scheme appears fully developed, suggesting that by that time Augustine had thought through the ramifications of his approach to *creatio ex nihilo*

and *formatio*.<sup>395</sup> In fact, Augustine's language is deeply informed by Plotinus: 'But just as it [formless creation] had no claim on you to be the sort of life which could be illuminated, so also now that it existed, it had no claim to receive light. Its formlessness could not be pleasing (*placere*) to you unless it were made light not by merely existing but by contemplating the source of light and adhering (*cohaerendo*) to it'.<sup>396</sup> In order for this reflective and quickening contemplation to occur, creation has to be turned back to a changeless God. The word Augustine uses to describe this process is *conversa*.

*Conversio* comes almost immediately in *De Genesi ad litteram*: 'it is by so turning (*conversione*), you see, that it [the formless material] is formed and perfected, while if it does not so turn it is formless, deformed...'<sup>397</sup> The logic behind this is coloured by Neoplatonism insofar as Augustine seems to imagine creation, although created out of nothing, afterwards emanating from God towards nothingness. Unless 'incomplete' and 'imperfect' creation (the original formless material) had been called back and turned towards God, it would have continued on its trajectory towards nothingness. This is clearly what lies behind Augustine's statement about the basic material that was 'tending by its very want of form toward nothing'.<sup>398</sup> Why is this? Augustine explains:

Rather, it is when it turns, everything in the way suited to its kind, to that which truly and always is, to the creator that is to say of its own being, that it really imitates the form of the Word which always and unchangingly adheres to the Father, and receives its own form, and becomes a perfect, complete creature. Accordingly, where scripture states, God said, Let it be made, we should understand an incorporeal utterance in the substance of his co-eternal Word, calling back to himself the imperfection of the creation, so that it

<sup>395</sup> In the next section, however, we will see that *creatio-conversio-formatio* scheme was worked out much earlier in terms of humanity's redemption.

<sup>396</sup> *conf.* 13.3.4 (CCL 27.243).

<sup>397</sup> *Gn. litt.* 1.1.2 (CSEL 21.1.4). See also *Gn. litt.* 1.3.7.

<sup>398</sup> *Gn. litt.* 1.4.9.

should not be formless, but should be formed, each element on the particular lines which follow in due order.<sup>399</sup>

The role of the Word here is integral to the whole scheme and, as will be shown, securely links participatory existence to participatory redemption. Augustine explains the Word's role fully at the end of this section: the Word is himself 'the beginning' in which heaven and earth were created. He is the Form by and through whom all else achieves form. This formation is accomplished by imitating the Word, 'the form which adheres eternally and unchangingly to the Father...'<sup>400</sup> Thus, conversion becomes imitation.<sup>401</sup> Creation as the changeable and temporal utterance of God echoes away into silence unless it becomes as the eternal Word himself; it is by an imitative participation in the Word that uttered creation is formed and abides.

This final point provides a context to a passage in *Gn. litt. imp.* 16.57-59, where Augustine addresses why the terms 'image' and 'likeness' are used in Genesis. In *Gn. adv. man.*, he had discussed only humanity's creation in the image of God.<sup>402</sup> But here we discover an argument very much like that found in q. 23 of *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, one in which the language of participation finally makes its debut in his commentaries on Genesis. To answer the question about 'image' and 'likeness' in *De gn. litt. imp.*, Augustine appears to draw directly from q. 23, even beginning, as there, with the idea of chastity: 'Now chastity is chaste without being so by participation in something, while it is by participation in her [chastity] that any chaste

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<sup>399</sup> *Gn. litt.* 1.4.9.

<sup>400</sup> *Gn. litt.* 1.4.9.

<sup>401</sup> See Vannier, 'Creatio', 'Conversio', 'Formatio', 74. See also Rowan Williams, "'Good for Nothing': Augustine on Creation", *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994) 9-24 on the ramifications of Augustine's approach to creation. In particular, he points out that creation and formation are due to their participation in God's life rather than obedience to arbitrary rules.

<sup>402</sup> *Gn. adu. man.* 1.23.40. See below for a discussion of the role of the *imago Dei* within Augustine's discussion of humanity's participation in God.

things are chaste’.<sup>403</sup> He then demonstrates that this truism obtains for other characteristics such as wisdom and beauty. Only God is each of these in himself while everything else enjoys each virtue by its participation in him. Obviously, the assumption that lies behind this argument is the same as the one we saw in *De moribus Manichaeorum*: each trait within the world—chastity, wisdom, and beauty—only enjoys a participatory existence, deriving its manifestation from its ideal (*ratio*) within the mind of God.

This argument permits Augustine to show how the entire universe shares in the divine likeness. He begins by exclaiming, ‘How far...the likeness of God, through whom all things were made, extends to the imposing of specific form on things, is indeed something that soars astronomically beyond human thought...’<sup>404</sup> But he posits that the shared likeness of various objects and species of existence must reveal a higher ideal that provides that likeness: ‘...if the universe consists of things that are like another among themselves, in order that each may be whatever it is, and all of them together may complete the universe, which God both established and governs, it is assuredly through the over-arching and unchangeable and undefilable likeness of the one who created all things, that they were made such to be beautiful with their mutually similar parts...’<sup>405</sup> Reading *Conf.* 13.3.4 and *Gn. litt. imp.* 16.57-59 in light of each other reveals how Augustine’s scheme works: contingent beings participate in the Being of God by heeding his call and by turning towards him through their imitation of the form of the Word, each in the way most appropriate for

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<sup>403</sup> *Gn. litt. imp.* 16.57.

<sup>404</sup> *Gn. litt. imp.* 16.59.

<sup>405</sup> *Gn. litt. imp.* 16.59. Missing in *Gn. litt. imp.*, however, is any direct mention of the Word as in *Gn. litt.* This is strange as the obvious inspiration for this passage, *diu qu.* 83 23 (entitled, it may be recalled, ‘On the Father and the Son’) clearly states that everything that participates in God achieves its form through Christ, the perfect form.

its kind. All three actions—*creatio*, *conversio*, and *formatio*—occur simultaneously with the creation of time itself.<sup>406</sup>

In a sense, Augustine's scheme is a metaphysical adaption of Cicero's *De inventione*. There, as has already been discussed, Cicero presents a scattered (*dispersos*) mass of humanity living like beasts without a *ratio* until a wise orator compels and gathers them together (*compulit...et congregavit*) and forms them into a civilisation.<sup>407</sup> Likewise, Augustine presents a formless creation unable to achieve form on its own until it is called back by God's utterance, the eternal Word, who shapes it into a formed creation. In both cases, although the capacity is there in the subject, form itself cannot be achieved except through the intervention of speech. In the hands of Augustine, Cicero's myth of the proto-orator's persuasion of human chaos towards the formation of civilisation has become the Word's conversion of chaos itself into formed existence. This is not to suggest that Augustine had *De inventione* explicitly in mind, but only to recognise the parallel, governing logic: in both, speech is generative. Cicero makes wise eloquence the basis for civilisation; Augustine makes the Word, who is also Wisdom, the basis for formed existence.

### ***Permaneo***

The only difficulty with the now familiar pattern of *creatio-conversio-formatio* as discussed by scholars such as Vannier or Zum Brunn is that it stops short of Augustine's full scheme. Augustine is so convinced that everything mutable falls

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<sup>406</sup> *Gn. adu. man.*, 1.3.2; *conf.* 12.12.15; *Gn. litt.*, 1.15.29-30, 5.5.12. See also Gerhart B. Ladner, 'St. Augustine's Conception of the Reformation of Man to the Image of God,' in *Augustinus Magister* (1954) vol. 2, 871-872. Ladner makes the additional important point that *creatio ex nihilo* means that in Augustine *formatio* cannot be *reformatio* (as in Plotinus). Vannier, '*Creatio*', '*Conversio*', '*Formatio*', 73 agrees with this point. In a sense, Augustine's insistence that *creatio*, *conversio*, *formatio* occurs simultaneously with the inception of time means that the entire scheme is only conceptual and theoretical. This is one of the reasons why later, medieval theologians rejected the whole notion of formless or 'potential' existence.

<sup>407</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.2 (LCL 4, 6).

away into nothingness that he cannot conceive of a contingent existence that is not continually supported by God. Thus, as important as the *creatio-conversio-formatio* scheme is, it amounts to little unless formed creation is also sustained in its formed *esse*. *Formatio* requires more than a merely formative *conversio*; it needs something to maintain that *conversio* permanently. It is here that Augustine finds a role within participatory existence for the Holy Spirit.

Augustine's approach to the Holy Spirit's role vis-à-vis participatory existence is complex. He includes the Holy Spirit in various ways that can at first seem muddled and poorly conceived. Thus, one finds Augustine speaking of the Holy Spirit as the true pattern for *formatio* (like the Word), as the one primarily involved in *conversio*, as the one who sustains *formatio* and *conversio*, and even as one who incubates creation as a bird does her eggs. What connects each of these roles, however, is Augustine's identification of the Holy Spirit with love; each role is fundamentally an expression of love, even of a kind of maternal love.

At first Augustine discusses the Holy Spirit's role in the act of creation only in terms of *formatio*. Drawing from Gen. 1.2*b*, Augustine explains the enigmatic reference to the Spirit being borne over the water by employing the analogy of a craftsman—an analogy borrowed from Plato that recurs in his writings<sup>408</sup>—working and shaping an unformed material. In this case, Augustine interprets the Spirit as God's Spirit and the water as the 'workable material'.<sup>409</sup> He writes:

Again we must beware of supposing that the Spirit of God was being borne over the basic material as though covering a spatial distance, but rather as exercising a skill in making and fashioning things, in the way that the intention (*voluntas*) of a craftsman is 'borne over' the wood or whatever it is

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<sup>408</sup> See, for example, Plato, *Timaeus* 27c-34a.

<sup>409</sup> At this point, Augustine shows some reluctance to identify the 'Spirit' of Gn. 1.2*b* with the Holy Spirit. By the composition of *conf.* 13, however, he has put all such concern behind him.

he is working on, of even over the parts of his body, which he applies to the work....This however is said if ‘the spirit of God’ in this place is taken to be the Holy Spirit, whom we venerate in the inexpressible and unchangeable Trinity.<sup>410</sup>

Clearly then, Augustine articulates a role for the Holy Spirit within the scheme of *creatio-conversio-formatio*. But in this passage, the role of the Holy Spirit differs little from that of the Word. While the Word provides the immutable *forma* by which creation obtains its own form, the Holy Spirit provides the ‘intention’ (*voluntas*) for that formation.

Returning to the same passage in *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine pursues a more evocative approach by comparing the Holy Spirit’s formative role in relation to a mother bird:

For what is said here in the Greek and Latin versions about the Spirit of God, that it was being borne over the water, according to the Syriac which is a language closely related to Hebrew...is reported to mean not was being borne over but was brooding (*fovebat*) over the water in the way birds brood over their eggs, where that warmth of the mother’s body in some way also supports (*adminiculator*) the forming of the chicks through a kind of influence of her own kind of love.<sup>411</sup>

Here, the Holy Spirit is the incubator in which existence achieves form rather than the ‘intention’ for that form. His is a supporting role now, providing through his ‘own kind of love’ the warmth and support for formation. As will be shown, the image of the Holy Spirit as providing a warm, supportive love is one that Augustine increasingly favours.

The idea of the Holy Spirit as involved in the support or sustaining of contingent existence is one that caught Augustine’s fancy early. In *De vera religione*,

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<sup>410</sup> *Gen. litt. imp.* 4.16 (CSEL 28.1.469).

<sup>411</sup> *Gn. litt.* 1.18.36 (CSEL 28.1.26-27). See chapter two of Robert J. O’Connell, *Soundings in St Augustine’s Imagination*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994) for an imaginative discussion of the term ‘foveo’ as it appears in this passage and elsewhere.

he writes: ‘God, the immutable Trinity, made them through his supreme wisdom and preserves (*conservat*) them by his supreme loving-kindness (*benignitate*).’<sup>412</sup> Though not nearly as suggestive as that of a mother bird, the presentation of the Holy Spirit as preserving creation in his capacity as divine ‘courtesy’ or ‘loving-kindness’ (*benignitate*) accords well with that image. In both, Augustine speaks of the Holy Spirit’s involvement in preserving and ties this to love. A similar division of labour among the persons of the Trinity appears in *De fide et symbolo* 9.19: ‘Hence those who read with close attention seem to recognise the Trinity in the passage where it is written: “Of him and through him and in him are all things”. “Of him” points to him who owes existence to none; “through him” points to the Mediator; and “in him” points to him who contains all things and binds them together (*qui continet, id est, copulatione conjungit*).’<sup>413</sup> This passage clarifies how Augustine imagines the Holy Spirit sustaining existence: namely, by containing and joining all things together. Is it any wonder that the image of a mother bird should later spring to mind?

We find further development along these lines in *De Genesi ad litteram*.

Returning again to the image of the Spirit being borne over the water, Augustine writes:

In either case, to be sure, the Spirit of God was being borne over it, because whichever it was that he had initiated, ready to be formed and perfected, it was subject to the good will of the creator. That means that when God said in his Word, Let light be made, and so on, what was made would abide in his good will, that is, would meet with his approval according to the measure of its kind.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> *ver. rel.* 18.35 (CCL 32.208).

<sup>413</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19 (CSEL 41.25). The use of the term *copulatione* is an interesting one. As will be discussed later, Augustine’s pneumatology may have been influenced by Marius Victorinus who refers to the Holy Spirit as the *copula* of the Father and the Son. See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 371.

<sup>414</sup> *Gn. litt.* 1.5.11.



The Holy Spirit enables contingent existence to abide in God's good will, which is necessary for continued existence. *Formatio* becomes an on-going process rather than merely a single moment.

Finally, in *De Trinitate* Augustine grounds the maintenance of contingent existence in the life of the Trinity itself in a way that takes us far in the direction of delight. There, he refers to the Holy Spirit as 'the sweetness (*suavitas*) of begetter and begotten pervading all creatures according to their capacity with its vast generosity and fruitfulness, that they might all keep their right order and rest in their right places'.<sup>415</sup> The Holy Spirit is here portrayed as the 'sweetness' of the Father and the Son, and it is this shared love between Father and Son that pervades and sustains creation. The Holy Spirit thus upholds and provides order to creation by bringing it into a relationship *within* the Trinity. *Participatio* is grounded in *communio*. We will see later how Augustine develops this idea within his approach to both participatory redemption and delight.

Before we turn our attention to participatory redemption, however, we must examine one last role for the Holy Spirit in creation. In *Conf.* 13.4.5, Augustine argues that creation is a free and generous act of God by discussing the role of the Holy Spirit in Gn. 1.2b.:

But your incorruptible and immutable will, sufficient to itself and in itself, was 'borne above' the life which you had made, a life for which to live is not the same as living in perfect happiness, because even while in a fluid state in darkness it had life. It remains for it to be converted to him by which it was made, more and more to live by the fount of life, to see light in his light, and to become perfect, radiant with light, and in complete happiness.

Here Augustine finds a role for the Holy Spirit at the moment of *conversio*, when the 'fluid state in darkness' is turned towards the path of bliss, which he equates with a

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<sup>415</sup> *trin.* 6.11 (CCL 50.241).

fullness of life. He reiterates this a few chapters later when he writes, ‘Happy is the created realm which has known nothing other than bliss. Yet the story would have been different unless, by your gift which is “borne above” all that is mutable, immediately upon its creation was elevated with no interval of time by that call ‘Let there be light,’ and it became light’.<sup>416</sup> Both passages suggest that Augustine conceived of *conversio* itself as linked closely to the Holy Spirit, and his connection of *conversio* here to a movement towards bliss perhaps explains why. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit as the ‘sweetness’ of the union of Father and Son calls out to creation to turn back towards God and experience blissful *formatio*.

The scheme of *creatio-conversio-formatio-permaneo* provides the framework and rationale for Augustine’s conception of contingent existence. Such existence only endures insofar as it participates in God’s own Being. Creatures are, therefore, absolutely unable to stand on their own two feet and relate as an ‘other’ to their Creator. Instead, all of creation is ‘of him and through him and in him’,<sup>417</sup> and therefore created, formed, and sustained by and through and in God. The contingent nature of creation explains the need for participatory existence since just as the individual derives existence from God so too does every good and virtuous quality and act. For example, as we have seen, Augustine holds that humans are only chaste insofar as they participate in chastity, wise insofar as they participate in wisdom, and beautiful insofar as they participate in beauty. There is, as it were, no other place from which these goods may come. They are of God and can be grasped only in and through God. In the end, God is both the source and the pattern of all that exists.

Augustine’s conviction that humankind depends absolutely on God is often not sufficiently appreciated by those who wish to distinguish between an old and a

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<sup>416</sup> *conf.* 13.10.11.

<sup>417</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19.

new Augustine. For example, in his influential book, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace*, J. Partout Burns argues that the early Augustine retained in his thought a strong view of 'human autonomy', only slowly yielding to a more pessimistic view of human dependence of God later in life (in 418).<sup>418</sup> But as we have seen, all indications are that Augustine would have found the phrase 'human autonomy' absurd. How can that which derives everything from God, brought about through the scheme of *creatio-conversio-formatio-permaneo* through participation in God, ever be autonomous? Does not the term 'autonomy' assume a clear and modern disconnect between God and humanity, as though humanity could stand independently from God? As has been demonstrated, from his earliest discussion of human existence Augustine gives no indication that such a suggestion ever occurred to him. Neither his reading of Scripture nor his Neoplatonic presuppositions would have led him to such a view. To the contrary, his only word for 'human autonomy' is an entirely negative one—*superbia*—and for Augustine it is not the source of human freedom but of bondage to *nequitia*. Certainly Augustine struggled to articulate the full dimension of human dependence of God in relation to salvation (as will be shown), but ultimately that struggle was not about reconciling a supposed autonomy and dependence but the paradox of liberty and contingency. To put it another way, Augustine strove to answer the question: how can humanity, whose existence is entirely contingent, enjoy freedom? As will be shown, his answer to that question is a simple one: delight.

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<sup>418</sup> J. Partout Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1980), 18-22. See Carol Harrison (2006), 273-276 for a good critique of Burns' thesis.

## Participatory Redemption

Before we begin to examine how Augustine's concept of participatory redemption developed, we should first recognise two important implications of his approach to participatory existence. First, his discussion, which we encountered in *De vera religione*, of the etymological relationship between wickedness (*nequitia*) and nothingness (*ne ququam*) provides a moral element to his wider discussion of participation.<sup>419</sup> For human beings (and angels for that matter), a descent towards nothingness is synonymous with a descent into wickedness. Since a creature's being and goodness derives from God, the decline of one means the decline of the other. This shows that from the start Augustine recognised that human beings, as rational and moral agents, participate in God in a way different from non-rational creation. As will be shown, his development of this point provided the rich soil from which to cultivate his approach to salvation. Second, his placement of the Word at the centre of *formatio* as the perfect and eternal image and likeness of the Father provides a vehicle whereby *reformatio* may also be achieved. That creation received its initial form through imitation of the Word suggested to Augustine that some form of participation or imitation must be involved in human redemption. In the former he uses the images of a formless earth and an abyss to retain Plato's initial material emanation, in the latter he discovered that Plotinus' reintegration could be realised in a Christian *reformatio*.<sup>420</sup> In short, Augustine believed that human redemption must involve a moral participation (beyond an existential one) and formation in the Word.

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<sup>419</sup> This is actually a repeat of his assertion in *b.vita* 2.8. See Zum Brunn, *Le dilemme de l'être*, 21-22 for a discussion of this point.

<sup>420</sup> Vannier, '*Creatio*', '*Conversio*', '*Formatio*', 75 discusses the connection between *formatio* and the renewal of the human image. According to her, Augustine's preferred words for this reformation are *renovare*, *reformare*, and *efficere*. Vannier does not note, however, the similarities between Augustine's reformatory participation and Plotinus' reintegration into the One.

With this underlying conviction in mind, let us now turn to the texts to see how Augustine's thought matured.

## Earliest Texts

Near the end of the leisurely conversation Augustine shares with friends and family in *De beata vita*, he dwells on the idea of divine wisdom.<sup>421</sup> Earlier, he had betrayed his Ciceronian influences by asking his friends the rhetorical question, "Do you not concede that the souls of wise men are far richer and greater, in their way, than the souls of the uneducated?" Not only do the others find this an obvious statement, but they go even further in condemning the uneducated as possessing souls 'full of faults and worthlessness'.<sup>422</sup> Such high-flown convictions are readily understood within the Neoplatonic spectrum of existence. If by the contemplation of the higher and ultimately of the first principle one moves away from nothingness towards reintegration with the One, then it follows that those people such as Augustine and his friends who seek wisdom will become better than those who do not.

Augustine explains this paradigm after his son proposes that happiness can only be enjoyed by devoting one's life to divine wisdom. He proposes a fundamental choice: either the soul beholds and devotes itself to wisdom or it is 'seduced to the treachery of images, weighed down in whose embrace it generally deserts God and finds a pernicious end...'<sup>423</sup> The reason for wisdom's exalted role is that it really is

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<sup>421</sup> *b. vita* 5.34.

<sup>422</sup> *b. vita* 2.8. This is reminiscent not only of Cicero but also of one of the last great Roman, pagan orators, Symmachus, who described his peers and himself as 'the better part of humankind'. See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 66-72. For a wider discussion of the late imperial senatorial class, see Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 15-22. *De beata vita* shows how easily Christianity could be moulded to the assumptions of late antique aristocratic life.

<sup>423</sup> *b. vita* 5.33.

the ‘wisdom of God’, which, according to Scripture, is none other than the Son of God. Thus, to possess wisdom is to be indwelt by God, who is the only reliable source of happiness.<sup>424</sup> As Zum Brunn points out, ‘la participation de l’âme à Dieu est une participation béatifiante parce qu’elle est rassasiante “fruitive”’.<sup>425</sup> This effectively provides a context for his description of the connection between wickedness and nothingness. By becoming enamoured with that which is not God, one sinks towards a ‘pernicious end’, somewhere on the brink of nothingness.

Thus far, however, there is little with which a Neoplatonist would disagree. Plotinus’s fundamental landscape—the lower participating in the higher—is left intact. There also seems to be no definition of sin or wickedness beyond a fixation on the temporal. Sin remains only a sort of blindness or error that can be corrected by the pursuit of wisdom, best performed in an environment similar to the setting for *De beata vita*: the scholarly leisure (*otium*) of aristocratic life.<sup>426</sup>

This feature may explain Augustine’s use of the term ‘*deificari*’ in his *ep.* 10, written around 391. In providing for his friend Nebridius an excuse for not visiting, Augustine writes:

...for in leisure both of them would be permitted to become godlike (*deificari enim utrisque in otio licebat*). Or, if this is not true, I am, if not the most stupid, certain the laziest of all men, for I cannot taste and love the pure good unless I enjoy a certain carefree repose. Believe me, there is a need of a great withdrawal from the tumult of perishing things in order to produce in a human

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<sup>424</sup> *b. vita* 5.34.

<sup>425</sup> Zum Brunn, *Le dilemme de l’être*, 23-24. Zum Brunn (p. 19-20) argues that Augustine uses the language of fruition in *b. vita* to convey the idea of participatory redemption over and above participatory existence or, to use her term, participation *sui generis*. Thus, while all creatures in a sense possess God, not all creatures are fruitfully possessed by God. The latter leads from famine to satiety.

<sup>426</sup> Dennis E. Trout ‘Augustine at Cassiciacum: *Otium Honestum* and the Social Dimensions of Conversion’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 42:2 (1988) 132-146. This seems to be how Augustine imagined the paradisiacal life of Adam. Again betraying his background, he portrays Adam as the sort of gentleman farmer who would not have been unfamiliar to the likes of Thomas Jefferson (*Gn. litt.* 8.8.15). See also Carol Harrison, ‘Augustine and the Art of Gardening’ in R.N. Swanson (ed.) *The Use and Abuse of Time in Christian History*, (Bury St. Edmunds: Boydell and Brewer, 2002), 37: 13-33.

being a freedom from fear that is not due to insensitivity, boldness, the desire for vainglory, or superstitious credulity. This also produces that solid joy that is absolutely not to be compared with any delight in the smallest degree.<sup>427</sup>

This passage is much discussed by those attempting to come to terms with Augustine's idea of deification in relation to the Eastern concept of *theosis*.<sup>428</sup> For our purposes, it is sufficient simply to mention that the letter squares neatly with the viewpoint Augustine expresses in *De Beata vita*. Deification, which seems at this point to be simply a term used to describe the 'fruitful' advancement towards God, is achieved through the pursuit of 'what is really good' (i.e., God) in the comfort of leisurely withdrawal. Other than the identification of wisdom with God, Augustine expresses little here that he would not have found in Cicero's *Hortensius*.

Thus, passages such as these tempt one to conclude that early Augustine understood unaided humankind as entirely capable of ascending towards God and away from nothingness. If it is by a willing devotion to wisdom that God enters the soul (as in *De beata vita*), then is there really any need for the Incarnation or for grace? Beginning with Peter Brown, scholars have been tempted to view and even to lament Augustine's extended letter to his friend Simplicianus as a watershed moment when he realised, within the context of the story of Jacob and Esau, the need to be overwhelmed by grace in order to be saved.<sup>429</sup>

This temptation needs to be resisted. Although not always well articulated, Augustine's approach to the Incarnation and grace are fundamental to understanding his approach to participation even in his earlier works. As Carol Harrison argues in her book, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, the role of grace is present, both

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<sup>427</sup> ep.10.2 (PL 33.74).

<sup>428</sup> For example, see Bonner, 'Augustine's Conception of Deification', 372 and Père Georges Folliet, '*Deificare in otio*. Augustin, *Epistula* 10.2' *Recherches Augustiniennes* 2 (1962) 225-236. Folliet highlights the Neoplatonic underpinning to this phrase.

<sup>429</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 146-157.

implicitly and explicitly, from the very beginning of Augustine's theological musings.<sup>430</sup> One way in which he articulates the idea of grace is with the word *admonitio*. In rhetoric, *admonitio* describes an oratorical reminder. For example, in *De oratore*, Cicero includes *admonitio* among those vital duties of an orator (along with exhortation, consolation, and moral instruction) that the hackneyed rhetorical handbooks 'pass over in silence'.<sup>431</sup> Unfortunately, Cicero does little better himself. But by examining how he employs *admonitio* in *De oratore*, one can see the rhetorical purpose of an admonition. For example, in the midst of addressing the topic of *inventio*, Cicero's interlocutor Antonius is about to discuss the role of *ethos* and *pathos* in persuasion when another interlocutor, Catulus, interrupts him with a question about the best order of arrangement. Antonius responds, 'Look how much of a god I am at that sort of thing...I swear, if it hadn't been for your reminder (*admonitio*), that thought wouldn't have crossed my mind'.<sup>432</sup> Later, Cicero calls *admonitio* 'a gentler reproach', which is among the 'cures' an orator can use to regain an audience's attention.<sup>433</sup> Admonition therefore serves the purpose of drawing someone's attention, through a reminder or a gentle reproach, to what would otherwise be neglected.

Similarly, Augustine uses *admonitio* to describe the 'nudging' God provides to divert the human gaze away from the temporal towards the eternal, from nothingness towards God.<sup>434</sup> Thus, even in a work as early as *De beata vita*, Augustine writes, 'A certain admonition (*admonitio*), flowing from the very fountain

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<sup>430</sup> Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 242-244. See also Carol Harrison, "'The Most Intimate Feeling of My Mind": The Permanence of Grace in Augustine's Early Theological Practice', *Augustinian Studies* 36:1 (2005) 56-57 for early references to the Holy Spirit's role in Augustine.

<sup>431</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 2.64.

<sup>432</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 2.180 (LCL 326).

<sup>433</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 2.339 (LCL 454): '...*admonitio quasi lenior obiurgatio*'.

<sup>434</sup> Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, 56.



of truth urges us to remember God, to seek Him, and thirst after him tirelessly'.<sup>435</sup>

This statement immediately follows the section, discussed earlier, in which he equates a devotion to wisdom with the entry of God into the soul. Plainly, that entry depends on the Holy Spirit's admonition. The initiating activity of God is made even clearer in his *Soliloquies* when, in a section redolent with the participative language of being and non-being, he prays to God, '...whom no man seeks unless he has been admonished...'.<sup>436</sup> These and similar passages actually conform remarkably well with the scheme of *creatio-conversio-formatio*. Just as God's call (*vocatus*) caused formless creation to turn towards him and be formed, so God's call causes fallen humanity to turn towards him and be reformed. For example, in his *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, Augustine argues that 'no one can will unless urged on (*admonitus*) and called (*vocatus*), whether inside where no man sees, or outside through the sound of the spoken word or through some visible signs, it follows that God produces in us even the willing itself'.<sup>437</sup>

Thus, the turn towards God is (again not unlike Cicero's proto-orator) in response to his urgent call just as the initial formation of heaven and earth was a response by the formless material to God's call.<sup>438</sup> Both *formatio* and *reformatio* are responses to God's *vocatus*. Also, it is noteworthy that the Scriptural passage (Phil.

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<sup>435</sup> *b. vita* 4.35 (CSEL 63.115).

<sup>436</sup> *Sol.* 1.1.3. *Ver. rel.* 12.24 by itself should put to rest any debate about the role of grace Augustine's early thought. There, he writes, 'If the soul, while it continues in the course of human life, overcomes the desires which it has fed to its own undoing by enjoying mortal things, and believes that it has the aid of God's grace enabling it to overcome them, if it serves God with the mind and good will, it will undoubtedly be restored, and will return from the mutable to the immutable'. Clearly, Augustine at this time accepted the need for grace to overcome the movement away from God.

<sup>437</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 68.5 (PL 40.73). This is echoed, drawing from precisely the same passage in Philippians, in *Simpl.* 1.2.12.

<sup>438</sup> Vannier, 'Creatio', 'Conversio', 'Formatio', 156 points out that in Augustine *admonitio* is a new *conversio* in which humankind is called from deformity (*infirmetas*) to a form (*formatio*) through the human subject's conformity (*conformatio*) in Christ. Ladner, 'St. Augustine's Conception', 868 discusses this process in relation to the crucifixion, drawing upon *s.* 27 in which Augustine states that through Christ's *deformitas* on the Cross, humankind receives back the *forma* it had lost at the Fall.

2.13) from which Augustine draws his thought and language comes immediately after the hymn in praise of Jesus' *kenosis* (Phil. 2.4-8) and is dependent on the example established by Christ's willingness to become incarnate and suffer death upon the cross. Both the Incarnation and the crucifixion, therefore, appear to have been uppermost in Augustine's mind at the time.

In fact, Augustine seems to have been most forcefully struck by the divine humility revealed by the Incarnation. His first true consideration of the Incarnation, found in *De ordine* 2.5.16, dwells particularly on the humility demonstrated by the Incarnation in contrast to the pride of the philosophers: '...indeed, though it be that so great a God has for our sake deigned (*dignatus est*) to take up and dwell in this body of our own kind, yet, the more lowly (*vilius*) it appears, so much more is it replete with clemency and the farther and wider remote from a certain characteristic pride of ingenious men'.<sup>439</sup> We encounter this theme again in 2.24.37 of *De moribus Manichaeorum* where, in the midst of arguing that the Incarnation does not require a change on the part of God, Augustine underscores the humble nature of Christ's self-emptying, again drawing upon Philippians. Similarly, in *De libero arbitrio*, he contrasts the pride of the fallen angels with the humility of the Son, which showed to us the 'door of humility' by which we can approach God.<sup>440</sup> Finally, from *De diversis quaestionibus* 83 (q. 71), Augustine draws upon Christ's humility (this time quoting Phil. 2.4-8 in its entirety) to argue that we should, 'in imitation of him, willingly bear one another's burdens.'<sup>441</sup>

In all these passages, what appears essential to Augustine is the capacity of the Incarnation to overcome human pride. Just as creatures obtain their form by

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<sup>439</sup> *ord.* 2.5.16 (CSEL 63.158). For a similar expression, see *mor.* 2.24.3.

<sup>440</sup> *lib. arb.* 3.9.28.

<sup>441</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 64.3.

imitating the form of the Word so too are proud humans converted away from wickedness towards righteousness by imitating his humility.<sup>442</sup> While one cannot but note how forcefully the exemplary nature of the Incarnation struck Augustine, one must also question whether this represents the full extent, at this time, of Augustine's soteriology. Was the young Augustine a proto-Abelard, viewing Christ's actions as primarily exemplary in nature?

If this can be established, what would it mean in terms of this paper? As has been demonstrated in part one, Augustine understood all existence to be a participation in God's Goodness and Being. It has also been shown that he believed that creation tends towards nothingness—either in its prototypical formlessness or subsequently through wickedness—unless it is called back towards God. Within this scheme, it is possible to understand Augustine's initial approach to the Incarnation as one in which Christ becomes the supreme admonition. By becoming human, Jesus provides proud humanity with a visible example by which it can turn towards God and be saved. In a sense, the Incarnation itself becomes God's *vocatus*, or urgent call, of humanity back to himself. This fits well within a Neoplatonic scheme in which Christ is identified with the divine intellect. Is it possible that what initially drew Augustine to Christianity was the shocking idea that Plotinus's divine intellect converts us by becoming one of us?

To answer this question, we can begin with a *terminus ante quem* for a developed approach to the Incarnation. In his catechism, *De fide et symbolo*, Augustine writes about the Incarnation in a way that draws together the elements we have already seen and adds to them the nascent idea of participation:

We cannot return except through humility. Now our restorer deigned to show in his own person an example of his humility, i.e., of the way by which we

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<sup>442</sup> This exemplary approach to the Incarnation is perhaps most evident in *ver. rel.* 16.31-32.

must return. 'For he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant'....According to his nature as the only-begotten, he has no brothers. But according to his nature as first-born, he has deigned to call brethren all who, after him and by means of his headship, are born again into the grace of God by adoption as sons, as the apostolic teaching proclaims.<sup>443</sup>

Here, we have both the focus on Christ's humility (along with the usual citation of Phil. 2.4-8) and the additional understanding that the fruits of the Incarnation are made effective by adoption through regeneration. Similarly, in speaking of the resurrection, Augustine refers to believers, 'whom he called into the adoption of the sons of God and deigned to make his co-heirs and co-partners' (*comparticipes et cohaeredes*).<sup>444</sup> While this scheme will be developed further by Augustine in later works, all the fundamental aspects of his incarnational theology are articulated in these two passages. Thus, A.D. 393 can be taken as the latest point at which Augustine might have understood the Incarnation exclusively in an exemplary fashion.<sup>445</sup>

Prior to that date, it does appear that what mattered most to Augustine about the Incarnation (and the crucifixion, for that matter<sup>446</sup>) is its exemplary nature. It is,

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<sup>443</sup> *fid. et sym.* 4.6.

<sup>444</sup> *fid. et sym.* 5.12 (CSEL 41.15).

<sup>445</sup> One possible place suggestive of a fuller understanding of the Incarnation is found in *diu qu.* 83. In q. 73.2 (PL 40.85) of that work, Augustine discusses a part of his favourite Incarnational passage, Phil. 2.4-8, in particular what Paul might have meant by Christ being 'found in the habit of a man'. Augustine describes four different ways in which this might be interpreted, finally settling on one that involves the assumption of human nature: '...for he took up humanity in such a way that it was transformed for the better, and it was filled out (*formaretur*) by him in a manner more inexpressibly excellent than is a garment when put on by a man'. It is interesting that in this context, Augustine should use the word *formaretur*, the imperfect subjunctive of 'to be formed', in the context of humanity's transformation through the Incarnation. In his introduction to his translation of *diu qu.* 83, however, David Mosher, 'Introduction', *Saint Augustine: Eighty-three Different Questions*, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 19 suggests that qq. 66-75 (all of which address Pauline passages) can be reliably dated to 394-395 when Augustine was working on his commentaries on Romans and Galatians. As will be shown, the line of thought expressed in q. 73 is very similar to that found in the commentary on Galatians. Thus, if Mosher is correct in his dating, q. 73 becomes a development of the theology found in *De fide et symbolo* rather than an anticipation.

<sup>446</sup> See, for e.g., *diu. qu.* 83 25.

however, important not to misunderstand Augustine. He was not, in fact, a proto-Abelard or, even more ironically, a proto-Pelagian. He did not conceive of humankind as capable of conversion towards God by its own power in need of only a model, however powerful, for guidance. Recall his use of the word *admonitio* by which human beings are nudged away from their dehumanising movement back towards their Creator. Without that nudging, people are absolutely incapable of ascending towards God. Really, they are like savage humanity in the prologue of *De inventione*: incapable of betterment without first hearing and responding to the eloquence of the proto-orator. Similarly, for Augustine, the movement of humanity away from nothingness requires God's call. And how does that call come except as grace in the power of the Holy Spirit? *Admonitio* is itself an activity of the Holy Spirit drawing the wayward back towards God.

Augustine's obvious fascination with the idea of humility suggests that he realised the impotence of human nature on its own to move inexorably towards God. Without a doubt, one of his bedrock beliefs was that to believe otherwise invariably leads to pride. Seen in this light, the Incarnation functions as the supreme *admonitio* necessary for overcoming human pride and achieving the *renovatio* of humanity. Externally it provides the intellect with a forceful sign of God's love and humility; internally it opens the way for the Holy Spirit to draw the faithful towards God.<sup>447</sup> Further, once nudged, human beings must continue to imitate the humility expressed in the Incarnation. This is not so much a moral imitation as it is an ontological one analogous to the imitation of the Word that gave form to formlessness in the first

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<sup>447</sup> See Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, 242-244.

place.<sup>448</sup> Indeed, imitation (*similitudo*) within Platonic thought involves the lower participating in the higher.<sup>449</sup>

Finally, the Holy Spirit is involved in and is necessary for this process of imitation. We have already seen how the Holy Spirit is involved in God's *vocatus*, both internally and externally, of the faithful back towards him.<sup>450</sup> But as early as *ep.* 11, Augustine shows that he has already begun to conceive of the Holy Spirit as the one whereby we can retain our knowledge of God by his granting to us a 'certain inward and ineffable charm and sweetness of remaining in that knowledge...'<sup>451</sup> Augustine explains this most clearly, however, in *De fide et symbolo* when he writes that the faithful are 'reconciled and recalled' (*reconciliati et...revocati*) by the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is love.<sup>452</sup> He concludes, 'Now to enjoy the wisdom of God is nothing but to adhere (*cohaerere*) to it in love. And one remains (*permanet*) in what one perceives only if it is with love'.<sup>453</sup> Thus, already Augustine has begun to conceive of a role for the Holy Spirit within participatory redemption that reflects his role within participatory existence.

### ***Expositio epistulae ad Galatas and Confessiones***

So, by the composition of *De fide et symbolo*, at the latest, Augustine has begun to articulate a theology of the Incarnation beyond merely an example of

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<sup>448</sup> See Vannier, 'Creatio', 'Conversio', 'Formatio', 78 for a good discussion of the connection between *similitudine* and *imago* in Augustine.

<sup>449</sup> See David Vincent Meconi, S.J., 'The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St Augustine's *Confessions*', *Augustinian Studies* 29:2 (1998) 67. While, as will be seen, I do not accept the basic thrust of Meconi's argument here, he does provide (here and his other articles) one of the best discussions to be found of the concept of participation in Augustine.

<sup>450</sup> See, *diu qu.* 83 57.1 where Augustine speaks of the Holy Spirit bringing perfection 'while we yet walk in the flesh'.

<sup>451</sup> See Lewis Ayres, "'Remember That You Are Catholic (*Serm.* 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8:1 (2000) 52.

<sup>452</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19 (CSEL 41.24).

<sup>453</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19 (CSEL 41.24).

humility and to incorporate some explicit idea of participation. What apparently led him to this express this idea more explicitly was his grappling with Romans and Galatians, particularly the Pauline language of adoption. It is here that the language of participation becomes more apparent. Central to that understanding of participatory redemption is the identity of Christ as mediator. 1 Tim. 2.5,<sup>454</sup> which becomes for Augustine a Christology text of great importance, is cited for the first time in *Expositio epistulae ad Galatas* 24 where he argues that as there is no need for a mediator between God and God, Christ must be a mediator between God and humankind.<sup>455</sup> Here he recalls his earlier language in a manner that suggests a rhetorical contest: ‘It remains, therefore, that anyone who was cast down by the Devil, the proud mediator, persuading (*persuadente*) him to pride, is raised up by Christ, the humble mediator, persuading (*persuadente*) him to humility’.<sup>456</sup> But, just as it seems that the Incarnation will again be described in exemplary terms, Augustine adds a new element:

And so God’s only Son became a mediator between God and human beings when the Word of God, God with God, both laid down his own majesty to the level of the human and exalted human lowliness to the level of the divine, in order that he—a human being who through God was beyond human beings—might be the mediator between God and human beings.<sup>457</sup>

It is significant how similar the flow of this passage is to that of *De fide et symbolo* 4.6: both begin by noting Christ’s humility and conclude with his transformation of humanity. But here for the first time Augustine explicitly articulates how Christ’s humility functions to redeem humankind: by laying down his majesty (again, an echo

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<sup>454</sup> ‘For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.’ (RSV)

<sup>455</sup> *ex. Gal.* 24.5.

<sup>456</sup> *ex. Gal.* 24.6 (CSEL 84.86-87).

<sup>457</sup> *ex. Gal.* 24.8.

of Phil. 2.4-8) to the level of humanity, Christ elevates human lowliness to the ‘level of the divine’. This is effectively an echo of Athanasius: ‘For he was made man that we might be made God’.<sup>458</sup> As Gerald Bonner points out, this is really only explicable in terms of participation.<sup>459</sup> It is by both Christ’s participation in human lowliness and humanity’s subsequent participation in Christ’s divinity that human redemption can be achieved.<sup>460</sup>

Any doubt about the participative nature of the Incarnation is laid to rest a little later in Augustine’s commentary on Galatians. He writes:

But the clause that we might receive the adoption as sons refers to the earlier phrase: made of a woman. For we receive adoption because the only Son did not scorn participation in our nature—he was made of a woman so as to be not only the only-begotten, without any brothers, but also the first-born among many brothers.<sup>461</sup>

Notice what Augustine has now done. Within the Neoplatonic scheme, the only means for ascent is for the lower to participate in the higher. At no point does the higher descend in order to elevate the lower. That is in fact anathema to Plotinus’s whole scheme. Augustine has now (and, it is safe to say that this dates to at least 393) broken entirely with Plotinus in this respect. Now, for the lower (humankind) to be able to participate in the higher (God), Christ (the higher) first participates in human nature (the lower). Apparently, this is why humility was of such importance to Augustine. He came to understand the paradox that ascent can only come about through an *a priori* descent.

The place one first encounters participatory redemption as found in *ex. Gal.* side by side with participatory existence is in the seventh chapter of *Confessiones*:

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<sup>458</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 54.3.

<sup>459</sup> Bonner, ‘Augustine’s Conception of Deification’, 373.

<sup>460</sup> See Bonner, ‘Augustine’s Conception of Deification’, 377.

<sup>461</sup> *ex. Gal.* 30.9-11.



interestingly, in the midst of Augustine's discussion of the merits of the 'books of the Platonists'. In 7.9.14, Augustine confesses that while he discovered the eternal nature of the Word in these books, he did not find anything about that same Word becoming incarnate.<sup>462</sup> He continues by explaining that he learned from Neoplatonism that the Word 'immutably abides' with the Father and 'that souls receive his fullness to be blessed, and that they are renewed to be wise by participation in wisdom abiding in them'. Again, we are reminded of Augustine's language, surveyed earlier, about the need for humankind to participate in God in order to have being and virtues. Indeed, this is precisely the same notion expressed in q. 23 of *De diversis quaestionibus* 83 and 16.57 of *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber*. It is also classical Neoplatonism: the lower enjoys what it has by participating in the higher.

David Meconi makes much of this in his article, 'The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St. Augustine's *Confessions*', arguing that this is the last time that a purely Platonic approach to participation appears in Augustine.<sup>463</sup> According to him, at this point, Augustine only conceives of *participatio* in the traditional Neoplatonic sense of the lower deriving its goodness and being from the higher. He suggests that the use of *participatio* in 7.18.24, where Augustine stresses Christ's participation in human nature, marks a significant development in Augustine's thought.<sup>464</sup>

What Meconi fails to recognise is that Augustine has both participatory existence and redemption in mind in 7.9.14. Indeed, the logic of the passage only works if one accepts that Augustine is describing both participatory existence and redemption. Just as Augustine found in Plotinus a teaching about the eternal

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<sup>462</sup> By now one should not be surprised to find Augustine quoting Phil. 2.4-8!

<sup>463</sup> Meconi, 'The Incarnation and the Role of Participation', 64.

<sup>464</sup> Meconi, 'The Incarnation and the Role of Participation', 68-69.

immutability of the Word but not about his Incarnation, or entry into human existence, he likewise found a teaching about participatory existence (that our being and goods derive from God) but not about mediation by participatory redemption (in which Christ participates in the human condition). Augustine's point is precisely that Platonism fails (and becomes proud) by its inability to accept the humility involved in the Word's participation in the human condition and even in the nadir of Platonic scale: death.

What Meconi does rightly highlight is the unusual nature of 7.18.24. This passage, however, is not so much a change or a development in Augustine's thought as it is an almost poetic encomium on participatory redemption:

Your Word, eternal truth, higher than the superior parts of your creation, raises those submissive to him to himself. In the inferior parts he built for himself a humble house (*humilis domus*) of our clay. By this he detaches from themselves those who are willing to be made his subjects and carries them across to himself, healing their swelling and nourishing their love. They are no longer to place confidence in themselves, but rather are to become weak. They see at their feet divinity become weak by his sharing in our 'coat of skin'. In their weakness they fall prostrate before this divine weakness which rises and lifts them up.<sup>465</sup>

It can be safely said that Augustine is now in command of his scheme. He begins here with a Neoplatonic statement of ascent away from pride/wickedness /nothingness. Humankind is helpless, unable to ascend by its own means. It must be raised and this can only happen by submission to the Word. Humility is the gateway. Gone now, however, is any suggestion of the Incarnation as primarily an exemplary admonition; now humanity is redeemed by the Word's construction of a 'humble cottage' for himself out of human nature. In other words, it is by the Word's humble participation in humanity that humanity is raised towards God. The result is that

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<sup>465</sup> *conf.* 7.18.24 (CCL 27.108).

those who believe in Christ learn humility rather than pride, weakness rather than confidence, and receive both healing and nourishment. In actuality, nothing has been added here that has not been seen before. What is different is the confidence with which it is expressed. Augustine's initial attraction to the humility of Christ has deepened into a fully articulated notion of participatory redemption.

### **Participatory Redemption in Augustine's Sermons:**

Turning now to examine how this scheme presents itself in one particular genre of Augustine's writings, namely, his sermons, we can see how he explained participatory redemption to his congregations. As will be shown, his preference in his homilies was to focus on the happiness that is obtained through the healing of a believer's participatory existence through participatory redemption.

The tone of this line of thought presents itself forcefully in one of Augustine's sermons on the Gospel according to St John. Preaching on Jn. 5.19-40, Augustine considers how we can achieve true happiness:

He [Jesus] intimated to us that the human soul and rational mind which is in the human being and is not in the brute animal, are not enlivened, are not made happy, are not enlightened except by the very substance of God...its happiness, by which the soul itself is made happy, only comes about by participation in that life of an always living, unchangeable, and eternal substance which is God, so that, just as the soul which is inferior to God causes that which is inferior to it, that is, the body, to live, so only that which is superior to the soul itself causes the same soul to live happily.<sup>466</sup>

Human beatitude comes through participation in the 'living, unchangeable, and eternal substance which is God'. To his mind, this is the essence of the Christian faith: 'that one God be worshipped, not many gods, because only the one God makes

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<sup>466</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 23.5.3. Again, Augustine draws on Phil. 2.4-8.

the soul happy. It becomes happy by participation in God'.<sup>467</sup> Earlier in the sermon, Augustine preached that participation enlightens the faithful like a lamp fuelled by the oil of God's mercy and draws them away from the weight of temporality and from the many towards the eternal and the immutable.<sup>468</sup> This ascent can only be achieved through a mediator and so the Word emptied himself and became a human being: 'Let Christ raise you up through the fact that he is man, let him lead you through the fact that he is God-man; let him bring you to that which is God'.<sup>469</sup>

Augustine's sermons on the Psalms, however, provide some of his strongest rhetoric about participation. For example, in his homily on Ps. 49, Augustine uses language highly suggestive of *theosis* to describe the believer's participation in God:

It is quite obvious that God called human beings 'gods' in the sense that they were deified by his grace, not because they were born of his own substance.... If we have been made children of God, we have been made into gods; but we are such by the grace of him who adopts us, not because we are of the same nature as the one who begets. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God; he is God, one God with the Father, the Word who was in the beginning, the Word who was with God, the Word who is God. Others, who become gods, become so by his grace. They are not born of God's very being in such a way that they are what he is; it is through a gracious gift that they come to him and become with Christ his coheirs. So intense is the Heir's charity that he wanted to have fellow-heirs.<sup>470</sup>

Besides defining the limits of human participation, Augustine reiterates that grace is the compelling force behind redemptive participation. Participatory redemption is a 'gracious gift'—suggesting the involvement of the Holy Spirit—that is a sign of Christ's charity. This passage underscores how far away Augustine has moved from Plotinus. Neoplatonists understood deification, if one is to use that term, as the

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<sup>467</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 23.5.4 (CCL 36.235): '*Haec est religio Christiana, ut colatur unus Deus, non multis dii; quia non facit animam beatam nisi unus Deus. Participatione Dei fit beata*'.

<sup>468</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 23.3.1 and 23. 5.2.

<sup>469</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 23.6.3. For an example from his sermons on John on how participation could be used to prove the divinity of Christ, see *Jo. eu. tr.* 48.9.

<sup>470</sup> *en. Ps.* 49.1.2.

contemplative's ultimate reintegration into the One. Augustine, on the other hand, stops short of a goal of absolute reintegration and states clearly that the journey itself is only made possible by grace. It is interesting to note how similar his language is to that of the passage from *De fide et symbolo* examined earlier. In both, he stresses that while Christ is the only-begotten Son, he was glad to have brothers and sisters as 'coheirs'.

Augustine's homily on Ps. 58, however, returns us to more familiar ground. In the midst of excoriating those who believed themselves to be strong—either through wealth, 'their robust physique', superior rank, or righteousness—Augustine upholds Christ as the supreme exemplar: 'But the Teacher of humility became a participant (*particeps*) in our infirmity to enable us to share in his divinity; he came down to us both to teach us the way and to become the way, and he graciously willed to make his own humility above all a lesson to us'.<sup>471</sup> This succinctly contains all the elements of Augustine's incarnational theology: Christ's participation in humanity, humanity's subsequent and dependent participation in his divinity, and the example of humility provided as an antidote to human pride. This passage might be described as participatory admonition in which Christ is both co-heir and teacher, both the teacher of the way and the way itself to God.

One final sermon will suffice to provide a taste of Augustine's use of participatory redemption in his homilies: *sermo* 166.<sup>472</sup> Although, the sermon is ostensibly against lying, the subject evokes from Augustine one of his clearest explanations of participatory redemption. This is not as strange as it sounds. If Christ is, as Augustine dearly believed, the eternal Truth, a sermon against lying would provide an easy avenue into the topic of participation: only by participating in

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<sup>471</sup> *en. Ps.* 58 (1) 7.

<sup>472</sup> For other examples, however, see *en. Ps.* 84.9 and 146.5.11; s. 192.

Truth can one be truthful. Towards the end of the homily and in response to the excuse, 'I am only human', Augustine says something that shocks his congregation: 'Don't be a man, so that you won't have to tell lies'. He then explains:

You see, it is in order not to be a man that you have been called by the one who became man for your sake. Don't take umbrage. I mean, you are not being told not to be a man, in the sense that you are to be a beast, but rather that you are to be among those to whom he gave the right to become children of God. God, you see, wants to make you a god; not by nature, of course, like the one whom he begot; but by his gift and by adoption. For just as he through being humbled came to share your mortality; so through lifting you up he brings you to share his immortality.<sup>473</sup>

By and large this is a reiteration of all the elements of Augustine's concept of participatory redemption that we have seen before. What is noteworthy here is that the whole scheme can be subordinated to a moral goal. Augustine's concept of participation is so central to his thought that it embraces even his moral theology. The whole approach of *sermo* 166 is that one ceases to be a liar not through some exertion of the will or submission to a rule (there is not a drop of either the self-help practitioner or of the Puritan in Augustine) but through participation in Christ the Truth. Moral reformation only comes through participation: 'So, putting aside lying, speak the truth, in order that this mortal flesh too, which you still have from Adam, may itself earn renewal and transformation at the time of its resurrection, having been preceded by newness of spirit; and thus the whole man being deified and made divine may cleave forever to the everlasting and unchangeable truth'.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> s. 166.4.

<sup>474</sup> s. 166.4.

## **Book IV of *De Trinitate***

*De Trinitate* provides Augustine's most complete and mature thought on his theory of participation. A close reading of book four reveals both the full extent of Augustine's thought and how central his theory of participation was to his entire theological edifice. The book begins with him dwelling on his favourite topic: the inner life. Self-knowledge, he claims, is the best form of knowledge, better than even the knowledge of the stars, because it is through such knowledge that a person becomes aware of his or her own weakness. Better still is one who, armed with self-knowledge, is 'roused by the warmth of the Holy Spirit' and subsequently is filled with humble compunction. Such a person is not puffed up with knowledge like the Platonists because he is 'built up by charity'. And this has brought into him 'the sorrow of exile stirred by longing for his true country and its founder, his blissful God.' Augustine then goes on to describe the journey back towards the 'blissful God' as conducted 'by the road he has made in the humanity of the divinity of his only Son'.<sup>475</sup> Here we have in a coherent and developed approach to the question Augustine had been addressing near the start of his Christian vocation. He has retained all the features of his earlier conclusions: the primary role of the Holy Spirit made effective through the Incarnation, the necessity of humility, and the inspired desire for God.

Yet in *De Trinitate*, Augustine dwells more deeply on the features of his overall scheme. He explains why humility and compunction are necessary and why we must rely on God's unmerited grace to achieve the ascent to him.<sup>476</sup> Then he describes the role of the Word both within participatory existence and redemption. Through the Word not only were all things made but they also continue to be united

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<sup>475</sup> *trin.* 4.1.1.

<sup>476</sup> *trin.* 4.1.2.

in one common life: a life that is the Word himself. Augustine states that the same Word is also the light of rational minds, thereby stressing the utter dependence of all creatures, and in particular humanity, on the eternal, unchanging Word. It is by participation in the Word that creatures have life and, in the case of humanity, rational minds.<sup>477</sup>

The Incarnation occurred so that humanity could be ‘cured and made well’. ‘Our enlightenment is to participate in the Word, that is, in that life which is the light of men’. This could not be accomplished through humanity’s own efforts since it lacks both the power and the purity:

Yet we were absolutely incapable of such participation (*participationi*) and quite unfit for it, so unclean were we through sin, so we had to be cleansed. Furthermore, the only thing to cleanse the wicked and the proud is the blood of the just man and the humility of God; to contemplate God, which by nature we are not, we would have to be cleansed by him who became what by nature we are and what by sin we are not. By nature we are not God; by nature we are men; by sin we are not just. So God became a just man to intercede with God for sinful man. The sinner did not match the just, but man did match the man. So he applied to us the similarity of his humanity to take away the dissimilarity of our iniquity, and becoming a partaker (*particeps*) of our mortality he made us partakers (*participes*) of his divinity.<sup>478</sup>

The Incarnation’s role in opening up the way for people to participate in God is itself the cure of the human soul. There is no salvation without participation. The wickedness that leads humanity towards nothingness is fundamentally pride: a pride so powerful that only the unfathomable humility of the Word in becoming human can overthrow it. And the result of this is the gracious deification of humanity, the ‘royal exchange’ of human corruption for Christ’s divinity.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> *trin.* 4.1.3.

<sup>478</sup> *trin.* 4.1.4 (CCL 40.163-164).

<sup>479</sup> An evocative phrase from Lancelot Andrewes, *Whitsun Sermon*, 8 June 1606.



Finally, Augustine stresses that participatory redemption is not an individualistic state. Rather, it is only through participation in Christ that a true and lasting fellowship may arise. The reason for this is the Fall when, ‘with a crashing discord we had bounced away, and flowed and faded away from the one supreme true God into the many, divided by the many, clinging to the many’.<sup>480</sup> By becoming our mediator, Christ reconciled the many to the one so that ‘we may be able to cling to the one, enjoy the one, and remain forever one.’<sup>481</sup> But now that Christ is the head and the Church his body, Christians are in a sense one body, ‘since head and body make one Christ.’ So, Augustine concludes, Christ wants his disciples to be one in him because they cannot be one in themselves, split as they are by ‘clashing wills and desires’ and sinfulness. To this end, Christ cleanses them to make them one, ‘not only by virtue of the same nature whereby all of them from the ranks of mortal men are made equal to the angels, but even more by virtue of one and the same wholly harmonious will reaching out in concert to the same ultimate happiness, and fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity.’<sup>482</sup>

## Participatory Life

At the heart of Augustine’s answer to the questions of both existence and salvation is life, or rather, Life. When, as we saw earlier in *De vera religione*, he refers to God as Life he uses a metaphor that is particularly appropriate. As

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<sup>480</sup> See R.A Markus, ‘*Alienatio*. Philosophy and Eschatology in the Development of an Augustinian Idea,’ *Studia Patristica* 9:3 (Berlin, 1966) 447 for a discussion of one aspect of Augustine’s view of humankind’s ‘self-dissipation’ (447) towards the many.

<sup>481</sup> *trin.* 4.2.11.

<sup>482</sup> *trin.* 4.2.12. Bonner, ‘Augustine’s Conception of Deification’, 383 stresses that for Augustine deification is essentially an ecclesial, and thus sacramental, process. While there is not space here to pursue this thought, *ver. rel.* 6.10—‘To all it [the Catholic Church] gives power to participate in the grace of God, whether they are as yet formed or reformed, admitted for the first time or gathered in anew’—shows that Augustine always had the Church in mind when thinking about participatory redemption.

Augustine understands God, he is the source not only of creaturely existence but also of human redemption. He is both the one who begets and the one who heals, the one who forms and the one who reforms. Both are achieved through participation.

Much of this, of course, would not have been unpalatable to a pagan Neoplatonist. Indeed, every fundamental aspect of Neoplatonic reintegration is retained, if reinterpreted. God still produces life, gives that life form by calling it back to him from nothingness, and even provides a path for reintegration through grace for the pure-hearted contemplative. Of course, life is now spoken into existence out of nothing, formation given through the Word who also reforms by becoming man himself, and reintegration is not absorption into the nature of the One but rather the gracious adoption into a divine status. Each of these is such a departure that one must speak of a theology that has, for all its dependency on Neoplatonism, moved beyond Plotinus into a theology wholly new.

What is particularly striking about Augustine's concept of creation is how integral speech itself is to existence. God utters creation, calls it back through the eternally spoken Word from nothingness to take on form, and finally recalls sinners from wickedness into the fullness of participatory life through that same Word becoming part of the creation. In a real sense, before we can speak about God's redemptive oratory, we must acknowledge his creative oratory; God is both an author and an orator. And at the very heart of creation and redemption stands the Word:

We then rejoice with joy because of the voice of the bridegroom, and give ourselves to the source whence we have our being. And in this way he is the Beginning because, unless he were constant, there would be no fixed point to which we could return. But when we return from error, it is by knowing that we return. He teaches us so that we may know; for he is the Beginning, and he speaks to us.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> *conf.* 11.8.10.

Augustine found in Christ the theological answer to the age old debate between philosophers and orators: in the Word, both wisdom and eloquence meet as one. Better still, he discovered that Cicero was in fact wrong: ultimately Wisdom is not mute; he is eternally spoken. And in that eternally spoken Wisdom is the beginning and end of all life. What could be more satisfying to a converted rhetor than that?

## 5

# Worldly Delights

## Introduction – *Delectatio*

For Augustine, temporal life is movement: all created essence progresses either towards or away from God. In this belief, he was not alone. As has been seen, Neoplatonists understood being in terms of its distance from the First Principle, and understood everything outside of the First Principle itself to be either moving through contemplation towards its source or collapsing into nothingness. Because of his fundamental belief in participatory existence, therefore, Augustine could only conceive of redemption in existential terms: he believed that every step towards heaven or hell influenced the very being (*esse*) of the individual. Such an existence cannot but be precarious. Life hangs on the edge of nothingness, unable on its own to secure a foothold, to continue its existence by its own will or power. People are not even capable of moving by their own volition; every step towards salvation and rest is due to God's call and grace and every step towards damnation and hell is due to the seduction of sin and the weight of human corruption.

But what is it that actually propels the movement? Augustine's familiar answer is love: 'My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me'.<sup>484</sup> He conceives of this 'weight' in terms of natural philosophy, with love acting on the individual as gravity acts on an object:

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<sup>484</sup> *conf.* 13.9.10.

A body by its weight tends to move towards its proper place. The weight's movement is not necessarily downwards, but to its appropriate position: fire tends to move upwards, a stone downwards....They are acted on by their respective densities, they seek their own place. Things which are not in their intended position are restless.<sup>485</sup>

Augustine's 'restless heart' therefore speaks to the soul's relentless search for rest in either God's changeless Being or nothingness. Apart from God, the soul will inevitably search for rest in oblivion; 'stirred' by God however it will seek that rest in praising God, in participating by grace in his Being: 'You stir man to delight in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'.<sup>486</sup>

But it is important to recognise that the soul is not the active agent in this search. Rather it is acted upon, stirred by an external force, carried by its love. Part of Augustine's explanation for this passivity seems to be that for him love itself is beyond human control. People are carried by a love they never invoked. Instead, they are drawn to love by delight. This view is clearly expressed, for example, in *sermo* 159, preached around 417. There, Augustine asks his congregation whether they love justice and then goes on to assert that they will only reply 'I do' truthfully if justice delights them: one 'only loves, after all what delights one'.<sup>487</sup> This connection of love with delight establishes both the whole motivational force behind virtue and vice and defines the contest for the individual soul. Augustine writes:

Your flesh...is delighted even by unlawful pleasures; let your mind take delight in the invisible, beautiful, chaste, holy melodious, sweet thing that is justice, so that you won't be forced to it out of fear. After all, if you are forced to it out of fear, you don't yet take delight in it. You ought to refrain from sinning, not out of fear of punishment, but out of love for justice.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> *conf.* 13.9.10.

<sup>486</sup> *conf.* 1.1.1.

<sup>487</sup> *s.* 150.3.

<sup>488</sup> *s.* 150.6.

Augustine takes great pains to convince his congregation that they must not seek God out of fear, as though pleasure itself is sinful. He is keenly aware of the danger, often implicit in Christian moral teaching, of suggesting that sin conquers through pleasure while God conquers through fear.<sup>489</sup> He asks his congregation dismissively,

When you were sinning, you used to take delight in your sins; was fear dragging you into sinning, or the deliciousness of sin? You will answer, of course, its deliciousness. So you are led into sin because it's delicious, prodded toward justice because you're frightened?<sup>490</sup>

Christians ought therefore to pursue justice not because they fear punishment but because justice 'shines more brilliantly, gleams more brightly, tastes more delicious, is much, much sweeter' than anything earthly or temporal. Ultimately for Augustine, the alternative is not between hedonism and Puritanism but between two opposing delights: one that carries believers towards God, the other which weighs them down towards wickedness and oblivion. As will be shown, this places delight at the heart of participatory existence.

Again, this delight is not something over which people have control. In his endlessly discussed letter to Simplicianus, Augustine asks, 'Who can welcome in his mind something that does not give him delight? But who has it in his power to ensure that something that will delight him will turn up, or that he will take delight in what turns up?'<sup>491</sup> Thus, just as love is beyond human control so too is delight.<sup>492</sup> This is

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<sup>489</sup> Augustine's argument here is also influenced by his anti-Pelagian polemic: he understood the Pelagians as teaching that human beings did the good because it presented itself to them as a law which must be obeyed; consequently, they obeyed because they feared punishment.

<sup>490</sup> s. 150.6.

<sup>491</sup> *Simpl.* 1.2.21.

<sup>492</sup> Burnaby's discussion of the relationship between delight and the will remains arguably unsurpassed. He argues that Augustine believes that all our willing takes place within a world in which motives determine the direction of the will and those motives are in part a product of an individual's environment and of the whole complex series of presentations and impressions over which he or she has no control. Delight is the key influence over human motivation. For a full discussion of this subject, see John Burnaby, *Amor Dei, A Study of the Religion of Saint Augustine* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1938), 224-247.

not surprising as delight and love are so closely connected for Augustine. Indeed, he seems to suggest here that delight is the vehicle whereby something enters the mind, which is the necessary first step for love. Augustine's statement comes immediately after he asks who can believe unless they have been called by truth and who can 'have such a motive present' in their mind so as to be 'influenced' to believe? What Augustine seems to suggest is that delight is a necessary part of receiving and accepting truth. Unless people delight in truth, they cannot even bring it to mind; they are, in effect, unaware of it. Here perhaps we hear an echo here of Cicero and Victorinus: wisdom/truth presenting itself through eloquence/delight.

As we have seen, Peter Brown makes much of this passage, arguing that in analysing the story of Jacob and Esau, Augustine 'came to see man as utterly dependent on God, even for his first initiative of believing in Him'.<sup>493</sup> According to Brown's interpretation, Augustine began to believe that delight is the sole source of action, as the only thing that can move the will. Brown concludes: 'Therefore, a man can act only if he can mobilise his feelings, only if he is 'affected' by an object of delight'. This is, of course, the language of persuasion, in which Augustine as a rhetor was well-versed, and its logic brings us back to the language of Cicero. The art of persuasion itself is the ability to move people to action through eloquent speech. Thus, for Cicero, an orator must sway the emotions of his audience in order to achieve victory.<sup>494</sup> In *De oratore*, as we have seen, he writes, 'I think nothing is more admirable than being able, through speech, to lure people's minds, to win over their inclinations, to drive them at will in one direction, to draw them at will from

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<sup>493</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 154.

<sup>494</sup> Cicero, *Orator* 69.

another'.<sup>495</sup> This is precisely the same logic Augustine uses in *Ad Simplicianum*.

God is in control because through delight he takes hold of people's minds and drives them towards himself.

It is helpful at this time to quote again Margaret Boyle's distinction between rhetoric and dialectic as it sheds light on Augustine's argument: 'Dialectic seeks an act of the intellect (judgment) through compulsion of reason, and it secures its religious end in contemplation. Rhetoric seeks an act of the will (assent) through persuasion of feeling, and it secures its religious end in conversion.'<sup>496</sup> At one level this is also Augustine's contention: one cannot make progress towards God unless the will is affected and moved by a delight of the heart that results in conversion. But what is even more striking is that he envisions a divine persuasion that compels a movement towards contemplation; he effectively combines Boyle's two goals by making conversion the middle point in a process that ultimately ends in the eternal contemplation of God. To achieve that persuasive goal, God uses his eloquence, which Augustine conceives principally in terms of *delectatio*.

The first mention in *Ad Simplicianum* of the idea that people must be 'affected' appears during Augustine's discussion of the verse, 'Many are called but few are chosen'. Considering all that we have learned about the importance of God's oratory in both participatory existence and redemption it should not be surprising that Augustine develops this rhetorical approach in the midst of discussing God's *vocatus*. In *Ad Simplicianum*, Augustine the rhetor explains how God's redemptive call actually works. God's *vocatus* is a persuasive call and just as an orator cannot persuade unless he conquers the audience's will through *pathos*, so too God only

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<sup>495</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.30 (LCL 22): '*Neque vero mihi quidquam, inquit, praestabilius videtur, quam posse dicendo tenere hominum coetus, mentes allicere, voluntates impellere quo velit; unde autem velit, deducere*'. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>496</sup> Boyle, 'Fools and Schools', 183.



'chooses' those called by conquering their hearts through delight. Far from being a new idea, as Brown contends, this is exactly the logic one would expect by one deeply formed by Ciceronian rhetoric. So, Brown is partly right when he points out that in his letter Augustine describes delight as no longer a 'spontaneous reaction, the natural thrill of the refined soul when confronted with beauty. For it is just this vital capacity to engage one's feelings on a course of action, to take "delight" in it, that escapes our powers of self-determination: the processes that prepare a man's heart to take "delight" in his God are not only hidden, but actually unconscious and beyond his control'.<sup>497</sup> But Brown is mistaken in describing this as something innovative. Augustine has simply approached the question of conversion by marshalling the insights about persuasion he has acquired as a rhetor. Who better to understand the dynamic of conversion than one deeply versed in the dynamic of persuasion? In both Augustine and Cicero, the audience is passive, the orator is in control, action is achieved through persuasion, and the will is conquered through emotion.

The question now arises as to why God acts in this way: why must God overwhelm the will of individuals in order for them to turn away from wickedness and oblivion towards the fullness of redeemed, participatory life? Augustine's answer to that question is an ironic one: just as delight draws individuals towards God, so also it draws them towards death. In fact, he believed that not only could delight move people towards death but it already has done so; the bondage of humankind to death came about through a misguided delight. Because Brown is focused on *Ad Simplicianum*, where Augustine's interest is about why some respond to God's call while others do not, he fails to note that Augustine conceives of the devil or sin working in the same manner as God. The question for the individual is

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<sup>497</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 155.

not, as Brown implies, a matter of self-determination but an alternative between two forms of delightful bondage: one to God, the other to death. Augustine understands humankind as already in bondage to the devil through temporal and carnal delight. Because the human will has been overwhelmed by a diabolical oratory, God must now overcome it with his own oratory. In order to understand how God conquers through delight, we must first establish how Augustine conceives of the human condition under the bondage to sin.

## Worldly Delight

In distinguishing between the different types of delight, Augustine at times appends a qualifying adjective such as ‘eternal’ or ‘spiritual’ on the one hand, and ‘worldly’, ‘terrestrial’, or ‘carnal’ on the other.<sup>498</sup> Most often, however, he allows the context to determine whether or not the delight is commendable. The same observations hold for the various other words he uses in place of *delecto* or *delectatio*. So, *gaudeo* and *placeo* are both used to describe the pleasure derived from both virtuous and wicked sources.<sup>499</sup> This is in marked contrast to his approach to human desire, in which he typically reserves words like *concupiscentia*, *cupiditas*, and *libido* to describe sinful lusts.<sup>500</sup> A possible explanation as to why Augustine does not use a

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<sup>498</sup> For examples of ‘spiritual’ (*spiritualis*) and ‘eternal’ (*aeternus*) delight, see *diu qu.* 83 70; *conf.* 8.10.24; *s.* 23.12; *en. Ps.* 118 (22), 7; 118 (25), 7; *Jo. eu. tr.* 124.5; *c. Jul.* 4.2. For examples of ‘worldly’ (*carnis*, *carnalis*) delight, see *diu qu.* 83 64.7; 70; *ex. prop. Rom.* 1.77; *s. Dom. mon.* 1.12.36; *conf.* 9.10.24; *en. Ps.* 50.3; 57.19; 64.4; *gn. litt.* 10.12.20; *ep.* 10.6; *s.* 4.26.27; 143.1; *c. Jul.* 4.14.

<sup>499</sup> Although, as one might suspect, Augustine generally uses the word ‘gaudeo’ in a positive sense, he does speak of one ‘rejoicing’ in the temporal or illicit joys with some frequency. See, for e.g., *ver. rel.* 38.69. *Gn. adu. Man.* 2.19.29; *s. Dom. mon.* 2.32; *Jo. eu. tr.* 28.8.

<sup>500</sup> Vernon J. Bourke, *Joy in Augustine’s Ethics*, in *Saint Augustine and the Augustinian Tradition*, ed. by Robert P. Russell, O.S.A. (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1978), 35-36 and G. Bonner, ‘*Libido and concupiscentia* in St Augustine’, *Studia Patristica* 6 (TU 81. Berlin, 1962), 303-314. Bonner argues that Augustine did not understand *concupiscentia* itself to be sinful, but a ‘wound and a vice in human nature’ that can be the occasion for sin (310). See *De ciu. dei* 14.15 for an example of how Augustine employs the term *libido*.

special word to describe ‘carnal’ or ‘worldly’ delight is that he seems to have considered all pleasure to be from God.<sup>501</sup> The experience of *delectatio*, therefore, is a good; how one obtains or responds to the delightful experience, however, is the difference between heaven and hell.

By Augustine’s way of thinking, carnal delight manifests itself in two ways: as illicit delight, when one actively enjoys what one knows to be sinful, and as temporal or corporeal delight, when one enjoys only or primarily what can be perceived by the five senses. He understands the first of these to be a delight in actual wickedness and thus inherently evil. In order to understand why people do what they know to be wrong, he universalises Genesis’ account of the Fall to construct a scheme wherein the serpent represents temptation, Eve the delight that comes from the temptation, and Adam the consent given when temptation turns into action. In developing this scheme of temptation-delight-consent, Augustine draws upon his own rhetorical education, reading the story of the Fall in light of Cicero’s rhetorical imperative to speak so as to prove, please, and persuade. As for temporal delights, the sinfulness lies less in the source of delight itself and more in idolising the temporal delight rather than using it as means for delighting in eternal truths and ultimately in God. Unlike illicit delight, temporal delight begins as a natural instinct that can only be outgrown with the approach of adulthood. So, an infant’s delight in its mother’s milk is natural and good as the child has not yet the rationality necessary for spiritual growth.<sup>502</sup> Augustine’s typical way of discussing temporal delight is by

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<sup>501</sup> *conf.* 2.5.10. The one possible exception to this rule is *voluptas*, normally used by Augustine to describe entirely physical pleasure and, thus, normally used with a negative connotation. There are exceptions, however, such as *Gn. litt.* 8.18 where *voluptate* describes the ‘honest’ pleasure that Adam enjoyed as Eden’s gardener. Also, in passages such as *conf.* 1.20.31, Augustine does not so much condemn *voluptas* itself as the search for *voluptas* elsewhere than God. This may explain why, as with *delectatio*, very often Augustine adds *carnis* or *carnalis* when referring to illicit *voluptas*.

<sup>502</sup> See, for example, *diu. qu.* 83 64.7 and *ep.* 140.2.3.

distinguishing *usus* from *frui*. Only God is to be enjoyed (*frui*) while created goods are to be used (*usus*) in order to enjoy God. Augustine believes that sin arises when a person seeks to enjoy temporal delights *propter se ipsum*.

When not resisted, both forms of carnal delight—the illicit and the temporal—result in an affective bondage (*consuetudo*) that makes resistance increasingly difficult and further shackles the individual to the mutable, temporal, and in due course to death itself. As will be shown, carnal delight is for all intents and purposes the experience of wickedness (*nequitia*), and as such involves pain: either the actual pain of divine punishment or, at the very least, the pain of an increasingly restless heart. Augustine’s idea of bondage to death or *nequitia* through carnal delight gives substance to the Pauline concept of slavery or bondage to sin (Rm. 6.17-23). Finally, carnal delight wages war against spiritual or eternal delight.<sup>503</sup> According to Augustine, due to original sin, humanity on its own always becomes enthralled to carnal delight and tends towards *nequitia* and non-being. This is why, although everyone yearns for the happy life, those who have not come to faith end up embracing those delights that move them farther away from realising their desires.

## Illicit Delight

Augustine’s understanding of what constitutes illicit delight is relatively unproblematic: essentially, it is the ‘delight in doing an evil deed’.<sup>504</sup> He illustrates what this actually means most vividly in the *Confessiones*. In Book 2, he explains

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<sup>503</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 224 suggests that the competing delights are synonymous with the rival loves in *De civitate Dei*, only considered as affections rather than as loves. If one accepts his equation, then it presents another aspect of Augustine’s thought redolent of Cicero: Rome equated with Cicero’s noxious orator and the Church with his ideal orator, each competing for the affections (and therefore the wills) of human society. See also Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 82-83.

<sup>504</sup> *ep.* 140.58. Later, Augustine expands this definition by referring to those who ‘willingly use good things unjustly’.

that in his youth the ‘single desire that dominated my search for delight was simply to love and to be loved’.<sup>505</sup> On its face, this would seem to be a straightforward impulse; indeed, from what we have discovered from Augustine thus far in our study we could even say that his desire was entirely natural. But he qualifies his desire for delight by explaining that ‘Clouds of muddy carnal concupiscence filled the air. The bubbling impulses of puberty befogged and obscured my heart so that it could not see the difference between love’s serenity and lust’s darkness’. ‘Lust’s darkness’ leads to a string of evocative phrases: Augustine describes how he was swept through the ‘precipitous rocks’ and became ‘submerged in a whirlpool of vice’ and ‘deafened by the clanking chain of [his] mortal condition’ which led him away from God. He was ‘tossed about and spilt, scattered and boiled dry’ in his fornications. The images here suggest helplessness, even evoking the image of Odysseus’s ship being swept between Scylla and Charybdis. The desire for delight is violently all-consuming.

Augustine greatly regrets that no one tried to ‘impose restraint’ on his overweening desire by marrying him off to some unsuspecting woman.<sup>506</sup> Because this did not happen—and he doubts that he would have been satisfied with merely procreating—he instead continued his downward spiral into sexual immorality until he had reached a level of ‘unbridled dissoluteness in many different directions’ that resulted in a ‘thick mist’ that hid God’s face from him.<sup>507</sup> For Augustine, the emblematic act of his wickedness was his participation in the theft of a pear. While in comparison to his other indiscretions this may strike us as a somewhat minor offence, for Augustine the episode serves to illustrate how illicit delight occurs. And

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<sup>505</sup> *conf.* 2.2.2.

<sup>506</sup> *conf.* 2.2.3.

<sup>507</sup> *conf.* 2.3.8.

the way he demonstrates this is by recourse to forensic rhetoric to examine the episode.

In his treatment of Augustine's use of rhetoric in the *Confessiones*, James Farrell writes, 'As Augustine investigates his own motives for stealing pears he turns to the method of classical forensic invention outlined by Cicero, and by the anonymous author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*'.<sup>508</sup> He does so not to exonerate himself of the crime (as one would normally expect from a lawyer setting out his case), but to accuse himself as one beyond mercy.<sup>509</sup> Augustine plays the role of both mute defendant and hostile prosecutor before God the judge. He therefore omits the 'direct opening' that *Rhetorica ad Herennium* recommends for cases where the cause is honourable because he believes he lacked 'any sense of, or feeling for, justice'.<sup>510</sup> Instead, Augustine advances to a brief and clear statement of the facts by telling the story of the theft. Farrell writes, 'His narration lasts but one paragraph, and (following the theoretical advice of *Rhetorica ad Herennium*) he neither tries "to recount from the remotest beginning," nor to "carry forward" beyond "the point at which we need to go"'.<sup>511</sup> Augustine has turned his rhetorical training against himself.

He begins by claiming that he and his compatriots actually enjoyed the 'excitement of thieving and the doing of what is wrong'.<sup>512</sup> Their 'enjoyment' lay in doing what was not allowed. Augustine positively wallows in his former iniquity:

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<sup>508</sup> Farrell, 'The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine's *Confessions*', 271. Again, by Augustine's day, people believed that the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* had been written by Cicero.

<sup>509</sup> Farrell, 'The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine's *Confessions*', 272.

<sup>510</sup> *conf.* 2.4.9.

<sup>511</sup> Farrell, 'The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine's *Confessions*', 273.

<sup>512</sup> *conf.* 2.4.9 (CCL 27.31): 'Nam id furatus sum quod mihi abundabat, et multo melius: nec ea re volebam frui quam furto appetebam; sed ipso furto et peccato.'

I had no motive for my wickedness except wickedness itself. It was foul, and I loved it. I loved the self-destruction, I loved my fall, not the object for which I had fallen but my fall itself. My depraved soul leaped down from your firmament to ruin.<sup>513</sup>

From the vantage we have gained by studying Augustine's concept of participation and delight, such language should not be unexpected. Augustine at that stage in his life was actually enjoying his own descent from God into *nequitia*. Wickedness itself delighted him such that he loved his own 'self-destruction' and 'fall'. Later, Augustine concludes that the theft 'has nothing lovely about it, none of the loveliness found in equity and prudence, or in the human mind whether in the memory or in the senses or in physical vitality. Nor was it beautiful in the way the stars are, noble in their courses, or earth and sea full of newborn creatures which, as they are born, take the place of those which die, not even in the way that specious vices have a flawed reflection of beauty'.<sup>514</sup> And yet, as he states repeatedly, he derived pleasure from the crime itself.<sup>515</sup> He plays the ruthless self-inquisitor in this passage, denying himself all other excuses for the crime. He mentions and casts aside the possibility that what he really loved was the beauty or taste of the fruit or the company of his friends. Relentlessly, Augustine compels all other lines of thought back to the same conclusion: he delighted in the crime itself.

According to Farrell, this is precisely the approach forensic rhetoric suggested when one wishes to employ a 'Plea for Mercy'.<sup>516</sup> The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* writes, 'We shall use the Plea for Mercy when we confess the crime

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<sup>513</sup> *conf.* 2.4.9 (CCL 27.31): 'Foeda erat, et amavi eam; amavi perire: amavi defectum meum; non illud ad quod deficiebam, sed defectum meum ipsum amavi: turpis anima et dissiliens a firmamento tuo in exterminium...'

<sup>514</sup> *conf.* 2.4.12.

<sup>515</sup> *conf.* 2.4.12; 8.16; 9.17. Plotinus is helpful in understanding the depths of depravity Augustine is trying to convey by his self-directed inquisition. In the *Enneads* 1.6.4-5, Plotinus states that a virtuous soul loves and yearns after the beautiful. According to Augustine's self-portrayal, however, he had become so dissipated that his soul instead loved the ugly.

<sup>516</sup> Farrell, 'The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine's *Confessions*', 275.

without attributing it to ignorance, chance, or necessity, and yet beg for pardon'.<sup>517</sup>

But contrary to rhetorical advice, Augustine does not even invoke his own virtues, good deeds, or any other merits for his defence. He mercilessly dismisses any possible extenuating circumstances. His delight in wickedness placed him beyond normal mercy; only through a complete confession of his sin and acceptance of his guilt can Augustine beg for God's mercy. His use of forensic rhetoric to examine his theft of the pears has unequivocally demonstrated the final state of one who had delighted in wickedness: he became far removed from God.

Augustine, however, never explains why he reached this state of sinfulness other than that he desired the delight of loving and being loved. In other words, in the *Confessiones* we are presented with the beginning of his descent (his disordered desire for love) and the end (his delight in wickedness), but no description of the mechanics of that descent away from God. For this we must turn to two earlier works—*De Genesi adversus Manicheos* and *De sermone Domini in monte*—in which Augustine presents his theory on how humankind ends up taking pleasure in its sinful transgressions. His approach to the psychology of sin in these two works not only sheds further light on his concept of delight but also reveals how central rhetorical theory was to that concept.

In book two of *De Genesi adversus Manicheos*, Augustine uses the account of the Fall as a window into the psychology of sin. He writes:

Even now, when any of us slide down into sin, nothing else takes place but what then occurred with those three, the serpent, the woman and the man. First of all, you see, comes the suggestion, either in the thoughts, or through the body's senses, by seeing or touching or hearing or tasting or smelling something. If, when the suggestion has taken shape, our desire or greed is not roused (*movebitur*) to sin, the serpent's cunning will be blocked; if it roused (*mota fuerit*), though, it's as if the woman has already been persuaded (*persuasum*). But sometimes the reason valiantly puts the brake on greed

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<sup>517</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 2.17.25.



even when it has been roused, and brings it to a halt. When this happens, we don't slide into sin, but win the prize with a certain amount of struggle. If however the reason does consent and decide that what lust or greed is urging (*commoverit*) on it should be done, then the man is expelled from the entire life of bliss (*vita beata*), as from paradise.<sup>518</sup>

For Augustine, therefore, the descent into sin comes about by a) the suggestion entering the mind either through thoughts or the senses, b) an emotional response to the sin that rouses desire, and c) reason, upon failing to resist the appeal, consequently consenting to the suggestion. In other words, sin occurs after the presentation of the sinful idea pleases one enough to enact it. Everything here depends on persuasion, and it is interesting to note how often variants on *moveo* or *persuadeo* occur in the passage. Augustine goes on to explain that the sinful suggestion itself is the refusal to live as a contingent being: 'what else is to be understood but a suggestion that they should refuse to be under God any longer, but should be their own masters instead without the Lord...'<sup>519</sup> Non-being, in effect, entices the individual to move away from God towards nothingness, and this constitutes pride (*superbia*). As a result, the sinner is cast away from the happy life. Just as wholesome delight can lead one towards the happy life so too can misdirected delight lead one towards misery.

Augustine returns to this image a few years later in his *De sermone Domini in monte* (393/394) where he gives an even clearer account of delight's role in sin:

For, there are three steps toward the complete commission of a sin: suggestion, pleasure (*delectatione*), and consent. The suggestion is made either through the memory or through the bodily sense—when we are seeing

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<sup>518</sup> *Gn. adu. Man.* 2.21 (CSEL 90.142-143). For good discussions of Augustine's use of the Fall to analyse the process of sin, see the two essays by Eugene TeSelle, 'Exploring the Inner Conflict: Augustine's Sermons on Romans 7 and 8' in Frederick Van Fleteren and Joseph C. Shnaubelt, OSA (eds), *Augustine: Biblical Exegete* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 321-322; 'Serpent, Eve and Adam: Augustine and the Allegorical Tradition' in Joseph T. Leinhard, Earl C. Muller and Roland J. Teske (eds), *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 341.

<sup>519</sup> *Gn. adu. Man.* 2.22.

or hearing or smelling or tasting or touching something. If we take pleasure in the enjoyment of this, it must be repressed if the pleasure is sinful (*Quo si frui delectaverit, delectatio illicita refrenanda est*)...if consent is given, then a sin is fully committed in the heart, and it is known to God...<sup>520</sup>

The *cupiditas* of *De Genesi adversus Manicheos* has now become *delectatione*. The sinful suggestion causes delight and this delight must be repressed lest it lead to consent. If consent is given and the sin is enacted then a ‘more intense pleasure is enkindled (*major accenditur delectatio*) when the suggestion is repeated afterwards’.<sup>521</sup> Illicit delight, therefore, leads to a thirst for greater delight, and through this a habit is formed. The habit itself is ‘very difficult to overcome’, requiring, in fact, the ‘aid’ of Christ. The habit of illicit delight becomes the chain that keeps fallen humanity in bondage to sin.

A passage from Augustine’s sermon on Ps. 9 sheds further light on the mechanics of suggestion, delight and consent. Commenting on the verse, ‘Their own foot has been caught in the very mousetrap which they set’, Augustine explains: ‘Love moves a thing in the direction toward which it tends. But the dwelling-place of the soul is not in any physical space which the form of the body occupies, but in delight (*delectatione*), where it rejoices to have arrived through love. Destructive pleasure (*delectatio...perniciosa*) follows greed, fruitful delight (*fructuosa*) follows love. This is why greed is called a root’.<sup>522</sup> This is a remarkable assertion by Augustine: *delectatio* is the actual place in which the soul dwells and is the ground in which love (*amor*)—both true love (*dilectio* or *caritas*) and false love (*cupiditas* or *libido*)—is rooted.<sup>523</sup> Thus, to delight in something is to place one’s very soul there, which explains why the habit of illicit delight results in bondage. The soul of the

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<sup>520</sup> *s. Dom. mon.* 1.12.34 (CCL 35.36).

<sup>521</sup> *s. Dom. mon.* 1.12.34 (CCL 35.38).

<sup>522</sup> *en. Ps.* 9.15 (CCL 38.66).

<sup>523</sup> For a possible Neoplatonic source for Augustine’s argument, see Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.7.

sinner becomes imprisoned in the unfulfilled *cupiditas*, which moves the soul in the direction towards which it tends: death. Augustine explains this in the same passage:

The foot of sinners, that is their love, is caught in the trap which they themselves hide. This is because when pleasure (*delectatio*) has followed deceitful action, when God has handed them over into the lusts of their heart, the pleasure (*delectatio*) already binds them in such a way that they do not dare to tear their love from it and apply it to useful objects.<sup>524</sup>

These passages shed light on Augustine's own descent into sin as narrated in book two of *Confessiones*. The desire for the delight of loving and being loved was, in effect, the desire of his soul to find its home, through love, in delight. Because that desire was disordered, he succumbed to the suggestion of sinful action, of living as though he were his own creator, and took delight in the thought and performance of those actions. The episode of the pear theft illustrates what happens when one consents to the delight found in a sinful suggestion. Augustine was persuaded to derive pleasure from deliberately sinning and ended up trapped in his own *cupiditas*.

Clearly, delight and persuasion are central to how Augustine understands the psychology of sin. But how and why did he develop this threefold psychological scheme of sinful action? A clue lies in the scheme itself: generally speaking, the threefold process of *suggestione*, *delectione*, and *consensione* conforms to Cicero's *officia oratoris*, or the three functions of the orator: proving, pleasing, and persuading. Just as a jury is presented with an argument, charmed by the orator's delivery, and thereby persuaded to act in accordance with his will, so too are people presented with a sinful idea, charmed by the devil's delivery and thereby moved to enact the sin. Augustine has taken the story of the Fall and universalised it by bringing it into conformity with Ciceronian rhetoric. In theory, those tempted can make use of reason to resist the delight and withhold consent; but Augustine's view

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<sup>524</sup> *en. Ps.* 9.15 (CCL 38.66).

of the human condition is that this, apart from God's grace, never actually happens. And so, the pull to commit sin occurs through the art of persuasion: delight is what empowers the temptation and compels the commission. As he explains elsewhere, people commit sins because they are drawn by sin's 'sweetness' (*suavitas*).<sup>525</sup>

Augustine's illicit delight can be compared to Cicero's, 'babbling stupidity'. Recall that in *De inventione*, Cicero argues that eloquence without wisdom is always harmful. The person who can charm with his or her words but fails to convey wisdom harms the state. In his myth about the origin of civilisation, he conjectures that in the course of events, men 'who were accustomed to stand on the side of falsehood against truth' employed fluency of speech to woo the people into believing them fit to govern.<sup>526</sup> Similarly, as we have now seen, Augustine conceives of a diabolical charm that uses delight and falsehood to beguile people into surrendering to sin the governance of their own will. He has transformed the devil into Cicero's anti-orator: his charm and false wisdom cause reason to act in a way inimical to the soul. Though Cicero's republic has been supplanted by an individual's reason and will, his original logic remains in place. Sin therefore presents itself as a kind of rhetoric, tempting people with its sweetness and eloquence to surrender their will to *cupiditas* and act in a manner that removes them farther from God. Like Augustine's preacher in Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana*, Sin is persuasive rather than coercive; people progress towards *nequitia* through being gripped by delight and compelled to action. That pleasure is a necessary component of non-coercive persuasion explains why Augustine focuses sharply on it. He recognises that pleasure is the greatest weapon in sin's arsenal. Without it, people would not engage in illicit activities. As will be shown in the next chapter, Augustine's approach to sin sets the

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<sup>525</sup> s. 159.6 (PL 38.871).

<sup>526</sup> Cicero, *De inv.* 1.3.

stage for the quintessential rhetorical contest wherein God contends with sin to persuade the soul towards the *beata vita* and away from a descent towards nothingness.

## Temporal Delight

Illicit delight, however, is not the only form of worldly delight for Augustine. Indeed, he is arguably much more concerned with terrestrial delights—those pleasures mediated through the five senses of the body—that may distract us from seeking God’s delight. Such delights differ from illicit ones in that they are not inherently wicked. Because God created these sensual delights, giving them form and beauty, they are good. But, Augustine warns that they cannot be enjoyed for their own sake. In book four of the *Confessiones*, he describes the proper role of temporal delights: ‘If physical objects give you pleasure (*placent*), praise God for them and return love to their Maker lest, in the things that please you, you displease him....For he did not create and then depart; the things derived from him have their being in him’.<sup>527</sup> Such pleasures are in a sense sacramental insofar as they express to the five senses what, to Augustine’s way of thinking, most truly exists spiritually and invisibly.<sup>528</sup>

But lawful delights can distract; they can become the objects of our attention instead of windows through which we observe God’s beauty and glory. Augustine writes, ‘Yet sin is committed for the sake of all these things and others of this kind when, in consequence of an immoderate urge towards those things which are at the bottom end of the scale of good, we abandon the higher and supreme goods, that is you, Lord God, and your truth and your law. These inferior goods have their delights,

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<sup>527</sup> *conf.* 4.12.18 (CCL 27.49).

<sup>528</sup> See, for example, *doc. chr.* 1.4.

but not comparable to my God who made them all'.<sup>529</sup> These inferior objects are not evil or sinful in themselves, but they can become the occasion for sin by drawing people's attention away from God in whom both they and the objects participate and obtain their being.

Unfortunately, inferior and mutable objects are bound to distract because people derive knowledge through their senses. In q. 64 of *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, Augustine allegorically interprets the five husbands of the Samaritan woman at the well as the five senses of the body.<sup>530</sup> He writes, 'the first stage of man is steeped in these five senses of flesh by the necessity of a mortal nature whereby we are begotten in such a state after the sin of the first man that, the light of the mind not yet restored, we are subject to senses of the flesh, and we spend life engrossed in the flesh without any understanding of the truth'.<sup>531</sup> This is a similar idea to that we encountered in Victorinus's commentary on *De inventione*, and a commonplace in Neoplatonic philosophy: the mind is trapped in flesh, unaware of divine and human wisdom, until it has been aided by something transcendent: for Victorinus, philosophical wisdom and for Augustine, participatory redemption. But Augustine also describes this state as the 'first stage', and adds that it is necessarily 'the condition of infants and small children, who are not yet capable of reason'.<sup>532</sup> During childhood, this sensory knowledge is legitimate, granted by God the creator, and allegorically represented by the Samaritan woman's first five husbands. Augustine probably stressed the initial goodness of a life bound by the senses to counter Manichaeism.

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<sup>529</sup> *conf.* 2.5.11.

<sup>530</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 64.7. See Cornelia W. Wolfskeel, 'Some Remarks with Regard to Augustine's Conception of Man as the Image of God' *Vigiliae Christianae* 30.1 (1976), 63-71.

<sup>531</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 64.7.

<sup>532</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 64.7.

But knowledge delimited by the senses is only legitimate in children who have yet to reach the age of reason. After that, the mind must not ‘use those senses as guides’. Rather it must be subjected to the ‘rational spirit’ and take the ‘divine Word as its lawful husband’. Augustine then introduces participative language: ‘Clinging in union to this Word (since man’s spirit itself will cling to Christ, because Christ is the head of the husband), the soul enjoys through spiritual embrace eternal life without any fear of separation’.<sup>533</sup> Freedom from sensory knowledge is a sign of growing participation in God through the Word. But Augustine thinks that this is clearly not the state of most people. He writes, ‘...that woman was in the grip of an error which signified the mass of people in the world subjected to empty superstitions following the era of the five senses of the flesh which ruled the first age’ and this ‘mass of people’ are caught in a diabolical ‘embrace’. They are trapped in the temporal and mutable because they have not outgrown sensory knowledge to perceive the deeper, eternal delight of God.

While addressing the question of grace in his letter to Honoratus (411/412), Augustine takes up again this idea of the need to outgrow dependency on the five senses in adulthood. But he does this in a way that more clearly connects this growth with the problem of temporal delights:

There is a certain life of a human being wrapped up in the senses of the flesh, given over to carnal enjoyment (*gaudiis carnalibus*), shunning carnal injury and pursuing carnal pleasure (*voluptatem*). The happiness of this life is temporal. It is a matter of necessity to begin with in this life, but a matter of will to continue it. An infant is, of course, poured into this life from the womb of the mother; it flees as much as it can the injuries of this life; it desires pleasures; it can do no more. But after a child has come to the age at which the use of reason awakens in it, the youngster can, when the will is helped by God, choose another life whose enjoyment lies in the mind, whose happiness is internal and eternal.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 64.7.

<sup>534</sup> *ep.* 140.2.3 (PL 33.539).

People are born with an innate desire for sensory pleasure. Again, this is perfectly good and natural in children, but in adults it is sinful if the enjoyment is not oriented towards God. Augustine stresses this point when he writes, ‘The rational soul, therefore, can make good use of temporal and bodily happiness (*temporali et corporali felicitate*) if it does not devote itself to the creature while neglecting the creator, but makes that happiness rather serve the creator who has also given it out of the most abundant generosity of his goodness’.<sup>535</sup> The way one does this is by ‘distinguishing, choosing, and weighing’ the created goods so that God’s order is preserved and the lesser goods are subordinated to the greater. Otherwise, one will become turned (*convertat*) towards what is worse and become disordered. This gives us an insight into the mechanics of participative existence. The movement towards God involves a delight that is oriented towards God, either directly or through the ordered enjoyment of created goods. On the other hand, enjoying created goods for their own sake or in a disordered way causes people to tend towards wickedness and their own disorder.

Augustine is also concerned that temporal delights can captivate an unilluminated mind. He discusses the mechanics of how this works in *De Trinitate* 10.5.7. There he explains that the *mens* is commanded to know itself so that it ‘should want to be placed according to its nature...under him it should be ruled by, over all that it ought to rule’. In other words, the *mens* enjoys pre-eminence with Augustine’s conception of a well-ordered, hierarchical creation. Instead, of keeping to this supreme position within creation, however, the *mens* becomes fixated with external beauty and wants to possess them for itself. It undergoes its own fall by turning away

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<sup>535</sup> *ep.* 140.2.4 (PL 33.539).



from God towards the inferior. Augustine's explanation of this fall takes us with rhetorical flourish into his understanding of participatory existence:

So it turns away from him and slithers and slides down into less and less which is imagined to be more and more, it can find satisfaction neither in itself nor in anything else as it gets further away from him who alone can satisfy it. So it is that in its destitution and distress it becomes excessively intent on its own actions and the disturbing pleasures (*inquietas delectationes*) it culls from them...<sup>536</sup>

The enjoyment of the temporal leads to a Gollum-like existence at the edge of nothingness. In this way, *De Trinitate* 10.7 echoes the passage from *De vera religione* discussed in the last chapter: 'A life, therefore, which by voluntary defect falls away from him who made it, whose essence it enjoyed, and, contrary to the law of God, seeks to enjoy bodily objects which God made to be inferior to it, tends to nothingness'.<sup>537</sup> Augustine makes the connection between temporal delight and death even clearer at the end of next chapter of *De vera religione*: 'Life which delights in material joys and neglects God tends to nothingness and is thereby iniquity'.<sup>538</sup> The descent towards *nequitia* is due to the power of love. When people delight in anything they become stuck to it like glue. In the case of temporal, mutable objects, their love binds them to the objects, drags them down and keeps them from returning to their own selves and to God. People become alienated from God and the mind, glued to a fragmented and fragmenting world, succumbs, in the words of R.A. Markus, to 'self-dissipation'.<sup>539</sup>

The way in which Augustine works out the problem of temporal versus spiritual delights is through his familiar distinction between those things which ought

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<sup>536</sup> *trin.* 10.7 (CCL 50.320).

<sup>537</sup> *ver. rel.* 11.21.

<sup>538</sup> *ver. rel.* 11.22 (CCL 32. 201): '...*quapropter vita, quae fructu corporis delectata negligit Deum, inclinatur ad nihilum, et ista est nequitia*'.

<sup>539</sup> *trin.* 5.7.; R.A. Markus, "'Alienatio.'" Philosophy and Eschatology in the Development of an Augustinian Idea,' *Studia Patristica* 9:3 (Berlin, 1966), 447.

only to be used (*usus*), those which ought to be enjoyed (*fruitio*), and those which can be both used and enjoyed. The distinction itself is neatly stated in book one of *De doctrina Christiana*: ‘There are some things which are to be enjoyed, some which are to be used, and some whose function is both to enjoy and use’.<sup>540</sup> Next, he explains that only God himself should be enjoyed while all else, including our neighbours, must only be ‘used’. The only distinction he makes between objects and human beings (both classified as *res*) is that the latter should be ‘used’ with love.<sup>541</sup> But even then, the love one has for one’s neighbour should be directed towards God; one does not love neighbours for their own sake but for God’s sake.

Unsurprisingly, Augustine’s approach here has caused not a little disquiet among scholars. For example, Anders Nygren describes Augustine’s approach as ‘acquisitive’ and exploitive, seeking to utilise others, including God, merely for the single-minded ascent from the temporal towards the eternal bliss.<sup>542</sup> Although others, such as Ragnar Holte, have developed more creative explanations for Augustine’s distinctions, no one appears comfortable with Augustine’s scheme. Oliver O’Donovan in his landmark essay, ‘*Usus and Fruitio in Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana I*’ examines the development of Augustine’s distinction from the Cassiciacum texts through his later works, focusing primarily on *De doctrina Christiana*, and concludes that Augustine never entirely mastered the division.<sup>543</sup> He argues that Augustine himself was not comfortable with the idea of our ‘using’ our neighbours, and so avoided the term in his later writings.<sup>544</sup> What is one to make of

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<sup>540</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.7.

<sup>541</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.39-40.

<sup>542</sup> Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, tr. Philip S. Watson (London: SPCK, 1982), 510-511.

<sup>543</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, “‘Usus’ and ‘Fruitio’ in Augustine, “De doctrina christiana”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982), 361-397.

<sup>544</sup> O’Donovan, “‘Usus’ and ‘Fruitio’”, 390-397.

Augustine's distinction in light of what we have discovered about participatory existence and delight?

First, that Augustine makes such a distinction should not be at all surprising. Really, he is doing no more than thinking through, in terms of human love, how one relates to God and to the rest of creation. As we have seen, the distinction between God as pure *esse* and all else as contingent *esse* is a fundamental one for Augustine. With such a conception, how one relates to God will necessarily be of a different order than how one relates to objects (*res*) of creation. At one level, therefore, Augustine's division of that which should be enjoyed and that which should only be used (with or without love) is merely a restatement of his concept of what it means to be contingent. One might rephrase his division as the love of Supreme Being versus the love of contingent beings.

Second, one ought not to become too fixated on the word 'use'. In many ways, it is unfortunate that the Latin word *usus* should have come down into English as 'use' with its distinctive utilitarian overtones. *De Trinitate* 6.11 should alert us to the possibility that *usus* has a different connotation in Latin than in English. There, Augustine attempts to explain what Hilary means when he describes the Trinity as 'Eternity in the Father, form in the image, use in the gift'.<sup>545</sup> It is here where he explains that what Hilary means by *usus* is that the Holy Spirit is the 'love, delight, felicity, or blessedness' of the Trinity. Obviously, these are not images that come to mind in our own concept of 'use', and so Augustine probably has something less exploitive in mind when he employs *usus* to describe our relation to *res*. In fact, *usus* in Latin can mean 'use, application, practice, exercise, social intercourse,

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<sup>545</sup> *trin.* 6.11.

familiarity’.<sup>546</sup> In the note to his translation of *De Trinitate* 6.11, Edmund Hill admits that he was tempted to translate *usus* as ‘intimacy’ as in his view it expresses Augustine’s mind better.<sup>547</sup> In fact, *usus* recurs often in rhetorical theory to describe the sought after state in which the rhetor has grown so familiar with technique and style that they come naturally and automatically in the midst of an oration.<sup>548</sup> In the end, there is no perfect equivalent in English to *usus*. This does not, however, matter because if one focuses more on what Augustine is attempting to describe by the term *usus* instead of on the term itself, his intent becomes much clearer. As will be shown, he is simply speaking of a different order of love than the one reserved for God: *fruitio* is a love that terminates in the beloved (*seipsum*) while *usus* is a love that relates to God through the beloved creature.

The division between the two types of love is evident when Augustine writes, ‘To enjoy something is to hold fast (*inhaerere*) to it in love for its own sake (*seipsam*). To use something is to apply whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love—if indeed it is something that ought to be loved (the improper use of something should be termed abuse)’.<sup>549</sup> What Augustine has in mind here is not altogether different from participation. As has been seen, *inhaero* is one of Augustine’s typical terms for participation. Christ inheres human nature enabling the faithful to inhere God. Accordingly, to enjoy something is to participate in or share a communion with it. But what are we to make of his definition of *usus*? Certainly at face value it would seem exploitive since the *res* appears to be merely the means for obtaining what one loves. Such an understanding is further bolstered by Augustine’s subsequent Platonic parable in which he compares our earthly pilgrimage

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<sup>546</sup> ‘Usus,’ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, P.G.W. Glare (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

<sup>547</sup> Edmund Hill, *On the Trinity* (New York: New City Press, 1991, n. 16, p. 215.

<sup>548</sup> See, for example, Cicero, *De orat.* 2.355.

<sup>549</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.4.4 (CCL 32.8).

to a journey back to one's homeland. In order to accomplish this journey 'we would need transport by land or sea which we could use to travel to our homeland, the object of our enjoyment'.<sup>550</sup> He concludes from this analogy that 'if we wish to return to the homeland where we can be happy we must use this world, not enjoy it, in order to discern "the invisible attributes of God, which are understood through what has been made" or, in other words, to derive eternal and spiritual value from corporeal and temporal things'.<sup>551</sup>

First, one ought to note that at this point Augustine is speaking broadly about that which may be enjoyed and that which ought to be used: that is, about God and the world. One's neighbour has yet to enter the discussion. In this respect, Augustine is merely restating his view of temporal versus spiritual delights. If people seek to enjoy the temporal, they will become distracted from God (conceived here as their homeland) and 'reluctant to finish our journey quickly, being ensnared in the wrong kind of pleasure and estranged from the homeland whose pleasures could make us happy'. Really, this claim is no different from what we discovered in *De vera religione* 11.21 or *De Trinitate* 10.5.7. In fact, Augustine's definition of *fruitio* as involving inherence explains why in *De Trinitate* (and elsewhere) he can say that the love of the temporal acts as a glue: the love itself acts as a bond that can only be broken with difficulty; thus, enjoyment of, or inherence in the temporal leads to bondage and ruin. What *De doctrina Christiana* adds, however, is a theory about why a fixation on the temporal leads to such bondage and ruin: true enjoyment of the temporal is an attempt to find ultimate delight in that which is finite.<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.4.4.

<sup>551</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.4.4.

<sup>552</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.33.37. In terms of the overarching argument Augustine makes here this is the same as treating a *signum* as a *res*.

Second, Augustine defines both *fruitio* and *usus* in terms of happiness. His introduction to this section of *De doctrina Christiana* makes this clear:

There are some things which are to be enjoyed, some which are to be used, and some whose function is both to enjoy and use. Those which are to be enjoyed make us happy; those which are to be used assist us and give us a boost, so to speak, as we press on towards our happiness, so that we may reach and hold fast (*inhaerere*) to the things which make us happy. And we, placed as we are among things of both kinds, both enjoy and use them; but if we choose to enjoy things that are to be used, our advance is impeded and sometimes even diverted, and we are held back, or even put off, from attaining things which are to be enjoyed, because we are hamstrung by our love of lower things.<sup>553</sup>

Although Nygren interprets happiness here as subjective, O'Donovan correctly notes that this is not how Augustine understood the concept.<sup>554</sup> As we will examine further in the next chapter, *beata vita* for Augustine is synonymous with God and so is *objective*: 'When I seek for you, my God, my quest is for the happy life'.<sup>555</sup> In other words, he is not arguing that people choose what makes them happy and then employ the world to achieve that subjective joy. Instead, because the happy life is God, one can only derive happiness from him. To attempt to base happiness on anything else is futile or worse because it will ultimately do no more than ensnare people in 'perverse sweetness' (*perversa suavitate*) and alienate them from God.<sup>556</sup> Augustine explains the difference: 'For when the object of love is present, it inevitably brings with it delight (*delectationem*) as well. If you go beyond this delight and relate it to your permanent goal, you are using it, and are said to enjoy it not in the literal sense but in a transferred sense. But if you hold fast (*inhaeseris*) and go no further, making it the goal of your joy (*laetitiae*), then you should be described as enjoying it in the true and

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<sup>553</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.3.3 (CCL 32.8). See also 1.32.35 where Augustine states, '...we should only enjoy a thing by which we are made happy, but use everything else'.

<sup>554</sup> Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 532; O'Donovan, *Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, 156.

<sup>555</sup> *conf.* 10.20.29. For a more detailed discussion, see the next chapter.

<sup>556</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.4.4 (CCL 32.8).

literal sense of the word'.<sup>557</sup> Only God is up to task of fulfilling such joy. The implication of Augustine's approach is really the opposite of what Nygren contends. To seek fulfilment in the contingent is exploitive because one seeks from the created object what it cannot deliver.

Finally, the division between the enjoyment of God and the use of the temporal world is not entirely negative. Things that can be used to 'assist' as if propping someone up (*quasi adminiculumur*). Indeed, people depend on these temporal props in order to discern the 'invisible attributes of God' and to 'grasp the eternal and spiritual from corporeal and temporal things'. This description should not be surprising as it develops Augustine's thesis in *De doctrina Christiana* that the world is divided between things (*res*) and signs (*signa*). God is supremely *res*, indeed is beyond *res*, of whom all else is a *signum*.<sup>558</sup> As Rowan Williams argues, God gives meaning to creation—it is 'uttered' and 'meant' by God—and so creation lacks its own meaning.<sup>559</sup> Created beings are oriented towards God, pointing towards the one from whom they have their existence. Such language is sacramental and suggests that enjoyment comes through the aid of temporal goods: *fruitio* and *usus* are, thus, closely connected.

Understood in this way, Augustine's choice of *usus* to describe our relation to our neighbour and, indeed, to ourselves becomes less problematic. Williams explains why very clearly, 'The language of *uti* is designed to warn against an attitude towards any finite person or object that terminates their meaning in their capacity to satisfy my desire, that treats them as the end of desire, conceiving my meaning in terms of

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<sup>557</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.33.37 (CCL 32.27).

<sup>558</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.10.10; 2.1.1.

<sup>559</sup> Rowan Williams, 'Language, Reality and Desire in Augustine's *De doctrina*', *Literature and Theology* 3.2 (July 1989), 141.

them and theirs in terms of me'.<sup>560</sup> In effect, to enjoy someone on their own account is to abuse them since they are incapable of giving rest to the restless heart. As Augustine writes, 'if we enjoy one another in ourselves, we remain as it were on the road and put our hopes of happiness on a human being or an angel'.<sup>561</sup> Augustine's painful recollection of the loss of a dear friend in *Confessiones* 4.9-14 explains why this is so. After speaking of all the shared pleasure of friendship—involving a 'thousand gestures of delight'—Augustine explains that one may not find ultimate solace in friendship because when a friend dies, one is plunged into 'the darkness of grief, and as the sweetness is turned into bitterness the heart is flooded with tears'.<sup>562</sup> From the agony of loss, Augustine concludes, 'wherever the human soul turns itself, other than to you, it is fixed in sorrows, even if it is fixed upon beautiful things external to you and external to itself, which would nevertheless be nothing if they did not have their being from you. Things rise and set: in their emerging they begin as it were to be, and grow to perfection; having reached perfection, they grow old and die'.<sup>563</sup> Augustine felt acutely the fleeting nature of the temporal; for him it could never be the source of true happiness or of fruitful enjoyment.

Because love is involved in the use of our neighbours, however, Augustine admits that utilitarian love is *practically* enjoyment. Enjoying God in our neighbour is to enjoy that person 'in the Lord'.<sup>564</sup> O'Donovan argues that this qualification of *usus* suggests that Augustine is uncomfortable with his absolute distinction between *usus* and *fruitio* and grudgingly provides for a third option by introducing a 'looser'

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<sup>560</sup> Williams, 'Language, Reality and Desire', 140.

<sup>561</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.33.36.

<sup>562</sup> *conf.* 4.9.14. Read in light of the chaos of a crumbling empire, Augustine's words become especially poignant.

<sup>563</sup> *conf.* 4.10.15.

<sup>564</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.34.38 (quoting Phil. 20).



meaning of enjoyment.<sup>565</sup> Perhaps another reason for this qualification is that Augustine recognises the special status of human beings: unlike other creatures, they rationally participate, however poorly, in God's Being. It logically follows then that human love should also be 'in the Lord'. In fact, Augustine's very language suggests participation: to enjoy God in a neighbour one must enjoy that neighbour in God. Mutual human love, even defined as *usus*, is one facet of humanity's shared participation. It is also worth noting that Augustine states that enjoying someone in the Lord 'is very close to that of using someone or something together with delight (*cum delectatione uti*)'.<sup>566</sup> That delight or pleasure must be directed towards God for it truly to be sweet just as the traces of God in creation must lead towards God in order to be signs.

The enjoyment of others in the Lord is therefore a corporate activity, which may explain why Augustine makes a further distinction about *usus*. He writes, 'a person who loves his neighbour properly should, in concert with him, aim to love God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind'.<sup>567</sup> Later, he adds, 'another human being should be loved more than our own bodies, because all these things are to be loved on account of God whereas another person can enjoy God together with us in a way which a body cannot...'<sup>568</sup> The journey towards the homeland is not a lonely one. Indeed, it requires the help of others on the same journey. He writes, 'Of all those who are capable of enjoying God together with us, we love (*diligimus*) some whom we are helping, and some who are helping us; some whose help we need and some whose needs we are meeting; some to whom we give no benefit and some by whom we do not expect any benefit to be given to us. But it should be our desire that

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<sup>565</sup> O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Saint Augustine*, 389.

<sup>566</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.33.37 (CCL 32.27).

<sup>567</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.22.21.

<sup>568</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.27.28.

they all love (*diligant*) God together with us...'<sup>569</sup> Here Augustine presents his clearest expression of *cum delectatione uti*: far from being exploitation, it represents a fellowship in which *amor* is not an end in itself but part of the means whereby the faithful transcend the world to enjoy God. Ultimately for Augustine, *amor* is grounded in and sanctified by *dilectus/caritas*.

### ***Consuetudo***

One reason why Augustine is so concerned about people enjoying the temporal is that delight impacts upon the *memoria* in such a way as to form a habit (*consuetudo*). We have already encountered this aspect of Augustine's thought in his discussion of the mechanics of sin in *De sermone Domini in monte*. There, he points out that after someone consents to the delight experienced from an illicit suggestion the delight grows more palpable the next time one encounters the suggestion:

If he then goes so far as to perform the corresponding act, the craving seems to be satisfied and extinguished, but a more intense pleasure is enkindled when the suggestion is repeated afterwards. The pleasure, however, is far less than that which has turned into a habit (*consuetudinem*) by continuous acts, for it is very difficult to overcome this habit (*consuetudinem*).<sup>570</sup>

This is a remarkably modern statement of the 'law of diminishing returns' whereby an addiction is formed. This passage demonstrates that Augustine was acutely aware of the 'addictive' quality of pleasure, and this psychological awareness allowed him to conceive of how the Pauline image of bondage to sin works within human experience.

In fact, the habit-forming nature of delight and pleasure is an integral feature of Augustine's theology and is central to his scheme of participatory existence.

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<sup>569</sup> *doc. chr.* 1.29.30 (CCL 32.23).

<sup>570</sup> *s. Dom. mon.* 1.12.34 (CCL 35.38).

Because the consent to delight—whether holy or carnal—creates a bond, both salvation and damnation are forms of bondage. The question for Augustine, then, is not between autonomy and bondage but between a bondage to God, which is also paradoxically freedom, and the bondage to sin, which is death. In both cases, the experience of delight and its influence over the will are what create the bond. In the next chapter, we will examine how Augustine conceives of the bondage to God. Here, we will conclude the discussion of worldly delight by studying how the bondage to worldly delights works.

According to J.G. Prendiville, Augustine likely developed his idea of *consuetudo* from three sources: Aristotle's *Categories*, the *Enneads*, and through his rhetorical training.<sup>571</sup> In the *Categories*, which Augustine knew in its Latin translation (probably through Marius Victorinus<sup>572</sup>), Aristotle defines habit as a quality of a substance, not a substance itself:

One sort of quality let us call 'habit' or 'disposition'. Habit differs from disposition in being more lasting and more firmly established. The various kinds of knowledge and of virtue are habits, for knowledge, even when acquired only in a moderate degree, is, it is agreed, abiding in its character and difficult to displace, unless some great mental upheaval takes place, through disease or any such cause. The virtues, also, such as justice, self-restraint, and so on, are not easily dislodged or dismissed, so as to give place to vice.<sup>573</sup>

Habits (*consuetudine*) differ from dispositions (*affectio*) in that they are enduring and changed only with great difficulty. Dispositions are 'volatile' and fickle, though they can become 'inveterate' and thus habits. Aristotle concludes, 'It is evident that men incline to call those conditions habits which are of a more or less permanent type and difficult to displace; for those who are not retentive of knowledge, but volatile, are

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<sup>571</sup> J. G. Prendiville, 'The Development of the Idea of Habit in the Thought of St. Augustine,' *Traditio* 28 (1972), 29.

<sup>572</sup> Prendiville, 'The Development of the Idea of Habit', 29.

<sup>573</sup> Aristotle, *Cat.* 8b, 26.

not said to have such and such a habit as regards knowledge, yet they are disposed, we may say, either better or worse, towards knowledge. Thus habit differs from disposition in this, that while the latter is ephemeral, the former is permanent and difficult to alter'.<sup>574</sup>

According to Prendiville, Aristotle's definition of habit became a commonplace in the ancient world. One of clearest examples that Aristotle's definition of habit informs Augustine's own is found in *De quantitate animae* (387-8): 'Through habit (*consuetudine*) it becomes linked to the habitat and environment of the body, and from these it undergoes separation with reluctance as though they were parts of the body; this force of habit (*consuetudinis vis*) is called memory when the link with those places is not dissevered even by separation and the lapse of time'.<sup>575</sup> Aristotle also describes habit as a 'second nature' (*consuetudo secunda natura*), a term which Prendiville traces from 'Aristotle through Cicero to Macrobius, Basil, and Augustine'.<sup>576</sup> What Aristotle means by this is that the habit becomes so ingrained that it is acted upon instinctively without the need for prior deliberation.<sup>577</sup>

Such a theory would obviously be important to rhetorical training, with its emphasis on inculcating theory through repetitive exercises. In *De oratore*, Cicero speaks of the importance of habit while discussing the role of memory in public speaking. According to him, memory offers 'great usefulness' and 'great power' by allowing the orator to retain what he learned in accepting a case, his own reflections

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<sup>574</sup> Aristotle, *Cat.* 8b, 26.

<sup>575</sup> *quant.* 71 (PL 32.1074).

<sup>576</sup> Prendiville, 'The Development of the Idea of Habit', 76-77. For Augustine's reference to this term, see *c. Jul.* 5.59; 6.41.

<sup>577</sup> See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1115a6-1117b22 where Aristotle discusses the problem of deliberation in moments requiring immediate bravery. Aristotle's ideal is for virtues to be so deeply inculcated that they spring naturally from a person's character rather than requiring moral deliberation.

on the case, and his arrangement of arguments'.<sup>578</sup> But almost no one has a memory keen enough to perform all these tasks without useful mnemonic devices and regular practice (*consuetudine*).<sup>579</sup> He recommends, therefore, engaging the five senses (particularly sight) in the process of memorisation: by forming mental images, 'conveyed and imprinted...by one of the senses', one can form mnemonic devices.<sup>580</sup> He concludes, 'Practice, the starting point for developing a habit (*consuetudo*), will provide the requisite skill'.<sup>581</sup> By habitually employing the senses, even in an imaginative way, a mental link is created between the memory and the object of memorisation.<sup>582</sup> Clearly, Augustine's own rhetorical training would have conformed to Cicero's recommendation and would have provided him with the deeper awareness of how powerful habits can be.

Augustine's own reading and experience therefore led him to understand habit as a quasi-permanent state that develops through practice and, because of its enduring nature, can only be overcome with great difficulty. The passage from his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount suggests that by then he had further analysed Aristotle's definition to include the mechanics by which practice becomes habit. The experience of pleasure creates the affective glue that entraps people and makes them unable to change their ways. In the case of sin, habit ties sinners intimately to death. Augustine takes up this very idea immediately following his analysis of the mechanics of sin and habit. He writes, 'just as sin is reached through the three successive stages of suggestion, pleasure (*delectatione*), and consent, so also

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<sup>578</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 2.355.

<sup>579</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 2.357 (LCL 468).

<sup>580</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 2.357.

<sup>581</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 2.358 (LCL 470).

<sup>582</sup> See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) for superbly detailed accounts of the use of mental imagery in memorisation for rhetorical performance.

there are three distinct degrees of the same sin, accordingly as it is in the heart, in a deed, or in a habit (*consuetudine*).<sup>583</sup> He likens these three degrees to kinds of death. The first is compared to death at home, the second to the corpse being carried outside, and the third, ‘when, by the weight of a bad habit (*consuetudinis malae*), the mind is pressed down as by a mound of earth—to the dead body rotting in the grave’.<sup>584</sup>

Augustine returns to this image in a sermon preached shortly before 418 on Luke 7.11-15.<sup>585</sup> He begins by distinguishing between bodily and spiritual death.<sup>586</sup> The first is visible and lamented, the second invisible and unnoticed. Then, as in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, he gives three examples of people restored to life from the Gospels: Jairus’ daughter, the widow’s son in Luke 7, and Lazarus. These, he continues, represent the three types of sinners, ‘whom today too Christ is still restoring to life’.<sup>587</sup> Jairus’ daughter signifies those who ‘have sin inside in their hearts, but don’t yet have it in actual deed’. In other words, the sinful suggestion has been made, but they have yet to consent to or be persuaded by it. The widow’s son represents those who, ‘after consenting to the wicked thought, proceed to put it into practice, like people carrying out the dead man’ and so the sin becomes public. Finally, Lazarus represents ‘people, who by doing what is wrong also tie themselves up in evil habits (*mala consuetudine*), become defenders of their own evil deeds’.<sup>588</sup>

Augustine concludes vividly:

So habituated (*consuetudo erat*) were they to their unspeakable vileness, that now wickedness (*nequitia*) sets the standard of justice....Such people, weighed

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<sup>583</sup> s. *Dom. mon.* 1.12.35 (CSEL 35.38).

<sup>584</sup> s. *Dom. mon.* 1.12.35 (CSEL 35.38). Augustine then compares restoration to Jesus’ raising of Jairus’ daughter, the second to the young man in Lk 7.14, and the last to the raising of Lazarus.

<sup>585</sup> Edmund Hill, O.P., *Sermons*, III/4 (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1992), 43.

<sup>586</sup> s. 98.2 (PL38.591): ‘*Ille quidem mortuus erat corpore; illi autem mente*’.

<sup>587</sup> s. 98.5.

<sup>588</sup> s. 98.5 (PL 38.594).

down by malignant habit (*consuetudine maligna*), are as it were not only dead but buried. But what must I say, brothers and sisters? Not only buried, but as was said about Lazarus, He's already stinking. That massive stone placed against the tomb, that is the hard force of habit which weighs on the soul and doesn't allow it either to rise or to breathe.<sup>589</sup>

Augustine finally concludes by connecting the development of sinful habits to his threefold scheme of sin: 'First, you see, there is the tingle of pleasure in the heart (*delectationis in corde*); second consent (*consensio*); third, the deed; and fourth, addiction, habit (*consuetudo*)'.<sup>590</sup> Interestingly, in the first two stages of sin, death is not final; the chain of habit, however, binds one so powerfully to death (Augustine again brings up the image of Lazarus's stench) that without Christ's intervention freedom is impossible.

Moreover, from his earliest writings, Augustine argues that *consuetudo* also binds people powerfully to the temporal. Unlike 'evil habits', these habits do not arise from the consent to and enactment of actual sin. Instead, such habits arise from an improper use, enjoyment or consideration of created goods, including the body. In *De moribus*, Augustine describes the body as a person's 'heaviest bond' (*gravissimum vinculum*) that is granted power over the soul by the soul's fear of pain and death.<sup>591</sup> The reason for this is that the soul loves the body 'from the force of habit' (*vi consuetudinis*), and does not realise that through ordered use and God's grace its resurrection and reformation can be effected.<sup>592</sup>

*De vera religione* provides an even clearer description of the bondage that comes through temporal habits; interestingly, this appears during Augustine's

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<sup>589</sup> s. 98.5 (PL 38.594).

<sup>590</sup> s. 98.6 (PL 38.595).

<sup>591</sup> *mor.* 1.22.40 (CSEL 90.45).

<sup>592</sup> *mor.* 1.22.40 (CSEL 90.46).

discussion of the persuasive power of classical philosophy.<sup>593</sup> He begins his work by defining the ‘good and blessed life’ as the ‘true religion wherein one God is worshipped and acknowledged with purest piety to be the beginning of all existing things, originating, perfecting, and containing the universe’.<sup>594</sup> Against this true religion, he sets those who prefer to worship many gods. Socrates, however, demonstrated the falsehood of polytheism by mockingly swearing ‘by a dog or a stone or any other object that happened to be near at hand’ in order to show others how ‘sunk in superstition’ they were.<sup>595</sup> Although Socrates’ insights were written down by Plato, ‘making it pleasant to read rather than potent to persuade’, the philosophers were not fit to change minds because they publicly shared in the ‘idolatrous superstitions and worldly vanity’.

People need to be persuaded because they have developed worldly habits that bind them to the visible world. According to Augustine, so long as the rational soul ‘is weakened by love of things that come to be and pass away, or the pain at losing them, so long as it is devoted to the custom of this life (*consuetudo huius uitae*) and to the bodily senses, and becomes vain among vain images, it laughs at those who say that there is something which cannot be seen by the eyes, or conjured up by any phantasm, but can be beheld by the mind alone, by the intelligence’.<sup>596</sup> Such habits ground people in contingent existence, separating them from the God who, as *De vera religione* states in its first line, is the source and sustainer of all life. Later, Augustine asks rhetorically for someone to present him with anyone who has truly resisted earthly bondage. He demands, ‘Give me a man who can resist the carnal senses and

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<sup>593</sup> See Prendiville, ‘The Development of the Idea of Habit’, 30-56; Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology*, 190 for discussions of *consuetudo* in *ver. rel.*

<sup>594</sup> *ver. rel.* 1.1.

<sup>595</sup> *ver. rel.* 2.

<sup>596</sup> *ver. rel.* 3 (CCL 32.189).



the impressions which they impose on the mind; one who can resist human custom (*consuetudo hominum*) and human praise...<sup>597</sup> Finally, he calls the attachment to the world *consuetudo carnalis*, which the Holy Spirit bids people to resist and from which God calls them.<sup>598</sup> As Prendiville notes, in *De vera religione* Augustine shows how *consuetudo corporum* ‘tightens its hold’ on humanity, leading it to neglect God and prefer created goods to the Creator.<sup>599</sup>

As with illicit delight, Augustine portrays the experience of *consuetudo* most vividly in the *Confessiones*, in this case in his discussion of his final conversion to Christianity. Book 8 opens with Augustine having accepted the spiritual nature of God and dealt with the problem of evil. He has accepted the truths of Nicene Christianity. Now, he claims to God that his desire is ‘not to be more certain of you but to be more stable in you’.<sup>600</sup> The difficulty for him at this time is that although he is ‘attracted’ by Christian belief, he is still ‘reluctant to go along its narrow paths’.<sup>601</sup> In actuality, as he proceeds to explain, his difficulty is that he believes he is called to celibacy, but has not yet the inclination to embrace it.<sup>602</sup> And so he finds himself praying, ‘Grant me chastity and abstinence, but not yet’.<sup>603</sup>

One possible way to look at Augustine’s situation is in terms of Ciceronian rhetoric. He has been presented with the truth or the argument of Christianity. He has even gone so far as to accept it. But he has not yet been persuaded; the mental acceptance has not yet compelled an active response. The argument—that ‘by the

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<sup>597</sup> *ver. rel.* 64 (CCL 32.229).

<sup>598</sup> *ver. rel.* 88 (CCL 32.245).

<sup>599</sup> Prendiville, ‘The Development of the Idea of Habit’, 32.

<sup>600</sup> *conf.* 8.1.1. For an insightful discussion of *consuetudo* in book 8 of the *Confessiones* in its wider context, see Prendiville (1972), 57-83.

<sup>601</sup> *conf.* 8.1.1.

<sup>602</sup> *conf.* 8.1.2. ‘But I was firmly tied by woman. The apostle did not forbid me to marry, though he exhorted me to something better and very much wished that all men were as unattached as he himself’.

<sup>603</sup> *conf.* 8.7.17.

witness of all creation I had found you our Creator and your Word who is God beside you and with you is one God, by whom you created all things'<sup>604</sup>—has not yet caused him to live as he believes he ought; his affections have yet to be converted.

Considering the rhetorical paradigm that lies behind this part of his confession, it should not be surprising that in the midst of this discussion Augustine should dwell on the two rhetors who most influenced him: Victorinus and Cicero.

First, Simplicianus, whom Augustine is visiting, presents the memory of Victorinus to 'exhort' Augustine to the 'humility of Christ'.<sup>605</sup> Augustine recounts the story of Victorinus's conversion from paganism to Christianity, dwelling at length on the delight and joy his conversion caused,<sup>606</sup> and concludes by claiming that the story caused him to be 'ardent to follow his example'.<sup>607</sup> But the example is not sufficient:

I sighed after such freedom, but was bound not by an iron imposed by anyone else but by the iron of my own choice. The enemy had a grip on my will and so made a chain for me to hold me a prisoner. The consequence of a distorted will is passion. By servitude to passion, habit is formed (*facta est consuetudo*), and habit to which there is no resistance becomes necessity. By these links, as it were, connect one to another...a harsh bondage held me under restraint.<sup>608</sup>

As in *De vera religione*, Augustine is bound by a 'carnal' will, 'harsh bondage' that restrained him from actually converting. The power of habit makes persuasion more difficult; not even the power of imitation—so important in classical philosophy and rhetoric—is sufficient to give Augustine freedom.

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<sup>604</sup> *conf.* 8.2.2.

<sup>605</sup> For the role of *exempla* in the presentation of Victorinus's conversion, see Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, and Manuduction*, 54-56 and Lewis Ayres, 'Into the Poem of the Universe: *Exempla*, Conversion, and Church in Augustine's *Confessiones*', *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 13 (2009), 263-281.

<sup>606</sup> *conf.* 8.3.6-4.9.

<sup>607</sup> *conf.* 8.5.10.

<sup>608</sup> *conf.* 8.5.10 (CCL 27.119).

Next, Augustine recalls how Cicero, through his *Hortensius*, had ‘stirred’ him to a ‘zeal for wisdom’.<sup>609</sup> He quotes or paraphrases *Hortensius* to indicate that the search for wisdom alone should have caused him to prefer wisdom above worldly fame and fortune. But though he had reached a point in which he was convinced of truth, the repercussions of his embracing the faith remained unattractive. He yearns to be like those whose souls had been healed, but his heart remains fixed to his old self. At this point, he no longer fears conversion, only that it will come too quickly and suddenly. Bound therefore by his carnal habits, Augustine’s heart remains unpersuaded; truth has not yet compelled action.

The result for Augustine is a state not dissimilar to an audience caught between two contending arguments. He presents the conflict as one between two wills operating within a single body: one that seeks to rise towards God, the other ‘weighed down by habit’ (*consuetudine praegravatus*).<sup>610</sup> At this point, it occurs to Augustine that this might be interpreted in a Manichean vein to suggest that two autonomous wills—one good, the other evil—existed in his soul. He guards against this by arguing that one can have two competing wills compelling one to evil (such as deciding whether to murder by poison or a dagger) or to good (such as deciding to read the Gospels or a psalm). His discussion of this latter point reveals how delight operates at the heart of the indecision. Delight pulls the will, and at this moment the delight of Augustine’s old self, seen as his carnal habit, resists the persuasive voice of truth and the delight of the new self. What he says about the choice between two goods holds for the choice between the old will and the new: ‘If all these offer equal delight (*pariter delectent*) at one and the same time, surely the divergent wills pull

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<sup>609</sup> *conf.* 8.7.17.

<sup>610</sup> *conf.* 8.9.21 (CCL 27.127).

apart the human heart while we are deliberating which is the most attractive option to take?’<sup>611</sup>

Again, this state is like one in the process of committing a sin. Christian truth has presented its suggestion just as the devil presents the suggestion of a sinful action. But truth has not yet wholly delighted Augustine’s heart so that he will consent to it. And so the old habit continues to hold him in bondage, though only barely. In desperation, his old self seeks to persuade him to turn back:

Vain trifles and the triviality of the empty-headed, my old loves, held me back. They tugged at the garment of my flesh and whispered: ‘Are you getting rid of us?’ And ‘from this moment we will never be with you again, not for ever and ever’. And ‘from this moment this and that are forbidden to you for ever and ever’. What they were suggesting in what I have called ‘this and that’—what they were suggesting, my God, my God, may your mercy avert from the soul of your servant! What filth, what disgraceful things they were suggesting....They were not frankly confronting me face to face on the road, but as it were whispering behind my back, as if they were tugging at me as I was going away, trying to persuade me to look back. Nevertheless they held me back. I hesitated to detach myself, to be rid of them, to make the leap to where I was being called. Meanwhile the overwhelming force of habit (*violenta consuetudo*) was saying to me: ‘Do you think you can live without them?’<sup>612</sup>

So, the habit of worldly delights whispers, calls, and seeks to persuade Augustine to turn away from God’s call, to continue his servitude to wickedness, his trajectory towards death and damnation. The end of Book 8 of the *Confessiones* presents the reader with a vivid portrayal of what the oratorical battle between God and the devil feels like to the individual caught in the contest. It divides the heart, pulls the soul in two opposite directions, and leaves the partly penitent sinner in a state of abjection and misery.

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<sup>611</sup> *conf.* 8.10.24 (CCL 27.128).

<sup>612</sup> *conf.* 8.11.26 (CCL 27.129-130). Augustine’s rhetoric in this passage is highly evocative. He uses the word *suggerebant* three times in quick succession to describe the ‘carping’ (*vellicantes*) sins ‘muttering’ (*mussitantes*) incessantly at him to turn away from God.

At the start of this chapter, we saw how Augustine's concept of conversion was informed by his training in persuasion. He had a clear concept of human motivation, the helplessness of the human will, and the need to engage the heart in order to persuade people to act. His conversion to Christianity deepened those insights so that he became convinced that what for Cicero meant the good of the Republic now meant the salvation of the individual. Humanity had been created to heed God's call, indeed had heeded that call in its formation, but had been persuaded to turn away from God towards nothingness. As a former rhetor, Augustine could not but conceive of how that happened in terms of rhetoric. The persuasive power of illicit and temporal delights had overwhelmed the human will, glued it to itself through love and delight, and caused it to enact sinful acts that became the links of an oppressive chain that bound it to death. His self-analysis of his theft of the pears in book two of the *Confessiones* demonstrates what this process is like and where it leads. Similarly, his analysis of motivation in terms of Ciceronian oratory—the suggestion, delight, and consent to sinful action—explains the mechanics of this bondage, leaving the individual helpless in the chain of carnal habits.

Recall once more Cicero's goal of oratory: 'I think nothing is more admirable than being able, through speech, to have hold of people's minds, to win over their inclinations, to drive them at will in one direction, to draw them at will from another'.<sup>613</sup> This is precisely the dynamic at work in Book 8 of the *Confessiones*: the persuasive power of illicit and temporal delights has taken hold of Augustine's mind and driven him helplessly in whatever direction it wills. Really, the constraining habit that lays hold of him merely speaks to the enormous power of the devil's persuasive speech. That beguiling oratory is never silent, continuing to whisper,

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<sup>613</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.30.

suggest, and call Augustine back from God even at the very moment of his conversion. That persuasive whispering comes not as an actual voice, but as the presentation of all the forbidden delights Augustine will have to forsake. The 'deliciousness' and 'sweetness' of sin and temporal delights are what give the devil's oratory its persuasive force so that Augustine's movement towards self-destruction is, ironically, one filled with pleasure, albeit a pleasure that never satisfies. To save him, to effect for him the participatory redemption begun by Christ's incarnation, God must overwhelm his enslaved will, take hold of his mind, and persuade him to move towards eternal bliss.

## 6

### *Delectatio Domini*

As has now been seen, Augustine had a keen sense of the power of worldly delight to beguile and entrap people in a love that would, apart from God's grace, lead to damnation. His awareness came as much through self-reflection and his rhetorical training and experience as through any particular doctrine. Indeed, that experience and training enabled him to enrich orthodox moral teaching by showing (in what might be called psychological terms) how individuals succumb to sin and damnation. Before his conversion, his life had been devoted to the art of persuasion and that experience had imparted a profound insight into how people come into bondage to death. But his insights into God's own oratory, the nature of divine delight and eloquence, present an even richer theological vision that expresses something of the nature of God, humanity, and creation. Yet, that very richness makes Augustine's concept all the more difficult to grasp. God's oratory and spiritual delight are not just more powerful than the devil's oratory and worldly delight; they are of an entirely different nature and order. Satan may suggest or delight, but such appeals are the extent of his oratory. God's oratory, on the other hand, is none other than himself and spiritual delight an expression of himself. Because of this, the experience of that oratory and delight is actually the experience of redemption and the fruitful, divinising participation in God's own nature and goodness.

In order to understand how Augustine's conception of God's oratory works, I will begin by examining one of his favourite images: the contemplation of the Lord's

delight. Drawing from Psalm 27.4 (26.4), Augustine presents God's own delight as the object of Christian contemplation. This divine delight is actually God himself which Augustine identifies even more precisely with God's goodness. The connection between delight and goodness will lead to the next point of my argument: Augustine's contention that everything that partakes of God's goodness—i.e. all of creation—partakes also of God's delight; delight is, therefore, woven into every particle of creation and imbues everything with beauty. Augustine develops his thought on beauty in *De ordine* and *De musica*, describing creation as God's poem that is fundamentally a collection of numerical or rhythmic relationships. Humankind is naturally attuned to these rhythms; indeed, each individual's very being reveals those rhythms. Next, I will further consider Augustine's understanding of beauty by examining his terms of 'measure', 'number' and 'order' (*mensura, numerus* and *pondus* or *ordo*) and their relation in his thought to the Trinity; God is the true and eternal beauty behind all created beauty. The beauty of creation therefore proclaims the Creator, and the delight this beauty elicits summons humanity to praise God also. Creation thereby participates through its beauty in God's redemptive oratory. I will conclude by surveying the *beata vita*, or the life that, according to Augustine, responds and shares in the delight of God's goodness. Like delight, the happy life is simply God himself and to be fully happy is to participate fully in God. Ultimately, the conversion towards the happiness of participative life comes through delight.

### ***'...to contemplate the Lord's delight'***

On 23 December 406, Augustine preached a sermon in his cathedral church on John 1.15-18 in which he addresses the old dichotomy between grace and law by arguing that though Christians continue to be bound by the Old Testament law (more



explicitly the Decalogue) they now enjoy the promise of eternal life through grace.<sup>614</sup> He suggests that the ‘grace upon grace’ of John 1.16 refers to the promise of eternal life, which he interprets through the lens of John 17.3 to imply direct knowledge of God. Now Christians only believe, but in heaven they will see God. To illustrate his point, Augustine asks his flock to consider a ‘certain lover’ in the Psalms who seeks longingly for only one thing.<sup>615</sup> He wonders aloud about the nature of this ‘one thing’ and suggests that one might reasonably suppose it to be the land of milk and honey, the subjection of foes, or the gain of worldly power and resources: all powerful desires expressed in the Psalms. But he dismisses these as ‘carnal’ and returns to musing about the nature of the ‘one thing’ as he builds rhetorically towards his answer. Again he refers to the ‘lover’ in the psalms: ‘After all he is on fire with love, he never stops sighing and sweating and panting. Let us see what he is asking for?’ Finally, he provides his answer by citing part of Ps. 27.4 (26.4): the lover seeks to dwell in the house of the Lord. He concludes, ‘And supposing you do dwell in the house of the Lord, where will your joy come from? That I may gaze, he says, upon the delight of the Lord’.<sup>616</sup> Augustine must have had his congregation on the edge of their seats by this point, because his mention of the Lord’s delight provokes excited cheers.<sup>617</sup> But he is not done yet. He next asks his cheering congregation what this delight might be: ‘Can it be seen with the eyes? Can it be touched? Is it a sort of beauty that delights the eyes?’<sup>618</sup> He answers these questions by presenting two contrasting images: a comely thief who delights the eyes but repels the spirit, and a just, ‘bent old man’ who repels the eyes but delights the spirit. From these images, he

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<sup>614</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.19-20.

<sup>615</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.20.

<sup>616</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.20 (CCL 36.30): ‘*Et puta quia habitas in domo Domini, unde ibi erit gaudium tuum? Ut contempler, inquit, delectationem Domini*’.

<sup>617</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.21.

<sup>618</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.21.

draws the lesson that God's delight is invisible to the eyes and it is this kind of delight people should long to see. This invisible delight is none other than God himself, who should be desired for himself and not for any reward. And so, Augustine concludes as last,

Let your soul say, One thing have I asked of the Lord, this will I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord throughout all the days of my life, that I may gaze on the delight of the Lord....Such will be the beauty of this delight that it will always be present to you, and you will never be satisfied—or rather, you will always be satisfied and never be satisfied. You see, if I say you will not be satisfied, it will imply hunger; if I say you will be satisfied, I fear boredom; where there will be neither boredom nor hunger, I do not know what to say; but God has something to give to those who find no words to say it, and something to give to the believer that they will be welcome.<sup>619</sup>

Thus, Augustine presents his congregation with his vision of heaven: an eternally satisfying gaze upon God's own delight. The idea of looking at or contemplating the delight of the Lord is one to which he returns time and again.<sup>620</sup>

One of the first places one encounters this reference to Ps. 27.4 is in the *Confessiones*. In Book Eleven Augustine turns to prayer for help in understanding the nature of time. He speaks about this desire to grow in knowledge in terms of love: 'Grant what I love. For I love, and this love was your gift'.<sup>621</sup> Augustine hopes that his attempt both to understand time and to know God will ultimately permit him so to live that he might 'contemplate the delight of the Lord'. As in his sermon on

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<sup>619</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.21. Augustine again demonstrates an insight into human psychology. Just as in *ser. Dom. mon.* 1.12.34 he voices something like the modern concept of the 'law of diminishing returns', here he voices the apparently contradictory idea that fully satisfying pleasure can lead to boredom. What harmonises both contentions is the role of desire. Unsatisfied desire leads to a psychological captivity to the experienced pleasure while a completely fulfilled desire leads to boredom. Augustine contends that only in heaven can one experience fulfilled desire without fear of boredom.

<sup>620</sup> See, for e.g., *conf.* 11.22.28; *en. Ps.* 26 (1), 4; 26 (2), 8-16; 38.6; 41.5; 77.21; 85.8; 110.9; 127.9; 143.10; *s.* 37.20.30; 169.13.16, 14.17; 216.1.1, 2.2; 251.7.6; 337.3; *trin.* 1.10.20, 13.31; *sp. et litt.* 28.49; *ep.* 130.8.15, 14.27.

<sup>621</sup> *conf.* 11.22.28.

John, eternal life, knowledge, and the contemplation of God's delight are closely connected.

That same connection appears, for example, in Book One of *De Trinitate*. There, Augustine begins by suggesting that contemplation 'is the reward of faith' that comes through the cleansing of the heart through faith.<sup>622</sup> Later, he explains that this will be a 'direct contemplation of God, in which all good actions have their end, and there is everlasting rest and joy (*gaudium*) that shall not be taken away from you'.<sup>623</sup> In his view, the story of Mary and Martha offers a 'sort of picture' of what that joy will be like. Mary sits contentedly, gazing upon her Lord, completely intent on truth. Augustine suggests this is a taste of that which the Psalmist seeks: to contemplate the Lord. While here it is the contemplation itself that brings joy, in 1.4.31 he refers to the joy of God manifesting himself to one who 'sighs' and seeks only to 'dwell in the house of the Lord...to behold the delight of the Lord' (*ut contempler delectationem Domini*).<sup>624</sup>

Mary of Bethany, a standard model for contemplatives, reappears in connection with the 'delight of the Lord' in *sermo* 169, preached around A.D. 416. Augustine begins, however, with Paul, musing aloud how the Apostle fell short of perfection: 'He had faith, he had virtue, he had hope, he was aflame with charity, he worked miracles, he was an unsurpassable preacher, he bore with all kinds of persecution, patient in all circumstances, loving the Church, carrying in his heart the concern for the Churches'.<sup>625</sup> Yet, continues Augustine, by his own admission, Paul lacked something. He suggests that 'to contemplate the delight of the Lord' was the object of Paul's quest: until he had grasped that delight, he remained imperfect. Mary

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<sup>622</sup> *trin.* 1.18.

<sup>623</sup> *trin.* 1.20 (CCL 50.56).

<sup>624</sup> *trin.* 1.20 (CCL 50.57).

<sup>625</sup> *s.* 169.16.

and Martha give the same lesson. Mary's choice is the better because she contemplated her Lord: 'That was the one and only life, to contemplate the delight of the Lord. This we cannot do, though, in the dark night of this world'.<sup>626</sup>

Augustine also uses Ps. 27.4 to speak about a divine delight that is utterly secure and entirely free from fear of loss. This sense, of course, is apparent at the end of his sermon on John's Gospel examined above where he attempts to express how the Lord's delight can be eternally satisfying without becoming interminably boring. Likewise, in Book Twelve of *Confessiones*, Augustine describes the 'heaven of heavens' as the place where God's 'delight is contemplated without any failure or wandering away to something else'.<sup>627</sup> The delight is completely and eternally satisfying and secure. As with Mary's contemplation, such delight can only be tasted fleetingly in this life; full vision and full delight must await heaven.

Augustine speaks most poignantly about the dependability of God's delight in a letter written to a wealthy Roman widow named Proba who had fled with her widowed daughter-in-law to North Africa after the sack of Rome in 410.<sup>628</sup> Much of the letter is about the happy life and in particular the search for secure happiness through prayer.<sup>629</sup> This search naturally brings Ps. 27.4 to Augustine's mind:

But whoever asks this one thing from the Lord and seeks it, asks for it with certainty and security and does not fear that it may be harmful when he has received it, for without it nothing is of benefit, whatever else one might receive as he ought. It is, after all, the one true and only happy life, namely, that, immortal and incorruptible in body and spirit, we contemplate the delight of the Lord for eternity....There, of course, is found the fountain of life, for which we must thirst in prayer as long as we live in hope and do not yet see what we hope for, under the protection of his wings before whom is

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<sup>626</sup> s. 169.17.

<sup>627</sup> *conf.* 12.11.12 (CCL 27.222): '...contemplantem delectationem tuam sine ullo defectu egrediendi in aliud...'

<sup>628</sup> Cite note for *ep.* 130.

<sup>629</sup> This letter sheds light on the religious preoccupation of many in the late antique West as the security of Empire began to crumble under the weight of barbarian invasion and migration.

all our desire, in order that we may be inebriated by the richness of his house and may drink of the torrent of his pleasure (*torrente voluptatis*).<sup>630</sup>

This is among Augustine's most evocative language about the 'Lord's delight', conveying the experience of that delight in terms of a fountain that inebriates. Clearly, the eternal contemplation of the 'delight of the Lord' is Augustine's image of heaven. Although, in the present life such delight can only be tasted, it remains the one thing that the faithful seek. The reason for this is that the 'Lord's delight' and God are synonymous. He is the 'fountain of life' and 'eternal delight' (*immortalium deliciarum*).<sup>631</sup> To seek eternal delight is to seek God. He states this clearly not only in his *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.21 but also in his sermon on Psalm 77: 'A heart is right with God when it seeks God for God's own sake. It has truly desired only one thing of the Lord, and that it seeks, to live in the Lord's house always and contemplate his joy (*contempletur ejus delectationem*).'<sup>632</sup>

What is one to make of these references to the 'delight of the Lord'? First, it should be recognized that the syntax of the psalm governs Augustine's own language. Thus, in many of these passages it is possible to understand him as merely using Ps. 27.4 to express a scripturally evocative image for the joy of everlasting life. Indeed, in some passages he refers instead to the delight of contemplating the Lord, which describes much more the experience of contemplation rather than the object of that contemplation.<sup>633</sup> Undoubtedly, this is at least part of his intention and there is a danger in taking his language too literally.

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<sup>630</sup> *ep.* 130.14.27 (PL 33.505). This passage is an excellent example of Augustine's rare, positive use of the word *voluptas*, suggesting a physicality that reinforces the inebriation of God's richness.

<sup>631</sup> For the latter description, see *en. Ps.* 110, 9 (CCL 40.1625)

<sup>632</sup> *en. Ps.* 77.21 (CCL 39.1082).

<sup>633</sup> See for example, *en. Ps.* 85.8, 11.

One of Augustine's sermons on Ps. 27 (26), however, begins to clarify his image of the Lord's delight. In commenting on verse four, he starts by contrasting the fleeting nature of this world with the enduring nature of heaven: this world is like a tent whereas heaven is a true and lasting home.<sup>634</sup> Next, he contrasts the type of happiness obtained in each place. Within the earthly tabernacle, people tend to seek happiness in various things, many of which are unworthy of human love.<sup>635</sup> God justly either takes away such inappropriate objects of love (which is an act of kindness) or grants the desire (which is an act of anger).<sup>636</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, such ephemeral happiness merely binds people to death and leads them towards damnation. But the faithful will seek to love only that which is worthy of love and above all else to 'dwell in the Lord's house all the days' of their life. This reference to Ps. 27.4 then sets the stage for an extended reflection on the Lord's delight.

Augustine first considers the type of luxury people desire in this life: 'In our earthly dwellings men and women like to have different sorts of luxuries and comforts, and each one wants to live in a house where the mind will find nothing to offend it, and many things to give it pleasure (*habeat multa quae delectent*)'.<sup>637</sup> He then asks what the equivalent of this would be in God's house. His answer is the contemplation of the Lord's delight: 'Now you can see what I love, now you can see why I want to dwell in the Lord's house all my days. It offers something wonderful, the chance to contemplate the Lord's own delight (*delectationem ipsius Domini*)'.<sup>638</sup> As before, the Lord's own delight can only be tasted briefly in the present; Augustine

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<sup>634</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (2), 6.

<sup>635</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (2), 7.

<sup>636</sup> Augustine's description here of happiness is a familiar one, appearing as early as his *beata vita*. We will return to his conception of the happy life later in this chapter.

<sup>637</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (2), 8 (CCL 38.158).

<sup>638</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (2), 8 (CCL 38.158).

admits that he cannot truly contemplate God because he is ‘fallen over’, but in heaven he ‘shall stand up and gaze’. The image of having fallen over flows naturally into Augustine’s now familiar language about participatory redemption. Because the human race has fallen and needs to be raised up to God, Christ became incarnate:

We fell, he came down. He ascended, we are lifted up, because no one has gone up to heaven except for the one who descended...We should not lose hope because he ascended alone, for he raises us up, even us, to whom he descended as we were falling. We shall stand before him and contemplate, and this great delight will be ours to enjoy fully (*et magna delectatione perfruemur*).<sup>639</sup>

After calling for his congregation to seek to turn their gaze beyond visible beauty (as in *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.21) so that they will desire something good, he writes, ‘But there is a simple good, sheer Goodness-Itself, in virtue of which all things are good, the Good itself from which all good things derive their goodness. This is the delight of the Lord, this is what we shall contemplate’.<sup>640</sup> Here, we see the close link Augustine makes between delight and goodness. The ‘Lord’s delight’ which the faithful will contemplate in heaven is actually God’s goodness from which all others goods flow. This effectively connects delight with participatory existence since to participate actively in God’s goodness is to contemplate his delight.<sup>641</sup> Because goodness and delight are effectively united, Augustine can then conclude that in heaven the faithful will be able to ‘enjoy that bliss to the full with no worries, the bliss (*deliciis*) that is the Lord my God himself’.<sup>642</sup>

From all these passages we can gather several crucial points about Augustine’s concept of divine delight. First, the ‘delight of the Lord’ is itself an

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<sup>639</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (2), 8 (CCL 38.158).

<sup>640</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (2), 9 (CCL 38.159): ‘*Est bonum simplex, ipsum bonum quo cuncta sunt bona, ipsum bonum ex quo cuncta sunt bona: ipsa est delectatio Domini; hanc contemplabimur*’.

<sup>641</sup> See *mor.* 2.4.6.

<sup>642</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (2), 9 (CCL 38.159). See also *ep.* 130.14.27.

object of contemplation. Augustine, of course, believes that the heavenly experience of contemplation will itself be delightful, but the phrasing of the psalm pushes him to think of the object of that contemplation as delight. In other words, the redeemed will experience the delight of contemplating eternally and securely God's own delight. But, second, this eternal delight can only be tasted in this life. In every instance, the 'delight of the Lord' refers more specifically to the object of a heavenly contemplation; it is, for all intents and purposes, the Beatific Vision. Third and most importantly, the 'Lord's delight' is God himself. Thus, in the *Confessiones*, Augustine can proclaim to God, 'You are eternal to yourself, you are your own joy (*gaudium*)'.<sup>643</sup> In this way, God's delight is just like God's love or wisdom: *Deus est quidquid in se habet*. Finally, Augustine connects the 'Lord's delight' most closely to God's goodness, which introduces delight into the scheme of participatory existence and redemption.

Before proceeding any further, therefore, we can discern one crucial way in which spiritual delight differs from worldly delight. In his discussion of worldly or carnal delight, Augustine presents that harmful pleasure as something mediated through sensory experience. Delight is situated in the subject, who experiences pleasure through his or her various senses and becomes beguiled by sin, the world or the devil. Thus, the devil uses delight, like an accomplished orator, to lead the subject away from God. Spiritual delight, on the other hand, exists most fully in God: indeed, is God. God does not use delight but is delight. Whereas the experience of worldly delight is simply an experience of pleasure, the experience of spiritual delight is an experience of God himself. The former is only appreciated through the mediation of the senses, the latter most perfectly in the act of contemplation. Perhaps

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<sup>643</sup> *conf.* 8.3.8 (CCL 27.118).



the most telling way in which Augustine expresses the difference between God and the devil is that while he is happy to speak of God delighting (in his creation, the faithful, good deeds) not once (so far as I can tell) does he ever suggest that the devil himself delights.

## Delight and Creation

By uniting goodness and delight, Augustine ensures that the Lord's delight does not exist merely in the intelligible realm. Divine delight is not like wisdom, inaccessible without the healing of the spirit.<sup>644</sup> Rather, God's delight is woven into the warp and woof of creation and is revealed to everyone in the form of beauty. Delight and beauty are also objective and transcend the creaturely experience of it. Indeed, God delights in his own creation. This can be seen, for example, in *De Genesi adversus Manicheos* where Augustine pokes fun at the Manicheans for being unable to understand Genesis 1.3 and compares God to a craftsman who is both satisfied and pleased (*placuerunt*) with the product of his craftsmanship.<sup>645</sup> Augustine takes the statement, 'God saw the light and that it was good' as an expression of pleasurable satisfaction. Likewise, in *De Genesi ad litteram*, he writes: 'God saw that it was good; it was out of the same genial courtesy (*benignitate*), after all, that he took pleasure in (*placuit*) what had been made, as that it had pleased (*placuit*) him that it should be made'.<sup>646</sup> God is such that he delights in his own creation; like a craftsman both the intention and the product are pleasing. In this way, to be good is not just to be delightful but even more to be delightful or pleasing to

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<sup>644</sup> For the necessity for the *mens* to be healed or purified in order to attain *sapientia*, see, for example, *trin.* 1.1.1-3.

<sup>645</sup> *Gn. adu. man.* 1.8.13 (CSEL 91.79).

<sup>646</sup> *Gn. litt.* 1.8.14 (CSEL 28.1.11).

God.<sup>647</sup> In other words, according to Augustine, creation was pleasing to God before it was ever pleasing to humankind.<sup>648</sup> The delightfulness of creation is, therefore, objective rather than subjective.

The way in which Augustine most often expresses the delightfulness of creation is by considering its beauty. From what we have learned about the Lord's delight, we can understand why this should be. As we saw, for example, in *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.21 and *De Trinitate* 1.18, Psalm 27.4 suggests that God's delight is something that is gazed upon or contemplated. The visual quality of the experience of God's delight suggests beauty, as is clear from the mention of beauty in this regard in *Jo. eu. tr.* 3.21.<sup>649</sup> Furthermore, God himself recognizes the beauty of his entire creation even when humanity is blind to it, because God himself is the beauty by which creation is beautiful.<sup>650</sup>

### ***De ordine and De musica***

One of Augustine's most striking attempts at explaining the objective nature of the delightful beauty of creation comes in the final and climactic book of his early treatise, *De musica*, completed not long after his conversion. In a sense, the nature and scope of this work is set towards the end of his earlier work, *De ordine*, where he describes the contemplative ascent towards God. After ascending through grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric,<sup>651</sup> reason finds itself longing to be transported immediately to a 'most blessed contemplation of things divine'.<sup>652</sup> This yearning is a desire, enabled

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<sup>647</sup> See *en. Ps.* 26 (8), 8.

<sup>648</sup> *Gn. adu. Man.* 1.8.13; 1.16.25; *Gn. ad litt.* 1.8.14

<sup>649</sup> As an interesting aside, the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* at times translates Ps. 26.4 as the 'beauty of the Lord'. See for example, its translation of *en. Ps.* 41.5.

<sup>650</sup> *conf.* 10.6.

<sup>651</sup> *ord.* 2.38.

<sup>652</sup> *ord.* 2.39 (CSEL 63.175).

by the liberal arts, to behold a true beauty that can be enjoyed contemplatively without recourse to the senses. Like the image of contemplating the 'Lord's delight' this divine enjoyment is a visual experience of divine beauty through the mind's eye. But at this stage of the ascent, reason is not yet prepared for such a vision, and therefore it turns its gaze 'slightly' (*paululum*) towards the senses.

At this point, Augustine could have taken a Manichaean or Neoplatonic approach and conveyed this inability to enjoy the divine in entirely negative terms. But he does not. First, he considers aural perception, distinguishing between the different types of sounds that only find value if 'arranged in fixed measure of time and in modulated variation of high and low pitch'.<sup>653</sup> This realisation then leads reason to investigate the nature of these sounds by working through its discovery of long and short syllables, segments and members and the idea of reversion until finally discerning rhythm, which in Latin is simply number. Augustine concludes, 'And thus poets were begotten of reason'.<sup>654</sup> For Augustine, poets essentially work with 'numeric proportions', which their studies have shown to be 'divine and eternal' (*divinos et sempiternos*).<sup>655</sup> These divine and eternal numbers are the reality behind the matter of sound. He defines the study of these aural, numerical proportions as music. Having grasped this stage of investigation, reason then advances to the visual and finds precisely the same pattern as with sound: 'And scanning the earth and the heavens, it [reason] realized that nothing pleased it but beauty; and in beauty, design; and in design, dimensions; and in dimensions, number'.<sup>656</sup> This harmonious beauty is true even of the heavens (for example, the motion of the stars and planets) that arouse

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<sup>653</sup> *ord.* 2.40.

<sup>654</sup> Though also providing them with grammarians as critics!

<sup>655</sup> *ord.* 2.41 (CSEL 63.176).

<sup>656</sup> *ord.* 2.42.

the mind to study them and observe ‘dimension and number’ governing in the ‘fixed and unerring courses of the stars and regulated spacing of distance’.<sup>657</sup>

Consequently, Augustine’s survey of sensory perception paints contingent existence as *objectively* beautiful because it is governed by dimension and number. Number is so fundamental to existence and determinative that even people untrained in music sing harmoniously and birds build ‘accurately and proportioned’ nests.<sup>658</sup> These numbers and dimensions are themselves divine and eternal, and they underpin and define the world’s beauty. Essentially, they are the *forma* of contingent existence. In other words, during the atemporal, creative stage of *formatio*, the Word provided *forma* by endowing formless primordial creation with the dimension and number that enable everything to enjoy both continued existence and beauty. To exist within time is to have *forma*, or dimension and number, which provide beauty. Indeed, the Latin itself—*forma* can mean both ‘form’ and ‘beauty’—would suggest the connection to Augustine’s literate mind. So, conformity to the eternal and divine pattern—the *forma* of the Word—makes all contingent existence existentially good and aesthetically beautiful.<sup>659</sup>

Augustine draws out this conclusion more fully in Book Six of *De musica* in which he uses Ambrose’s hymn, *Deus Creator Omnium*, to investigate music in relation to God and the soul.<sup>660</sup> As in *De ordine*, he envisages a close relationship between poetry and music both of which derive their beauty from rhythm and proportion.<sup>661</sup> This enables Augustine to think of creation as a cosmic poem (*carmini*

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<sup>657</sup> *ord.* 2.42.

<sup>658</sup> *ord.* 2.49.

<sup>659</sup> *Gn. litt.*, 1.4.9.

<sup>660</sup> Brian Brennan, ‘De musica’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 42:3 (1988), 273.

<sup>661</sup> See *ord.* 2.40 and *mus.* 6.3. See also Catherine Pickstock, ‘Soul, City and Cosmos after Augustine’, in John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, (ed.), *Radical Orthodoxy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), 247.

*universitatis*) that is given shape by number and dimension in relation to God.<sup>662</sup> In fact, the whole of contingent existence is really not a thing itself but a series of interrelated numbers.<sup>663</sup> Catherine Pickstock notes that this implies that creation is ‘nothing but relations ordered in certain regular and analogical proportions’ and thus is less like ‘one big note’ than ‘a poem or song’.<sup>664</sup>

One of the ways in which Augustine unfolds this vision of contingent existence is by addressing the question of why ordered reality appears so disorganised. He explains that the limited vantage point people enjoy as mere members of a much larger creation creates the illusion of a disordered world. He compares this reduced vantage to a statue in a beautiful building or a soldier in a line of battle who is unable to appreciate the order and beauty of the whole.<sup>665</sup> He finally invokes his earlier image of creation as a song or poem by suggesting that: ‘...if the syllables in some poem were to live and perceive for as long a time as they sound, they would in no way be delighted by the rhythmicity and beauty of the composition of the work, which beauty they would not be able to overlook and approve of in its totality, since it would be constructed and perfected by the individual, transient syllables themselves’.<sup>666</sup> Ultimately, the beauty that is inherent not just to creation as a whole but to each of its constituent parts remains incomprehensible to all but God. Contingent beings lack the luxury of standing apart from creation and observing it as a whole. Consequently, creation is pleasing to God in a far richer and deeper way than to humankind.

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<sup>662</sup> *mus.* 6.29 (PL 32.1179).

<sup>663</sup> *mus.* 6.29.

<sup>664</sup> Pickstock, ‘Soul, City and Cosmos after Augustine’, 247.

<sup>665</sup> *mus.* 6.30. For a discussion of this point, see Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation*, 46.

<sup>666</sup> *mus.* 6.30.

But despite the limitations of contingent existence, humanity remains properly attuned to creation's beauty. Because we share Augustine's assumption, it is easy to overlook the fact that everywhere he assumes that beauty does delight. Nowhere does he need to make the case that when beauty is perceived either through the senses or more perfectly in contemplation the human response will always be one of delight. Thus, when he examines the effect of music on the soul, the often unspoken foundation for the movement of his argument is that no matter how fallen people might be they will always respond pleasurably to the beauty of numerical proportions. All human sinfulness really does is reduce vision: it becomes harder and harder not to be distracted from God by carnal rhythms or inferior beauty.

In *De musica*, Augustine considers the perception of beauty by delving into how people apprehend rhythm and number. He categorises these numbers into five groups: those found in sound (*sonantes*), those discerned by the soul (*occursores*), those remembered (*recordabiles*), those pronounced (*progressores*), and finally those that allow the soul to judge number (*judiciales*) even in silence.<sup>667</sup> The last of these, which Augustine defines as judicial rhythms or numbers, regulate the other rhythms: thus, for example, when people walk, they do not walk with a random pace but with one that conforms to a rhythm.<sup>668</sup> He concludes that the regulating nature of these judicial rhythms 'suggests God as the creator of the living things, whom it is surely proper to believe to be the originator of all concord and harmony (*convenientiae atque concordiae*)'.<sup>669</sup>

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<sup>667</sup> *mus.* 6.16 (PL 32.1171-1172). See also Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation*, 29.

<sup>668</sup> *mus.* 6.20. Augustine suggests that this ordered rhythm holds true for all bodily actions including chewing and scratching. This example pertains to progressing rhythms. Augustine speaks at even greater length about how judicial rhythms regulating occurring rhythms through memory and recognition.

<sup>669</sup> *mus.* 6.20 (PL 32.1174).

Augustine then wonders whether judicial rhythms can themselves be transcended and in pursuing this line of thought explicitly relates judicial rhythms to delight: ‘But I for my part believe that when this verse, which we put forth, is sung, *Deus creator omnium*, we both hear it with those occurring rhythms, and recognise it with the memorised rhythms, and pronounce it with the progressing rhythms, and enjoy (*delectari*) it with these judicial rhythms, and evaluate it with some others...’<sup>670</sup>

The judicial rhythms therefore are the basis for enjoying or delighting in those rhythms or numbers that comprise the created order. They are what attune people to the beautiful chorus of God’s cosmic poem. Thus the experience of delight is ‘imbued with a rhythm’ that enables one to ‘approve of equal intervals and reject confused one...’<sup>671</sup> But because judicial rhythms can be fooled, they require a higher or rational rhythm to judge the delight experienced through the perception of interval and rhythm. Augustine writes, ‘...reason investigates and questions the carnal pleasure (*carnalem...delectationem*) of the soul, which claimed for itself the judicial role, as equality charms the soul with the rhythms of temporal spaces, whether any two short syllables that it has heard are really equal...’<sup>672</sup> Judicial rhythms can mistake unequal rhythms for equal ones and as a result enjoy ‘...unequal rhythms as if they were equal’.<sup>673</sup> Reason’s perception admonishes the soul to ‘divert our joy’ (*gaudium*) away from things that imitate equality.<sup>674</sup> Yet, insofar as these things imitate equality they remain ‘beautiful in their own kind and order’. Both judicial and rational appreciations of music are actions of the same soul. Carol Harrison suggests that there is really no separation between the two but rather ‘a necessary warning that

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<sup>670</sup> *mus.* 6.23 (PL 32.1176).

<sup>671</sup> *mus.* 6.24.

<sup>672</sup> *mus.* 6.28 (PL 32.1179).

<sup>673</sup> *mus.* 6.28

<sup>674</sup> *mus.* 6.28 (PL 32.1179).

pleasure is not the end, but the *means* to the end, which is to know and love God, and that we need to be rationally aware of this and constantly judge all else against this end—even what is ethically right or aesthetically pleasing’.<sup>675</sup>

One way of understanding Augustine’s argument here is by comparing it to his psychology of temptation found in *De sermone Domini in monte* that was examined in the previous chapter.<sup>676</sup> As we saw there, a sin that is first suggested to the mind becomes a temptation through the delight it causes and finally is either resisted or enacted by rational consent. Similarly, rhythms suggest themselves to the soul and cause delight by their perceived equality. Reason’s role is to investigate and question that experience of delight so that the soul will not have its joy diverted towards those rhythms that only imitate equality. Both passages suggest that Augustine considered the evaluation of delight as one of the primary roles of reason. Indeed, Augustine often describes this role elsewhere in his works by introducing the idea of the ‘palate of the heart’ whereby one develops a taste that can distinguish between the bitterness of worldly delight and the sweetness of the Lord.<sup>677</sup>

At this point in *De musica*, Augustine’s argument leads him to consider more fully the interplay between reason, which employs ‘higher rhythms’ to evaluate delight, and judicial rhythms, which through delight judges the quality of the other rhythms. He has already concluded that even those things that only ‘imitate’ equality remain beautiful. If they are beautiful they must be to some degree good (and vice

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<sup>675</sup> Carol Harrison, ‘Augustine and the Art of Music’ in Jeremy Begbie and Steven Guthrie (eds.) *Resonant Witness* (Grand Rapids MI, 2010 forthcoming), 33.

<sup>676</sup> *s. Dom. mon.* 1.12.34.

<sup>677</sup> See, for example, *en Ps.* 30, (4), 6; 51, 18; Augustine’s image of the ‘palate of the heart’ tasting the ‘sweetness’ of the Lord introduces an image that will be taken up by later medieval authors. For a discussion of this metaphor, see the two essays: Franz Posset, ‘The “Palate of the Heart” in Augustine and Medieval Spirituality,’ in Frederick Van Fleteren and Joseph C. Schnaubelt, OSA (eds) *Augustine: Biblical Exegete* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001, 253-269; ‘Christi Dulcedo: The Sweetness of Christ in Western Christian Spirituality’ *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 30 (1995), 359-366.



versa). Consequently, he argues that one should not be ‘offended by what is inferior but delight in only what is superior’.<sup>678</sup> Augustine’s reason for this ordered approach to pleasure and beauty is one that should now be familiar:

For the pleasure (*delectatio*) is like the weight of the soul. And so pleasure sets the soul in its place (*Delectatio ergo ordinat animam*). ‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’, where your pleasure (*delectatio*), there your treasure will be, but where your heart is, there your beatitude or misery will be. But what is superior except that in which the highest, unshakeable, unchangeable, eternal quality exists, where there is no time, because there is no change, and from which the times are created and set in order and modified in imitation of eternity, which the celestial rotation returns to the same place and recalls the celestial bodies to the same place and through the days and months and years and lustra and the other orbits of the stars obeys the laws of equality and unity and order? In this way, through the rhythmical succession of their times, the orbits unite the terrestrial things, subjected to the heavenly ones to the hymn, as it were, of the universe (*carmini universitatis*).<sup>679</sup>

Thus, reason is able to evaluate judicial rhythms according to an even higher set of eternal rhythms that give harmony to the whole of creation.

We can gather two important points from Augustine’s argument thus far. First, as early as *De musica* Augustine conceived of delight as ordering the soul within the hierarchy of contingent existence. Delight is the weight of the soul, the gravitational force that sets the individual in his or her place within creation. We encountered precisely this idea in the last chapter in Augustine’s sermon on Ps. 9 where he writes that ‘...the dwelling-place of the soul is not in any physical space which the form of the body occupies, but in delight (*delectatione*), where it rejoices to have arrived through love’.<sup>680</sup> In *De musica*, delight orients the soul either towards inferior, carnal rhythms or, through reason’s evaluation of it, towards the superior, eternal rhythms. Second, reason assesses not through any subjective or created

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<sup>678</sup> *mus.* 6.29.

<sup>679</sup> *mus.* 6.29 (PL 32.1179).

<sup>680</sup> *en. Ps.* 9.15 (CCL 38.66).

rhythm but through its perception of eternal rhythms. Beauty impinges upon every aspect of this evaluation: eternal beauty enables the beauty of the rational mind to judge the soul's experience of created beauty. Aesthetic taste is therefore objective; however dimly it may appreciate the beauty of God's ordered creation the basis for that appreciation is an objective, eternal beauty.

Augustine's description in *De musica* of creation as a cosmic poem or song ties in well with his understanding of the Divine utterance of creation into existence. Recall that in Book Eleven of the *Confessiones* Augustine prays to God: 'You do not cause it to exist other than by speaking'.<sup>681</sup> Creation is spoken into existence *ex nihilo* through the eternal Word. That spoken creation is then called back from collapsing into nothingness through the same eternal Word and discovers shape and form in that *conversio*. *De musica* suggests that God's creative utterance is best understood as a *carmen*: a poem in which numerical proportions and relationships provide the goodness and beauty of all that has been created. The Word, whom Augustine also describes as the 'eternal Reason',<sup>682</sup> determines the beginning and end of each syllable of that cosmic poem, functioning as a sort of divine poet through whom the *carmini universitatis* exists. The order with which God provides creation is not therefore the imposed order of a tyrant but the creative order of an artist. If God's will manifests itself as beauty then the proper and natural response to that will is delight.

This concept of creation compels Augustine to reject his earlier Manichaeism and conceive of everything as beautiful not only to humankind but even more to God himself. Instead, he conceives of a hierarchy of beauty stretching not (as one might

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<sup>681</sup> For further discussion see Raymond D. DiLorenzo, "'Divine Eloquence and the Spiritual World of the Praedicator": Book XIII of St. Augustine's *Confessions*', *Augustinian Studies* 16 (1984), 75-88.

<sup>682</sup> *conf.* 11.8.10.

suppose) from the supremely ugly to a supremely beautiful God but from the least to the most beautiful. As with evil, ugliness is not something positive but the absence of the positive: namely, beauty. He speaks therefore of ‘inferior’ and ‘superior’ beauty, placing in the centre the soul to which all types of carnal beauty are inferior and to which only God’s own splendour is superior. As with delight, the soul must employ reason to detach itself from inferior examples of beauty so that it can be attached to the superior and eternal beauty of God.<sup>683</sup> Because delight is the soul’s response to beauty, the soul’s appreciation of the inferior or the superior determines that soul’s position within the hierarchy of beauty. In a sense, people become like what they admire. Augustine so fuses delight with beauty, love and goodness that the three really cannot be separated.

But no matter how far down the scale the soul sinks, it remains to some degree beautiful to God. Even *phantasia* and *phantasma* (the first found in the memory and the second produced from the ‘those movements the memory possesses’<sup>684</sup>) have a ‘beauty of their own’ at which God does not ‘look askance’.<sup>685</sup> God does not even look away from the ‘sinful and burdened soul’ since it retains some form of beauty by continuing to ‘activate’ and ‘be activated by rhythms’.<sup>686</sup> That beauty may decrease but it remains beautiful all the same. And so ‘the supremely good and supremely just God does not look askance at any beauty, which is created either as a consequence of the damnation or the returning or the remaining of the soul’.<sup>687</sup> In a sense, nothing that exists can ever escape God’s aesthetic appreciation, however obscure that beauty may be to humanity.

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<sup>683</sup> *mus.* 6.49.

<sup>684</sup> *mus.* 6.32.

<sup>685</sup> *mus.* 6.33.

<sup>686</sup> *mus.* 6.56.

<sup>687</sup> *mus.* 6.56.

Having made his case for the objective beauty of all creation, Augustine can now state unequivocally that everything created—be it plants, animals, elements, each particle of the earth and the heavens—all conform to eternal rhythms.<sup>688</sup> He marks the ‘rhythmical equality’ (*numerosam parilitatem*) of each created order and concludes that all are dependent on ‘that supreme and eternal origin of rhythms and similarity and equality and order’ that is God.<sup>689</sup> Take those dimensions away and the earth collapses into nothingness. Ultimately, for Augustine everything is either music or nothingness; to be created is to be musical—informed through and through with the eternal music of God. In commenting on this passage, Carol Harrison notes that the existence and beauty of all created things proclaim God’s ‘harmony, unity, equality and order; together they form a hymn of the universe, the *Deus Creator Omnium*, to whom the soul must refer the delight or love that they occasion, as to their source and end’.<sup>690</sup> In a sense, therefore, all of creation is epideictic, an encomium to the world’s Creator and Lord.

*De ordine* and *De musica* present the world as God’s poetry. Indeed, as we can now see from understanding the two works in the context of Augustine’s other writings, contingent existence is the poetic utterance of God. The beauty which that creative utterance enjoys derives from an eternal beauty that reaches out through numerical proportions to clothe an otherwise formless creation in such a way that it delights both God and the human soul. Because beauty, which in *De musica* Augustine calls harmony, equality and convenience, causes delight, every syllable of existence is delightful. This is why people can be drawn to those things that are far inferior to the soul; no matter how far from God these things are they continue to bear

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<sup>688</sup> *mus.* 6.57-58.

<sup>689</sup> *mus.* 6.57 (PL 32.1192).

<sup>690</sup> Harrison, ‘Augustine and the Art of Music’, 39.

sufficient beauty to attract the soul through the bodily senses. Such a conception could easily have led Augustine to conceive of such inferior objects as evil. But he never does. The moral agent is always the soul and more specifically the reason within the soul that has the duty of evaluating the delight experienced.<sup>691</sup>

From this vision, we can take one final point. Because God's creative oratory, conceived as harmonious rhythm, is not just beautiful but beauty itself, it is altogether different from the devil's oratory. Sin and the devil may use delight to entice, but they do so by using what is not theirs. In other words, if all that exists is like a syllable of God's cosmic poem, then the devil's weapon is not really oratory but a twisting and corrupting of the syllables within God's cosmic poem. The implication of this is that the devil's speech only remains effective because that which it entices remains somewhat good and beautiful. Augustine has shown that goodness and beauty are always ordered, even if people cannot perceive that order, and so try as the devil might, the discordant notes are ultimately swallowed up in the beauty of the whole *carmen* and work, if only through their own damnation, to proclaim the delightful beauty of the Creator.

### ***'Measure, number and order'***

In *De ordine* and *De musica*, we have seen how Augustine contends for the delightfulness of contingent existence by conceiving of creation in terms of 'numerical proportions'. This approach resonates happily with Wisdom 11.21—'You have disposed all things by measure and number and weight'—in a way that obviously captured Augustine's imagination. His understanding of this passage in

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<sup>691</sup> Harrison, 'Augustine and the Art of Music', 36 argues that in *De musica* Augustine 'is careful to make clear that what is at fault is not so much created reality itself as the soul's mistaken attitude to and use of it.

terms of formed existence and beauty enables him to develop an argument wherein God not only makes the world beautiful by imbuing it with measure, number, and order, but is himself the Trinitarian standard by which they are wonderfully formed.<sup>692</sup> In *De Genesi ad litteram*, he writes:

...as we ordinarily understand measure in the things we measure, and number in the things we number or count, and weight in the things we weigh, no, God is not these things; but insofar as measure sets limits to everything, and number gives everything its specific form, and weight draws everything to rest and stability, he is the original, true and unique measure which defines for all things their bounds, the number which forms all things, the weight which guides all things...<sup>693</sup>

Here we have an enrichment of his argument of Book Six of *De musica*. He continues to think of *forma* in terms of number (or rhythm), but now that number is delimited by measure (*mensura*) and ordered by weight (*pondus*). Thus, measure, number, and order give further content to the *forma* that comes with the *conversio* of creation away from its initial formlessness. The imposition of these three dimensions results in formless creation achieving a distinctive form and place within the realm of creation.

To be formed in such a way is also to be made beautiful. In *De Genesi adversus Manicheos*, Augustine argues that there ‘is not a single living creature...in whose body I will not find...that its measures, numbers and order are geared in a harmonious unity. Where these should all come from I cannot conceive, unless it be from the supreme measure and number and order which are identical with the unchanging and eternal sublimity (*sublimitate*) of God himself’.<sup>694</sup> Again, this accords well with *De musica*; while there Augustine finds the highest *numeri* located

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<sup>692</sup> See Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation*, 101-110 for a fuller treatment of this aspect of Augustine’s thought. For a discussion of Augustine’s possible sources, see p. 101, n. 27.

<sup>693</sup> *Gn. litt.* 4.3.7.

<sup>694</sup> *Gn. adu. man.* 1.16.25-26 (CSEL 91.92).

in God, here he finds measure, number and weight all deriving from God's sublimity. In *De Genesi ad litteram*, he contends that these three dimensions are not created but existed in God before the act of creation.<sup>695</sup> But he also realises that he must be careful not to suggest that God himself can be measured, numbered and ordered. This leads to a paradox in which God who is beyond all dimension is nevertheless the basis for all dimension: 'It is a great thing, a concession granted to few, to soar beyond everything that can be measured and see measure without measure, soar beyond all number and see number without number, to soar beyond everything that can be weighed and see weight without weight'.<sup>696</sup> In *De Genesi ad litteram* he provides no answer to this paradox other than to insist that God could only perceive measure, number and weight if they existed within himself since before creation there was no other in which they could have been perceived.<sup>697</sup>

The passage from *De Genesi adversus Manicheos*, however, suggests that as early as 388, Augustine had begun to reflect upon a connection between the three dimensions of formed existence and the Trinity. That connection becomes more explicit, as one might expect, in *De Trinitate* where Augustine argues that the three dimensions of created existence reveal the Trinitarian nature of God. In a passage to which we will return later, Augustine writes:

Thus all things around us that the divine art has made reveal in themselves a certain unity and form and order... So then, as we direct our gaze at the creator by understanding the things that are made, we should understand him as triad, whose traces (*vestigium*) appear in creation in a way that is fitting. In that supreme triad is the source of all things, and the most perfect beauty, and wholly blissful delight (*beatissima delectatio*).<sup>698</sup>

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<sup>695</sup> *Gn. litt.* 4.3.7.

<sup>696</sup> *Gn. litt.* 4.3.8.

<sup>697</sup> *Gn. litt.* 4.5.12.

<sup>698</sup> *trin.* 6.12 (CCL 50.242).

The beauty of the world is, therefore, a footprint (*vestigium*) of God that points towards his sovereignty, beauty, and delight. Indeed, he speaks of the Holy Spirit, which he identifies as the ‘sweetness of the begetter and the begotten’, as ‘pervading all creatures according to their capacity with its vast generosity and fruitfulness, that they might keep their right order and rest in their right places’.<sup>699</sup> The ordered beauty of creaturely existence therefore manifests the ‘sweetness’ of the shared Trinitarian love. If Augustine most closely associates measure and unity with the Father, number and beauty with the Son, then he connects order and delight most closely with the Holy Spirit. As will become clear in the next chapter, this is an essential point.

By locating the eternal source of measure, number and order within the Trinity, Augustine accomplishes two important things. First, he further develops his understanding of how creation participates in God. Creatures are not simply produced by God like goods produced from a factory. Their continued existence, their unity of being, form and beauty, and place within creation are all derived and are constantly deriving from God. Indeed, those dimensions exist more in God than in the creature; they are thus also the eternal impinging upon the ephemeral. For Augustine, the created substance itself amounts to little more than dust. Everything else one perceives of creation is the presence of the Trinity imprinted on the dust of creation.

Second, because God is the source, form and measure of all creation, all creatures must therefore by their very nature proclaim the presence of their Creator. This is what he means by stating that God’s footprints appear in creation. And for him, God’s most visible footprint is the beauty that delights and the sweetness that pervades everything. Augustine makes this point in his first homily on John’s Gospel

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<sup>699</sup> *trin.* 6.11.



by returning to his image, probably informed by Plato's *Timaeus*, of God as a master craftsman. He presents his congregation with the analogy of a 'plan for some building': at first it exists only in the mind's eye and can only be admired (*mirantur*) by the craftsman himself.<sup>700</sup> But after the 'finely sculpted perfection' is completed, 'People notice the admirable building and admire the design of the builder; they are amazed at what they see and love in what they do not see, for who is there who can see a design?'<sup>701</sup> He concludes that by observing with delight the splendour of heaven and earth one can discern 'what the Word must be like through which it was made'. Again, for Augustine the beauty of the world is *objective* rather than *subjective*.

Delight therefore fills creation. Because of this, humankind has permission to delight in the created world as long as it recognises that God is the beauty that engenders that delight. In other words, if beauty is really the *forma* that measure, number and order impart, and if those three dimensions are really a sign of the Trinity, then a right appreciation of beauty is actually an appreciation of God. There is no beauty apart from God. For Augustine, everything that is good is delightful, because every good thing springs from 'Goodness-Itself' which is synonymous with the 'Lord's delight'.<sup>702</sup> Because the delightfulness of the world finds its source in God's own beauty, everything created reveals by its unity, form, and order the divine art of God. In Book Ten of *Confessiones*, Augustine states that 'heaven and earth and everything in them all tell me to love you'.<sup>703</sup> Indeed, he describes this as their 'praise' of God. Although these delights of the world are not themselves the true object of Augustine's love, they are good delights and they do tell us something of God's delight:

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<sup>700</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 1.9 (CCL 36.5).

<sup>701</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 1.9.

<sup>702</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (8), 9.

<sup>703</sup> *conf.* 10.6.8.

But when I love you what do I love? It is not physical beauty nor temporal glory nor the brightness of light dear to earthly eyes, nor the sweet melodies of all kinds of songs, nor the gentle odour of flowers and ointments and perfumes, nor manna or honey, nor limbs welcoming the embrace of the flesh; it is not these I love when I love my God. Yet there is a light I love, and a food, and a kind of embrace when I love my God—a light, voice, odour, food, embrace of my inner man, where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain, where there is sound that time cannot seize, where there is perfume which no breeze dispenses, where there is a taste for food no amount of eating can lessen, and where there is a bond of union no satiety can part. That is what I love when I love my God.<sup>704</sup>

We should not be surprised by this language as it depends on Augustine's understanding of participatory existence. Because created existence draws its being, goodness, and beauty from God, and because God himself is love (from which spiritual delight springs), all created delights that arouse the senses derive their power from God and reveal him to us. Thus, when we seek to enjoy only the created good, treating it as though its delightfulness is self-oriented, it replies by urging us to look elsewhere. As David Bentley Hart argues, the 'delightfulness of created things expresses the delightfulness of God's infinite distance' in such a way that one may think of the relationship between worldly and divine beauty as an *analogia delectationis*.<sup>705</sup> This is why Augustine suggests, as he does in his sermon on Psalm 144, that our delight in the beauty of the world ought to lead to the praise of the God who created it.<sup>706</sup> In beauty rightly appreciated, humanity glimpses the face of God.

In this respect, Augustine conceives of beauty as enjoying its own rhetorical power. The beauty of heaven and earth 'speak' God's praises calling humankind to join in their praise God (*loquuntur laudes tuas*).<sup>707</sup> When Augustine turns to creation to discover the object of his love, it speaks to him through its beauty to turn towards

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<sup>704</sup> *conf.* 10.6.8.

<sup>705</sup> David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 242.

<sup>706</sup> *en. Ps.* 145.2. See Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, "The Augustinian Conception of Beauty and Dante's *Convivio*" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15.4 (Jun., 1957): 435-448.

<sup>707</sup> *conf.* 10.6.8 (CCL 27.159).

their Creator. In his famous account of his interrogation of nature, everything speaks to him persuasively:

And what is the object of my love? I asked the earth and it said: 'It is not I'. I asked all that is in it; they made the same confession. I asked the sea, the deeps, the living creatures that creep, and they responded: 'We are not your God, look beyond us'. I asked the breezes which flow and the entire air with its inhabitants said: 'Anaximenes was mistaken; I am not God'. I asked heaven, sun, moon, and stars; they said: 'Nor are we the God whom you seek'. And I said to all these things in my external environment; 'Tell me of my God who you are not, tell me something about him'. And with a great voice they cried out: 'He made us'. My question was the attention I gave to them, and their response was their beauty.<sup>708</sup>

Just as Augustine's rhetorical *confessio* directs the reader towards a rightful praise of God, so too does creation's *confessio* direct Augustine towards a rightful praise of its Creator. Creation actually functions here like Cicero's orator: it gains the audience's attention through delight and then directs it towards a goal. Here we witness the enfleshed, divine utterance of creation overflowing with a beauty and delight that shares in God's urging call of all things back to himself. The form and beauty that result from the Word's conversion of creation back from nothingness rebound within creation in such a way that all creatures participate through their beauty in calling all to God.

This passage from *Confessiones* exhibits many facets of Augustine's thought that we have seen thus far. His questioning of creation abides by the hierarchy of being: he begins by questioning the lowest of lives and works his way upwards towards the heavens. Just as in *De musica* all created things no matter how remote from God have beauty, so too here does each level of creation direct Augustine to God through its own beauty. In fact, the passage illustrates a contemplative ascent driven by delight, the natural response to beauty. The ascent continues in a predictable manner, culminating in the subsequent paragraph with Augustine's

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<sup>708</sup> *conf.* 10.6.9.

contemplation of himself. Again, as in *De musica*, the inner soul of humankind is set at the highest pinnacle of creation; only God is higher and so Augustine's self-contemplation joins in the chorus of the rest of creation by directing him to God. The entire ascent at this point falls within the purview of judicial rhythms. It is basically an ascent of delight. But just as judicial rhythms are regulated by rational rhythms in *De musica* so in the *Confessiones* does reason enable delight to move the soul upwards. In 10.7.10, Augustine reflects on the different manner animals and people are aware of beauty:

Animals both small and large see it [beauty], but they cannot put a question about it. In them reason does not sit in judgement upon the deliverances of the senses. But human beings can put a question so that 'the invisible things of God are understood and seen through the things which are made'.<sup>709</sup>

The soul's response to the experience of delight engendered by beauty leads the mind to question the perceived beauty. The cross-examination of beauty then invokes the rhetorical moment in which the 'voice' of creation may proclaim the existence of the Creator. If the soul perceives God then it is converted and directed towards salvation.

Augustine's ideal, therefore, is a world in which humankind observes God in the beauty of creation. He may be a Neoplatonist insofar as he looks for an ascent beyond the material world towards a direct and inward vision of God, but he clearly believes that such a vision must await heaven. In this life, when a direct contemplation of God can only be briefly enjoyed, his ideal is one in which humankind effectively shares in creation's praise of God by responding to that praise (creation's beauty) with the judgement of the soul. If a person lacks judgement, the voice of creation falls silent.<sup>710</sup> But by entering into a conversation with beauty, the soul can be directed to share actively and purposefully in creation's hymn of praise.

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<sup>709</sup> *conf.* 10.7.10.

<sup>710</sup> *conf.* 10.7.10.

It is interesting to note that unthinking creation does this automatically without variation; only fallen humanity has, as it were, struck up a discordant note by seeking to praise itself.

Augustine, in fact, provides a portrait of his imagined ideal society in which the world and humanity share perfectly in the beauty of God's delight. This is found in the eighth book of *De Genesi ad litteram* where Augustine imagines what Adam's life in Eden was like before the Fall.<sup>711</sup> Not surprisingly it describes a rather romanticised life of a late Roman gentleman-farmer:

So then whatever delights (*deliciarum*) there are to be found in agriculture, they were of course far and away more complete at that time when neither earth nor sky was putting any difficulty in the way. You see, there was no stress or wearisome toil but pure exhilaration of spirit (*exhilaratio voluntatis*), when things which God had created flourished in more luxuriant abundance with the help of human work. As a result the creator himself would be praised more copiously...<sup>712</sup>

Indeed, wonders Augustine, what can be more wonderful than the work of a farmer: a person 'directed and governed invisibly by God' applying his 'work and skill' to the care and nurture of life?<sup>713</sup> Thus Augustine concludes with a question the answer to which strikes him as self-evident: 'How therefore can it be abhorrent to the truth, if we believe that man was set up in Paradise to work at agriculture, not in servile toil, but with genuine pleasure (*voluptate*) and uplift of spirit? What, after all, is more innocent than such work for our moments of leisure, and what can provide more material for our serious reflection?'<sup>714</sup> Such is Augustine's *beata vita*: people

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<sup>711</sup> The fullest discussion of this is Carol Harrison, 'Augustine on the art of gardening' in R.N. Swanson (ed.), *The Use and Abuse of Time in Christian History*. (Bury St. Edmunds: Boydell and Brewer, 2002), 13-33.

<sup>712</sup> *Gn. litt.* 8.8.15 (PL 34.379).

<sup>713</sup> *Gn. litt.* 8.16.

<sup>714</sup> *Gn. litt.* 8.8.18 (PL 34.387).

delighting in managing the beautiful world of 'luxuriant abundance' in praise of and service to their 'blissful God'.

## *Beata Vita*

Such a life, however, is manifestly absent in the world we know. The problem, of course, is the Fall, which requires the solution provided by participatory redemption. Because of humankind's pride, which is both the cause and legacy of the Fall, the *beata vita* remains beyond the grasp of humanity and a true and godly delight remains elusive. In other words, humankind was made to share in the 'Lord's delight' but because of the Fall it invariably turns towards the worldly delight that enslaves the soul to the world, the flesh and the devil. Augustine believed, however, that despite the entrapment of fallen humanity to sin, the *beata vita* remains a universal desire. Ultimately, the desire for happiness is a desire for God.

The typical examination of what Augustine means by *beata vita* focuses on his philosophical sources. Certainly, Augustine agrees with many of the assumptions of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, above all the assumption that the primary motivational force is the instinctive search for happiness. Thus, Augustine is classified as a eudaemonist, and his reflections on the happy life are examined within the philosophical tradition of eudaemonism. *Eudaemonia* is a word coined by Aristotle in *The Nicomachean Ethics* to describe the ultimate goal of humanity: the pursuit of happiness. According to Aristotle, one's own happiness is the only goal that cannot be disowned and this happiness is simply the highest good that is pursued for its own sake.<sup>715</sup> It is, as it were, part of the make-up of humanity. How one

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<sup>715</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), I.7.

achieves happiness was, of course, a subject of disagreement and philosophical conflict in the ancient world. The Stoic who held that happiness is attainable only by the rational mind was just as much a eudaemonist as the Epicurean who held that happiness comes through physical pleasure.<sup>716</sup> Augustine, it is assumed, walked comfortably within the world of eudaemonism, and so took it as read that everyone pursues his or her own happiness.

In the final chapter of *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*, appropriately entitled, 'Conclusions: Self-Love and Eudaemonism', Oliver O'Donovan addresses Augustine's eudaemonism by taking aim at Karl Holl's and Anders Nygren's critiques of Augustine's theology. According to O'Donovan, Holl attacked Augustine's eudaemonist structure by arguing that Augustine should not have taken the quest for happiness as the model for Christian ethics because it 'elides the distinction between the way of God's requiring and all other ways which man may devise'.<sup>717</sup> Holl's critique was later taken up by Anders Nygren, who found Augustine's mixture of Pauline and Platonic thought untenable. Nygren believed that Augustine's theology reduced all love, including the love of God, to a form of self-love by making the 'acquisitive' pursuit of happiness the highest goal.<sup>718</sup> O'Donovan counters these arguments by suggesting that within Augustine's eudaemonism the 'goal is an objective reality which the subject has not chosen for himself and his orientation to which is a necessity of his creation'.<sup>719</sup>

Before we even begin to look at what Augustine has to say about the *beata vita*, we can discern from our study so far that O'Donovan is largely correct. If the

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<sup>716</sup> See Burnaby (1938), 45 for a good, brief overview of eudaemonism.

<sup>717</sup> O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Saint Augustine*, 141.

<sup>718</sup> Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 532.

<sup>719</sup> O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Saint Augustine*, 156.

‘Lord’s delight’ is ‘sheer Goodness-Itself, in virtue of which all things are good’,<sup>720</sup> then the *beata vita* is simply the experience of that Trinitarian delight. In other words, delight is an essential part of participatory existence, and to be removed from that delight is somehow to be removed from the fullest attainable level of existence. Understood in this way, the desire for happiness is the desire for God. And because no one has chosen to exist nor can influence the character of that delight which is God, true happiness like true delight and true beauty is objective rather than subjective. In terms of *De musica*, happiness is to be in tune with the eternal rhythm of God’s poetic utterance. This is why Augustine can speak positively of the delights of the world despite all his warning and concerns about the dangers of such delight; as long as those delights lead towards God, they are good and commendable. Indeed, in reality those delights do no more than draw from and reveal the Lord’s own delight. O’Donovan is, therefore, correct in his argument against Holl and Nygren: the pursuit of happiness is not necessarily selfish or acquisitive. At its heart, the pursuit of happiness is the search for God and the perfectly participatory existence for which humanity was created *ex nihilo*. Ultimately, Augustine’s eudaemonism is summed up by his most famous statement: ‘You stir man to delight (*delectat*) in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you’.<sup>721</sup> Humanity yearns for the delight from which it was made, in which it lives, and towards which it strives. Thanks to pride, however, humankind is (to put it bluntly) utterly inept at pursuing the ‘joy of man’s desiring’.<sup>722</sup>

For Augustine, *beata vita* is ultimately from one angle a life grounded securely in God’s delight or from another angle a life that participates fruitfully and

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<sup>720</sup> *en. Ps.* 26 (2), 8.

<sup>721</sup> *conf.* 1.1.1 (CCL 27.1).

<sup>722</sup> Johann Sebastian Bach, *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben*, BWV 147.



securely in God's goodness. The experience of spiritual delight and participation are so closely wrapped up with each other that one cannot enjoy one without the other. The happy life, therefore, is not so much the acquisition of any particularly good, not even of God, but a shorthand description for the joy of participating in God. As will be shown in the next chapter, such an existence cannot ever be acquired; it can only be given through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the end, Augustine's description of *beata vita* sums up all that we have discovered in this chapter's exploration of spiritual delight.

### **Participation and the Happy Life**

Augustine concludes his treatise, *De beata vita*, with his definition of the happy life: 'This, therefore, is the complete satisfaction of souls, that is, the happy life: to know precisely and perfectly Him through whom you are led into truth, the nature of the truth you enjoy, and the bond that connects you with the Supreme Measure'.<sup>723</sup> Really, this early definition informs what Augustine means by contemplating the Lord's delight: it is to know and enjoy God to the complete satisfaction of the soul. Also, the journey towards full delight begins only because God provides 'a certain admonition which incites us to remember God, to seek Him, and having banished pride, to thirst after him'.<sup>724</sup> God initiates the search and is at once the one in whom the search occurs, the goal of that search, and the bond that keeps the searcher attached to that goal. The return of the faithful to God is therefore Trinitarian in shape.

Augustine continued to hold basically the same view of the 'happy life' throughout his life. In the *Confessiones*, he writes, 'When I seek for you, my God,

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<sup>723</sup> *b. vita* 35.

<sup>724</sup> *b. vita* 35.

my quest is for the happy life'<sup>725</sup> God is also the 'blessed home country which all desire, but not all seek in the right way'.<sup>726</sup> As we have already seen, in *ep.* 130, he speaks of the happy life as the enjoyment of the Lord's delight. In that letter, Augustine answers Proba's question about prayer by suggesting that she should pray 'for the happy life, for all human beings want this'.<sup>727</sup> Even the wicked commit their misdeeds out of a desire for happiness. What then is this happy life? Augustine reminds Proba that this question has 'consumed the minds and leisure of many philosophers'. But they could not provide a satisfactory answer because they did not 'honour' the source of the happy life.<sup>728</sup> Is the happy life, he asks, living as one wills? Even the pagans have recognised that this cannot be so, and he quotes Cicero, 'a man of great eloquence', from *Hortensius* as evidence. He therefore suggests that the happy life might be to have everything one wants and not to want anything that is improper.

But this then poses a new problem: why are some made happy by marriage while others by remaining celibate?<sup>729</sup> Both are proper desires, even if one can be shown to be better than the other. Both however remained trapped by their desire for the 'well-being' of those they love. If such is the source of their happiness without any deeper desire for 'greater and better things and ones richer in usefulness and moral beauty' they remain far from the happy life. Instead, Proba should seek happiness in that 'one life by which one lives for God and from God', which means to love God for his own sake and oneself and one's neighbours for God's sake.<sup>730</sup> But

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<sup>725</sup> *conf.* 10.20.29 (CCL 27.170): '*Cum enim te, deum meum, quaero, uitam beatam quaero*'.

<sup>726</sup> *s.* 150.9.

<sup>727</sup> *ep.* 130.9.

<sup>728</sup> *ep.* 130.10.

<sup>729</sup> *ep.* 130.11.

<sup>730</sup> *ep.* 130.14.

even this is not fully the happy life. Augustine concludes, ‘Why do we not rather say with the psalm, One thing I have asked of the Lord; this I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, that I may contemplate the delight of the Lord and visit his temple?...The true Life himself taught us to pray for the sake of acquiring this happy life...’<sup>731</sup> And as we have seen already Augustine reiterates this by explaining that what everyone seeks is, ‘the one true and only happy life, namely, that immortal and incorruptible in body and in spirit, we contemplate the delight of the Lord for eternity’.<sup>732</sup> The happy life, therefore, is God, ‘the fountain of life’,<sup>733</sup> and the pursuit of happiness is fundamentally the pursuit of God: the *beata vita* is none other than the contemplation of the Lord’s delight. This is the assumption behind the beginning of the *Confessiones*. The restless heart longs for happiness, longs for God, and will search relentlessly until it rests in the delight of godly praise.

Augustine frequently reveals that he takes it as read that everyone longs for happiness. One of the best examples of this comes in his sermon preached at Carthage in 413/414, on the account from Acts of Paul’s address to the crowds in Athens.<sup>734</sup> The biblical reference to the two poles of ancient philosophy—Stoicism and Epicureanism—allows Augustine to contrast Christianity with the whole spectrum of philosophy. He introduces the heart of his sermon by speaking about what he considers to be the commonality shared by all philosophies and Christianity:

First let me tell you in general that there is one overriding concern common to all philosophers....all philosophers strove by dedication, investigation, discussion, by their way of life, to lay hold of the blessed life. This was their one reason for philosophizing; but I rather think the philosophers also have

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<sup>731</sup> *ep.* 130.15.

<sup>732</sup> *ep.* 130.27.

<sup>733</sup> *ep.* 130.27.

<sup>734</sup> See also, *s.* 150; *trin* 13.10; 13.25; and *conf.* 10.20.29 for other examples.

this in common with us....Therefore the urge for the blessed life is common to all philosophers and Christians.<sup>735</sup>

Obviously, this is a classic eudemonistic statement. The motivating force for pagan and Christians alike is the pursuit of happiness. Augustine is even clearer a few lines later: ‘I ought to have said that it (the pursuit of happiness) is characteristic of everybody, absolutely everybody, good and bad alike. People who are good, after all, are good in order to be happy, and those who are bad would not be bad unless they hoped they could thereby be made happy’. At first sight, this statement would appear to support Holl and Nygren’s complaint that Augustine provides a self-serving and acquisitive motivation for virtuous living: one is only good in order to be happy with the corollary logic that one would just as well be bad if it led to true happiness. Augustine himself predicts this response and explains that some do seek happiness through vice, using the example of a thief to illustrate his point.<sup>736</sup> He dismisses this as ‘shameless and mistaken’ because happiness only results from virtue: ‘goodness is work, happiness the reward’.<sup>737</sup>

But what does Augustine mean when he states that God rewards goodness with happiness? In the next part of his sermon, he answers the question—‘what makes life happy?’<sup>738</sup>—first as an Epicurean, then as a Stoic, and finally as a Christian. The Epicurean argues that bodily pleasure makes people happy, the Stoic that the virtuous mind is necessary. Augustine’s Christian answer is simply that true happiness is a *donum Dei*.<sup>739</sup> So, the pursuit of the truly happy life can only be successful if one receives that life as a *donum Dei*. This is really a reiteration of the

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<sup>735</sup> s. 150.4.

<sup>736</sup> s. 150.4. Notice the irony that Augustine, whom Nygren accuses of taking an acquisitive approach to virtue, uses the acquisitive vice of a thief to show how vice cannot lead to true happiness!

<sup>737</sup> s. 150.4.

<sup>738</sup> s. 150.5.

<sup>739</sup> s. 150.8 (PL 38.812).

point he makes in *De beata vita*. Whatever we are to make of Augustine's eudemonism, we must accept his conviction that the *beata vita* sought is only achieved by God's grace.

Augustine entirely rejects the Epicurean approach, calling them 'pigs rather than men'.<sup>740</sup> He is more approving of the Stoics, stating that a virtuous mind is praiseworthy and calling the four cardinal virtues of classical ethics—prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude—admirable. But then he asks from where they receive their virtues. He concludes, 'It is not precisely your virtuous mind that makes you happy, but the one who has given you virtue, who has inspired you to desire it, and granted you the capacity for it'.<sup>741</sup> Thus, the desire and the capacity to be virtuous and the virtues themselves are all gifts of God. Everything about the search for true happiness, therefore, comes from God. Interestingly, Augustine understands delight to be the motivational force that compels one towards virtue: 'Virtue delights you; it's a good thing that delights you. I know, you are thirsty for it; but you can't pour yourself a drink of virtue'.<sup>742</sup> In other words, in order to be virtuous, one must want to be virtuous, and to have that desire, virtue itself must be delightful enough to draw people towards itself. That delight comes from God as a *donum Dei*.

Everything Augustine preaches in *sermo* 150 is in fundamental agreement with his conclusion in *De beata vita*. The same points are made elsewhere. In his letter to Macedonius (413/414) he writes,

For only he who made human beings makes them happy. After all, he bestows such great goods upon his creatures, both the good and the bad ones, that they exist, are human beings, are vigorous in their senses, able in their

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<sup>740</sup> s. 150.6.

<sup>741</sup> s. 150.9.

<sup>742</sup> s. 150.9 (PL 38.812): '*Virtus te delectat; bona res delectat: scio, sitis; sed virtutem tibi manare non potes*'.

strength, and abounding in riches. He will give himself to the good in order that they may be happy, because it is also his gift that they are happy.<sup>743</sup>

In the same letter, he adds, ‘If, then, true virtue delights us (*virtus vera delectat*), let us say to him what we read in his sacred books, I shall love you, O Lord, my virtue. And if we want to be truly happy, something we cannot fail to want, let us hold on with a believing heart to what we learned in the same books, Happy is the man for whom the name of the Lord is hope and who has not searched after vanities and insane lies (Ps. 40.5)’.<sup>744</sup> These assertions make perfect sense within Augustine’s understanding of existence. Everything humanity is and has comes from God. That is what it means to be good. If the movement towards nothingness is simultaneously a movement towards wickedness, then conversely the ascent towards God is an ascent towards happiness. That ascent only comes through the power of delight obtained by participatory redemption, and thus is a gift. Although only implied in this passage, there is an inkling that the ‘happy life’ and participation are deeply intertwined.<sup>745</sup>

The participatory aspect of the happy life becomes much clearer in Augustine’s long letter to Honoratus written in 411/412. There we find happiness discussed very much in terms of being and non-being. Augustine writes:

Hence, the rational creature, whether in an angelic spirit or in the human soul, was made so that it cannot be for itself the good by which it becomes happy, but it becomes happy if its mutability is turned toward the immutable good. If it turns away from it, it is wretched. But its turning away is its failure, and its turning back is its virtue.<sup>746</sup>

Again, goodness and happiness are closely interlinked (recall that in *En. Ps.* 26 (2), 8 he refers to ‘Goodness-Itself’ as the ‘delight of the Lord’) with goodness understood

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<sup>743</sup> *ep.* 155.2.

<sup>744</sup> *ep.* 155.6 (PL 33.669).

<sup>745</sup> See also *trin* 13.10 where Augustine speaks of the virtues coming from God and ‘adding’ (*accedant*) themselves to humankind.

<sup>746</sup> *ep.* 140.56.

as the means whereby one becomes happy. The obvious reason for this is that God is the source of both goodness and happiness. This time, however, the happy life is directly related to participatory existence. One may approach the happy life through conversion (*conversio*) towards God, the ‘immutable good’. Conversely, turning away from God towards nothingness is a failure in being and leads only to wretchedness. Next, Augustine identifies the gift of *conversio* with the gift of virtue. In other words, the turning towards God away from death manifests itself as virtue. We can understand why Augustine says this by recourse to his scheme of participatory redemption. By turning towards God, the ‘immutable good’, people are better able to partake of that goodness, which in turn makes them happy. This explains Augustine’s statement that people are ‘good in order to be happy’. That goodness is not something which they themselves generate. In other words, people do not suddenly of their own volition decide to be good with the expectation that such behaviour will lead to happiness: the soul ‘cannot be for itself the good by which it becomes happy’.<sup>747</sup> Instead, in light of *ep.* 140, Augustine would seem to be saying that the goodness that people receive from God is what results in happiness. The thief is his example of what happens when people seek happiness of their own accord.

Augustine continues in the letter to allude to the role of participation in the happy life. He writes, ‘The mutability of the rational soul, therefore, is warned (*admonetur*) in order that it might know that it cannot be righteous, saved, wise, and blessed except through participation in the immutable good and that it cannot be by its own will its own good, but only its own evil’.<sup>748</sup> In other words, the *admonitio*, which (as we saw in chapter three) is God’s nudge to turn from death towards him, arouses the faithful from their self-satisfaction and teaches them that only by

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<sup>747</sup> *ep.* 140.56.

<sup>748</sup> *ep.* 140.74 (PL 33.571).

accepting their status as contingent beings wholly dependent on God can they begin to approach true happiness. To act otherwise is literally evil, because, as Augustine understands that word, it is an act of privation, a step towards non-being.

Finally, near the conclusion of the letter, Augustine makes his clearest statement of all that the journey towards the happy life is really nothing other than participatory redemption: ‘...he who was the Son of God became man by assuming our nature, not by losing his. In this way the power was also given to us who receive him that we who were human beings might become children of God, changed for the better by participation in the immutable good, not for temporal happiness but for the adoption into eternal life, which is alone blessed’.<sup>749</sup> Thus, one can enjoy the *beata vita* by clinging to God through the participation made possible by the Incarnation.

In *De Trinitate*, Augustine himself clearly sums up the conclusion that true happiness depends on participation in a way that neatly captures the fullness of his theology: ‘For surely if the Son of God by nature became the son of man by mercy for the sake of the sons of men...how much easier it is to believe that the sons of men by nature can become sons of God by grace and dwell in God; for it is in him alone and thanks to him alone that they can be happy, by sharing (*participes*) in his immortality; it was to persuade (*persuadendum*) us of this that the Son of God came to share in our mortality’.<sup>750</sup> Not only do we find here an explicit connection between *beata vita* and participation but we also discover that this state of being is actually the goal of God’s redemptive rhetoric. The Incarnation both enables the happiness of participating in God’s goodness and ‘persuades’ the faithful to pursue that life. In Christ, *conversio* becomes *persuasio*. His conversion of the faithful comes through

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<sup>749</sup> *ep.* 140.82 (PL 33.575): ‘...qui Filius Dei erat, homo factus est, naturam suscipiendo nostram, non amittendo suam: per quod et nobis recipientibus eum potestas daretur, ut qui eramus homines, filii Dei fieremus participatione incommutabilis boni in melius commutati, non ad temporalem felicitatem, sed ad vitae aeternae, quae sola beata est, adoptionem’.

<sup>750</sup> *trin.* 13.12 (CCL 50a.399).



the persuasion of his Incarnation; conversely, because the faithful have been persuaded they have now turned away from nothingness to begin their ascent towards dwelling in God.

Gathering together everything we have discerned about Augustine's conception of the *beata vita* requires holding together several ideas. First, every created being enjoys its existence only insofar as it participates in God. For rational creatures, to participate fully in God is to be happy.<sup>751</sup> Second, the Lord's delight suffuses all created beings, so that to participate fully in God is to gaze upon his delight; this is again the happy life. Because of this, the spectrum from full being to non-being is also a spectrum from 'delight beyond measure' to wretchedness and misery. Third, even in their fallen state, all people retain a restless yearning for the happy life, which is the full participation in God for which they were created. Augustine notably places the source of this yearning in the *memoria* and compares it to the recollection of joy because it induces further desire.<sup>752</sup> Indeed, he wonders aloud whether the desire for the happy life is not some racial memory of humanity's pre-fallen condition.<sup>753</sup> Finally, the conversion towards God, the happy life and the pursuit itself (each aspects of participatory redemption) are achieved by delight. It is when virtues delight that people seek them and in seeking them find God.

### *Delectatio Domini*

This chapter has taken us necessarily through a wide range of subjects and works since Augustine's approach to spiritual or godly delight is so complex and

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<sup>751</sup> In *diu. qu.* 83 5, Augustine states that only rational creatures are capable of happiness. This agrees with Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 10.8) who argues that while animals may feel their own pleasure they are not capable of happiness. It also agrees with his approach in *conf.* 10.6.8-9 to the evocative power of beauty that was discussed earlier.

<sup>752</sup> *conf.* 10.21.30.

<sup>753</sup> *conf.* 10.20.29.

encompassing. The entirety of his thinking however is more easily grasped if one remembers that at its heart is the idea that true delight is in fact God himself. Because God is self-expressive his delight is also expressed outward into creation. Whether someone experiences that delight in the beauty perceived by the senses or through a contemplative taste of God's own unmediated delight and beauty, in reality such a perception is of God's own self. Moreover, because creation participates in God's goodness, it longs to share in God's life. Non-rational creation does this simply through its own beauty: its very existence is mute praise of God the Creator. Fallen humanity, though now enslaved to worldly delights, continues to yearn for a complete and secure experience of God's delight and Augustine most readily conceives of this as a thirst for the happy life. In the end, the *beata vita* is an everlasting participation in God that is also a secure and direct contemplation of the *delectatio Domini*.

## *Beata Delectatio*

According to Augustine, contemplation of the *delectatio Domini* is the goal of both human existence and God's redemptive oratory. As we have seen in *De Trinitate* 13.12, the Incarnation seeks to persuade and to move fallen humanity towards a fuller participation in the divine. God the orator not only calls humankind to share in his own life but is also the call itself whereby the faithful are persuaded. But that persuasive summons does not come to those who exist apart from God but to those who obtain their existence through God's Word. All of the created order is utterance, deriving life, beauty, form, delight, and salvation from the eternal utterance of the Word. Worldly delight has captured humanity's obsessive attention through a diabolic twisting of delights so that they point away from God either to themselves or towards damnation. The bondage of sin has made people deaf both to God's cosmic song of creation and to his redemptive oratory. They are like the subjects of Cicero's false orator, lulled by a deceptive eloquence to yield their will to one who will only bring about ruin. In order to regain their attention and to call fallen humanity back into his own life and delight God must use his own eloquence: that eloquence, conceived as the 'sweetness' of the Trinity offered as a gift to the world, is none other than the Holy Spirit.

In order to understand the Holy Spirit's role we must first come to grips with his identity as Augustine understood it. That identity grows out of the interplay between three descriptive eponyms he typically uses for the Holy Spirit: *communio*, *dilectio* or *caritas*, and *donum Dei*. These, as will be shown, are the soil out of which

spiritual delight grows. First, Augustine identifies the Holy Spirit as the *communio* of the Father and the Son, most fruitfully understood as their shared love. That ‘sweet’ *communio* shared between the Father and the Son flows into creation to nourish and sustain it. Second, the shared Trinitarian *dilectio* is the ground for all other loves. As Augustine argues in *De Trinitate* 8.12, the love with which we love is in fact God himself. Finally, that love is also the well-spring of human redemption, pouring into the hearts of the faithful as a gracious gift that above all else enables them to delight in God.

Key to understanding how the Holy Spirit *as* love sanctifies the faithful *by* love is Augustine’s interpretation of Romans 5.5: ‘and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (RSV)’. That verse became central to Augustine’s understanding of how the Holy Spirit enables the faithful to participate in the redemption opened up to them by the Incarnation and Resurrection. Augustine interprets Romans 5.5 in connection with Romans 7.22-23<sup>754</sup> from which he draws the conviction that an overwhelming and delightful love must seize and compel fallen humanity away from their bondage to sin so that they can freely participate in God. The Holy Spirit provides the ‘eternal’ or ‘spiritual’ delight that draws the faithful towards God by overwhelming the ‘carnal’ delight that entices fallen humanity towards death. Conceived in rhetorical terms, the Holy Spirit therefore is the Eloquence of God that overcomes the false fluency of the devil by gaining the attention of the individual and making him or her receptive to the truth that converts and restores.

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<sup>754</sup> ‘For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost being, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members (RSV)’

# The Holy Spirit

## *Communio*

Central to Augustine's pneumatology is his belief that the Holy Spirit is the communion of the Father and the Son. This facet of the Holy Spirit's identity is found in one of Augustine's earlier works, *De fide et symbolo*, written in 393:

Some have even dared to believe that the Holy Spirit is the communion or deity, so to speak, of the Father and the Son, their *theotés* as the Greeks call it. So, as the Father is God and the Son is God, the very deity which embraces both...is equated with the God by whom the Son is begotten. This 'deity', by which they would have understood the mutual love and charity of both Father and Son, they say is called the Holy Spirit...<sup>755</sup>

The peculiarity of this passage has attracted much comment. For example, Lewis Ayres refers to Augustine's equating of the Holy Spirit with the 'deity' of the Father and Son as 'clumsy'.<sup>756</sup> Although no one seems to know for certain where Augustine discovered this teaching—who are the 'some' to whom he refers?—most agree that Marius Victorinus is one of them.<sup>757</sup> As we have already seen, Victorinus was an important influence on Augustine's thought not least in his sympathetic use of Neoplatonism. In line 3 of his *Hymnus* 1, Victorinus refers to the Holy Spirit as the *copula*, or bond, of the Father and the Son (*patris et filii copula*), an idea that may have been original to him.<sup>758</sup> Whatever the inspiration for the image, from an early

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<sup>755</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19.

<sup>756</sup> Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 371. See E.J. Meijerling, *Augustine: De Fide et Symbolo* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben Publisher, 1987), 121-123 for a good commentary on this passage. Meijerling notes that 'deitas' is an 'unusual and literal translation of the Greek *theotés* whilst "divinitas" would be the more appropriate Latin'. See also O. Du Roy, *L'Intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon S. Augustin. Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966), 486-487 regarding Augustine's possible sources.

<sup>757</sup> The term *theotés*, however, appears to derive from Ambrose's *On the Holy Spirit*, though he uses the term differently. Another possible source is Didymus the Blind's *De Spiritu Sancto*, though Jerome's Latin edition had only appeared just prior to Augustine's composition of *De fide et symbolo*. See Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 371.

<sup>758</sup> Victorinus, *Hymnus* 1.3 (CSEL 83.285).

date Augustine was clearly attracted to the idea of identifying the Holy Spirit with the shared love of the Father and the Son. Furthermore, at this point he explicitly equates the shared *communio* with God's deity, though qualifying this with 'so to speak', which suggests a certain hesitation.

We encounter a fuller discussion of this identity in Book Six of *De Trinitate*. After arguing his point that the Father and the Son are one, Augustine proceeds to include the Holy Spirit in the Divine 'unity and equality of substance'.<sup>759</sup> He begins by arguing:

For whether he [the Holy Spirit] is the unity of both the others or their holiness or their charity, whether he is their unity because their charity, and their charity because their holiness, it is clear that he is not one of the two, since he is that by which the two are joined (*conjungitur*) each to the other, by which the begotten is loved by the one who begets him and in turn loves the begetter. Thus, they keep unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4.3), not in virtue of participation but of their own very being (*sintque non participatione, sed essentia sua*), not by gift of some superior but by their very own gift.<sup>760</sup>

Here we find a restatement of the Holy Spirit as *communio*, or 'that by which the two are joined to each other'. Augustine is alert to the danger of his approach and thus stresses that Father and Son are not joined by participation (as, in fact, contingent existence is) but from their own Being. Thus, the Holy Spirit as *communio* is grounded in God's own Being and is to be understood as God 'very own gift' of himself to himself. Augustine concludes in a way that takes us towards the Holy Spirit's identification as love or charity: 'So the Holy Spirit is something common (*commune*) to Father and Son, whatever it is, or is their very communion (*communio*), consubstantial and coeternal. Call this friendship, if it helps, but a better word for it is charity (*caritas*)'.<sup>761</sup>

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<sup>759</sup> *trin.* 6.7.

<sup>760</sup> *trin.* 6.7 (CCL 50.235).

<sup>761</sup> *trin.* 6.7 (CCL 50.235).

Obviously, Augustine has the Holy Spirit as both *communio* and *caritas* or *dilectio* very much in mind here, and before we even begin to examine how he understands the Holy Spirit as love, we can discern how the two identities intertwine. For Augustine, *communio* grows out of and speaks of love. Conversely, love requires *communio*: a lover and a beloved. In Book Eight, Augustine dares even to use sexual imagery in describing love: ‘And what is love but a kind of life coupling (*copulans*) or trying to couple together two things, namely lover and what is being loved? This is true even of the most external and fleshly kind of love’.<sup>762</sup> Does one perhaps detect here the logic that led Augustine from Victorinus’s reference to the Holy Spirit as *copula* to his own reference to him as love?

Augustine returns to the image of the Holy Spirit as *communio* again in Book Fifteen, which though written between five and ten years later, retains the same features as found in Book Six:

And if the charity by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father inexpressibly shows forth the communion (*communio*) of them both, what more suitable than he who is the common (*communis*) Spirit of them both should be distinctively called charity?...Because he is common (*communis*) to them both, he is called distinctively what they are called in common (*communiter*).<sup>763</sup>

Here, the basis for Augustine’s logic is 1 John 4.8-16. We will later return to Augustine’s interpretation of this passage and its importance to his overall scheme. For now, it sufficient to note only that *communio* is the ground for the Holy Spirit’s identity as love. Augustine argues that because the Holy Spirit is the shared ‘common Spirit’ of the Father and the Son (here, Augustine avoids the term *theotés* even though that seems to be his meaning), the best way to conceive of him is as *caritas*.

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<sup>762</sup> *trin.* 8.14 (CCL 50.290-291).

<sup>763</sup> *trin.* 15.37 (CCL 50A.513-514).

He evokes this image of the Holy Spirit as the shared spirit of the Father and the Son in one of his sermons on John's Gospel, probably preached soon after the completion of the first part of *De Trinitate*. He is in the midst of explaining at great length the spiritual significance of the one hundred and fifty-three fish caught by the Disciples in John 21. In dividing up the total, he assigns the number seven to the Spirit and in a general way invokes tradition as support before giving his own theological explanation:

For certainly holiness and sanctification pertain properly to the Holy Spirit, and in this regard, although both the Father is spirit and the Son is spirit because God is a spirit, and the Father is holy and the Son is holy, nevertheless by proper name the Spirit of both is called the Holy Spirit.<sup>764</sup>

Clearly, Augustine has retained his initial view of the Holy Spirit as God's shared nature, though now using the term *spiritus* rather than *deitas*. In each of these passages we encounter Augustine's commitment to understanding the Holy Spirit as something shared by the Father and the Son, though he seems uncertain about the property of that which is shared.

Greater clarity however is found in his *sermo* 71, preached around 417-420 or at roughly the same time as the completion of *De Trinitate*, on the obscure passage from Matthew 12.32 regarding the 'unforgiveable sin' against the Holy Spirit.<sup>765</sup> After carefully explaining how blasphemy against the Spirit ought to be understood (and apologising for keeping his congregation in suspense for so long!), Augustine turns his attention to the Holy Spirit:

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<sup>764</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 122.8

<sup>765</sup> In the notes to his translation of the sermon, Edmund Hill, O.P. refers to the 'problem' of the interpretation of this passage as the 'one of the thorniest in biblical interpretation' (271). Interestingly, after stating his opinion of the sermon ('interminable' and 'long and rambling—and eccentric in some of its exegesis'!) he finds the need to counterbalance Augustine's interpretation with a quote from the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Whether or not one agrees with Augustine's interpretation, the 'rambling' nature that Hill laments actually demonstrates Augustine's pastoral sensitivity. He takes great pains not only to guard against uncharitable misinterpretations of the passage but also to limit the scope of the passage's exhortation. It also appears that Augustine had in view the possible use of this passage by Donatists.



...the property of the Holy Spirit is to be the communion (*communitas*) of the Father and Son... So by what is common (*commune*) to them [i.e. love] both the Father and the Son wished us to have communion (*communione*) both with them and among ourselves; by this gift which they both possess as one they wished to gather us together and make us one, that is to say, by the Holy Spirit who is God and the gift of God. By this gift we are reconciled to the godhead (*divinitati*), and are delighted (*delectamur*) by him. Just as we learn things by truth, we love things by love, and it enables us both to know things more thoroughly and to enjoy them when known more happily.<sup>766</sup>

And a little later in the sermon, Augustine concludes: ‘So to which person of the Trinity would communion in this companionship (*hujus communio societatis*) properly belong, if not to that Spirit who is common (*communis*) to Father and Son?’<sup>767</sup> Recalling what we discovered in the first chapter about participatory redemption, we can glimpse Augustine’s entire scheme within these two passages. The Holy Spirit is the shared love, the *communio*, of the Father and the Son. This *communio* is the ground for our own *communio* rooted in love with God and each other.<sup>768</sup> This recalls Augustine’s conclusion in his discussion of participation in *De Trinitate* 4 (which we examined at the end of the last chapter): Christ cleanses the faithful in order to unite them, ‘not only by virtue of the same nature whereby all of them from the ranks of mortal men are made equal to the angels, but even more by virtue of one and the same wholly harmonious will reaching out in concert to the same ultimate happiness, and fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity’.<sup>769</sup> The passage from *sermo* 71 suggests that the Holy Spirit himself is the ‘furnace of charity’ wherein the faithful are ‘fused’ together.<sup>770</sup> And all of this—

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<sup>766</sup> s. 71.18 (PL 38.454).

<sup>767</sup> s. 71.29 (PL 38.461).

<sup>768</sup> This is one of the rare occasions in which Augustine speaks of the participation of the faithful in God as *communio*. Typically, he reserves that term to describe either the relationship within the Trinity (as we have seen) or the fellowship of the Church.

<sup>769</sup> *trin.* 4.2.12.

<sup>770</sup> The Holy Spirit is suggested by the use not only of *caritas* here but also of ‘furnace’. Augustine frequently refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of heat, suggested by the tongues of fire at Pentecost. See for example, *conf.* 13.9.10. and *trin.* 4.1.1.

participation in God and communion with each other—comes as a gift, which Augustine identifies with the Holy Spirit and also which not only reconciles the faithful to God but enables them to delight in him as well. As we will discover later, there is much more that can be mined from this passage, but already it has taken us much closer towards understanding the source and role of spiritual delight.

### ***Dilectio et Caritas***

We have already seen from his earliest works that Augustine conceived of the Holy Spirit as love. He typically uses either the word *dilectio* or *caritas* (which he apparently considered synonymous<sup>771</sup>) in reference to the Holy Spirit. In *De fide et symbolo*, the identification of the Holy Spirit as love is based on his conception of him as the *communio* of the Father and the Son: ‘This ‘deity’, by which they would have understood the mutual love (*dilectionem*) and charity (*caritatem*) of both Father and Son, they say is called the Holy Spirit...<sup>772</sup> After quoting Romans 5.5, Augustine next refers to the Holy Spirit’s role as the gift from God (*donum Dei*) as ‘sufficient indication’ that the Holy Spirit is the love of God. He then concludes: ‘To this is added another testimony given by the Apostle John, Because God is love (1 John 4.16). For here, too, he does not say, Love is God, but, God is love, in order that the deity itself may be understood as love’.<sup>773</sup> Clearly at this point, Augustine’s conception of the Holy Spirit as the ‘mutual charity’ (*amborum caritatem*) is

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<sup>771</sup> Roland Teske S.J., ‘Augustine’s Inversion of 1 John 4:8’, *Augustinian Studies* 39:1 (2008), 52. In *trin.* 15.18.32, Augustine himself states that the two terms are synonymous: ‘...*dilectio sive caritas (nam unius rei est utrumque nomen)*’.

<sup>772</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19 (CSEL 41.23).

<sup>773</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19.

synonymous with his conception of the Holy Spirit as the *communio* of Father and Son.<sup>774</sup>

It is interesting that Augustine stresses here that although God is love, love is not God because later that very inversion becomes central to his understanding of the Holy Spirit and fertile ground for theological development.<sup>775</sup> We encounter this inversion initially in his sermons on the first epistle of St John:

How, then, could it be a short while ago, ‘Love is from God’, and now, ‘God is love?’ For God is Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The Son is God from God; the Holy Spirit is God from God. And these three are one God, not three gods. If the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God and he loves him in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, then love is God, but God because it is from God. For you have each one in the epistle—both Love is from God, and Love is God.<sup>776</sup>

Love, insofar as it proceeds from God, is God. Next, Augustine suggests that whenever someone hears the phrase, ‘from God’ he or she will naturally think of either the Son or the Holy Spirit. He accepts this connection and suggests, in light of Romans 5.5, that the love from God ought to be equated most closely with the Holy Spirit since it is through him that love is poured into the hearts of the faithful. As Roland Teske, S.J. indicates, however, this passage has caused more than a little trouble for translators, many of whom (such as the one above) have corrected Augustine’s ‘Love is God’ (*dilectio Deus est*) by translating it as ‘God is love’ (*Deus dilectio est*).<sup>777</sup> Yet, both Augustine’s subsequent argument and his approach to love suggest that the inversion is deliberate: because *dilectio* always finds its source in

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<sup>774</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19 (CSEL 41.23).

<sup>775</sup> See Teske, ‘Augustine’s Inversion of 1 John 4:8’, 49-60 for a discussion of Augustine’s inversion of 1 John 4.8.

<sup>776</sup> *Jo. eu. ep.* 7.6.

<sup>777</sup> *Jo. eu. ep.* 7.4-6 (PL 35.2031-2032). Teske, ‘Augustine’s Inversion of 1 John 4:8’, 49 states that only one of three English translations retain Augustine’s word order and that the NPNF actually state that Augustine made a mistake and obviously did not understand how the original Greek functions. Boniface Ramsey, the translator of this quote, does note (108, n. 10) the change here from the normal *Deus dilectio est* to *dilectio Deus est*, but offers no explanation for why he translates it as though no change has been made.

God it can be said to be God himself. Really, Augustine's argument here is entirely consonant with the arguments made about wisdom, truth, goodness, and any other attribute of God. God is what he has and so he must be love. In fact, Augustine's argument from *De fide et symbolo* points us in the right direction. He can make the bold statement that love is God because fundamentally love is the *communio* of the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Spirit.

Not surprisingly, Augustine's fullest treatment of the Holy Spirit as love comes in *De Trinitate*. In Book Eight, he makes a forthright statement about love:

Let no one say 'I don't know what to love'. Let him love his brother, and love that love; after all, he knows the love he loves with better than the brother he loves. There now, he can already have God better known to him than his brother, certainly better known because more present, better known because more inward to him, better known because more sure. Embrace love which is God, and embrace God with love. This is the love which unites (*consociat*) all good angels and all the servants of God in a bond of holiness, conjoins (*conjungit*) us and them together, and subjoins (*subjungit*) us to itself. And the more we are cured of the tumour of pride, the fuller we are of love. And if a man is full of love, what is he full of but God?<sup>778</sup>

This passage demonstrates the high regard Augustine had for what he calls 'true love'. But we can see here the same logic that we have seen before; this time love is not identified as the love that unites the Father and the Son, but the love that unites 'all good angels and all the servants of God' together and subjoins them to God. This is, of course, the language of participation with love functioning as the binding principle both between creatures and between God and creation.

This passage is part of Augustine's developing argument that God is best understood as lover, beloved, and mutual love. The conclusion of that argument in Book Eight sheds further light on the Holy Spirit:

What then, after all that, is this love or charity which the divine scriptures praise and proclaim so much, but love of the good? Now love means someone

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<sup>778</sup> *trin.* 8.12 (CCL 50.286-287). Throughout this passage Augustine uses either *dilectio* or *diligo*.

loving, and something loved with love. There you are with three, the lover, what is being loved, and love. And what is love but a kind of life coupling or trying to couple together two things, namely lover and what is being loved....What does spirit love in a friend but spirit?<sup>779</sup> So here again there are three, lover and what is being loved, and love.

This conclusion makes clear why Augustine is comfortable inverting 1 John 4.8 and declaring that love is God. As Lewis Ayres rightly suggests, Augustine does not consider love to be merely an analogy for understanding the Trinity<sup>780</sup>—God is not *like* love or even love *like* God—instead, God *is* love and love *is* God. Thus, ‘true love’ (*vera dilectio*) in the individual is the actual presence of God and makes God known as triune.<sup>781</sup> Also once again, the idea of *communio* (here, as we saw earlier, expressed in terms of coupling) lurks just behind Augustine’s explanation of the nature of love. In fact, it illustrates why Augustine’s connects *dilectio* and *communio* so closely: *communio* best describes the mutuality involved in the lover loving the beloved with love.

Augustine again discusses the Holy Spirit as love in Book Fifteen in a manner that should now be very familiar: ‘According to the holy scriptures this Holy Spirit is not just the Father’s alone nor the Son’s alone, but the Spirit of them both, and thus he suggests to us the common charity (*communem...caritatem*) by which the Father and the Son love each other’.<sup>782</sup> This reiteration of his concept of the Holy Spirit as *communio* and *caritas / dilectio* (and both together) introduces Augustine’s extended treatise on the person of the Holy Spirit that comprises all of chapter five of Book Fifteen and is his longest meditation on the subject. He continues by addressing a

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<sup>779</sup> *trin.* 8.14.

<sup>780</sup> Lewis Ayres, “Remember That You Are Catholic”, 61. Ayres points out that neither *analogia* nor *proportio* appear anywhere in *De Trinitate*.

<sup>781</sup> In *trin.* 8.10 (CCL 50.284), Augustine writes: ‘Thus it is that in this question we are occupied with about the trinity and about knowing God, the only thing we really have to see is what true love (*vera dilectio*) is; well in fact, simply what love (*dilectio*) is. Only if it is true love does it deserve to be called love, otherwise it is covetousness (*cupiditas*)...’

<sup>782</sup> *trin.* 15.27 (CCL 50A.501).

theological conundrum: since Scripture says that ‘God is love’ as opposed to ‘the Holy Spirit is love’, he concedes that each member of the Trinity is, indeed, love, and all three together are love.<sup>783</sup> But he then qualifies his concession by arguing that just as the Word is particularly designated Wisdom, even though each member is also wholly wisdom, so too is the Holy Spirit distinctively called love (*caritas*).<sup>784</sup>

Augustine next argues that since the Father alone does not proceed from another, then 1 John 4.<sup>785</sup> logically limits ‘the love which is God in such way that it is from God’ to either the Son or the Holy Spirit.<sup>786</sup> This echoes and slightly develops the previously discussed assertion in his sermon on John 21: Scripture speaks of love proceeding from God who is love and this to Augustine’s mind suggests the Holy Spirit. He continues:

But the next few lines....In this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit (1 John 4.13). So it is the Holy Spirit of which he has given us that makes us abide (*manere*) in God and him in us. But this is precisely what love does. He then is the gift of God who is love....So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbour when he has been given to him, and he himself is love. Man has no capacity to love God except from God.<sup>787</sup>

Here we encounter a slightly different approach by Augustine in his argument for understanding the Holy Spirit as love. First, he uses the idea of ‘abiding’ (*manere*) to prove that the Holy Spirit is properly thought of as love.<sup>788</sup> Love is the cause of the ‘abiding’ or ‘remaining’ in God, echoing the Holy Spirit’s role within participatory

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<sup>783</sup> *trin.* 15.28.

<sup>784</sup> *trin.* 15.29.

<sup>785</sup> ‘Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God’.

<sup>786</sup> *trin.* 15.31.

<sup>787</sup> *trin.* 15.31 (CCL 50A.506).

<sup>788</sup> Augustine takes a similar approach in *De fide et symbolo*, where he argues that to ‘enjoy the Wisdom of God is nothing else but to cleave to him in love; and no one has an abiding grasp of anything unless he loves it. Moreover he is called *Holy Spirit*, since whatever is made holy is made holy in order to abide for ever’ (*fid. et sym.* 9.19).

existence, where Augustine argues that the Holy Spirit sustains contingent existence. In this case, the Holy Spirit enables the faithful to remain or abide in redemptive participation in God and God in them. Second, because the Holy Spirit as love enables the faithful to abide in God he is also properly called *donum Dei*. Clearly, Augustine understands *dilectio* to be connected intimately to *donum*; if one recalls that his conception of love entails mutuality then it is easy to see why the connection exists: love to be love must be given and received. Augustine's conclusion introduces the final facet of the Holy Spirit's identity: *donum Dei*:

So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him the charity of God is poured out in our hearts, and through it the whole triad dwells in us. This is the reason why it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the gift of God. And this gift, surely, is distinctively to be understood as being the charity which brings us through to God, without which no other gift of God at all can bring us through to God.<sup>789</sup>

### ***Donum Dei***

One of Augustine's earliest allusions to the Holy Spirit as a gift comes at the very end of his first consideration of the Trinity in *ep.* 11. There he states that the two fruits of the Incarnation are knowledge of God and 'a certain inward and ineffable charm and sweetness of remaining in that knowledge, and of despising all mortal things,—a gift and work which is properly ascribed to the Holy Spirit'. Technically Augustine employs the term 'gift' here to describe the 'inward and ineffable charm and sweetness' that the Holy Spirit gives to the faithful rather than to the Holy Spirit himself. But it is important to note that from his earliest discussion of the Holy Spirit the idea of 'gift' is present and is oriented towards creation: in this case, the enabling of the faithful to remain in the knowledge of the Father.

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<sup>789</sup> *trin.* 15.32.

A fuller development of the Holy Spirit as gift comes in the now familiar nineteenth chapter of *De fide et symbolo* where Augustine uses the identity of the Holy Spirit as gift to prove that the Holy Spirit is God. Speaking about the ‘great and learned commentators of the divine Scriptures’, he states: ‘they declare that he is the gift of God, so that we believe that he gives no gift inferior to himself’.<sup>790</sup> In building up towards this conclusion, he develops why ‘some’ have taught that the Holy Spirit is God’s gift. Interestingly, he begins by citing Romans 5.5 to explain why ‘they consider the fact that we are reconciled to God through the Holy Spirit (which is why He is called a gift from God) as a sufficient indication that the Holy Spirit is the love of God’.<sup>791</sup> Here then Augustine explicitly links the Holy Spirit’s role as gift to the reconciliation of the faithful to God.

The close connection between the Holy Spirit’s identity as gift and the reconciliation of humankind to God, however, gives rise to a theological conundrum. In his book *Amor Dei*, John Burnaby points out that Scripture and tradition speak of the Holy Spirit as gift in relation to humankind. Thus, the Holy Spirit’s identity as *donum Dei* would seem to require the existence of humankind as recipient, which in turn shackles the Holy Spirit to creation in contradiction to the eternal and immutable nature of God. Burnaby suggests that Augustine could have solved this problem by describing the Holy Spirit as the ‘self-giving’ of love between Father and Son. But, according to Burnaby, Augustine only implies this in *De Trinitate* 5.12 before passing on immediately to speak of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world.<sup>792</sup>

*De Trinitate* 5.12-16 contains one of Augustine’s fullest treatments of the Holy Spirit as gift. He is in the midst of arguing that the names ‘proper or peculiar’

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<sup>790</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19.

<sup>791</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19.

<sup>792</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 173.



to each person of the Trinity are never used ‘with reference to self but only with reference to each other or to creation’.<sup>793</sup> Almost immediately he turns to the name of ‘gift’ for the Holy Spirit:

He is the gift of the Father and the Son, because on the one hand he proceeds from the Father (John 15.26)... and on the other the apostle’s, Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ is not one of his (Romans 8.9), are spoken of the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit is a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son, and perhaps he is given this name just because the same name can be applied to the Father and the Son. He is properly called what they are called in common, seeing that both the Father and the Son are holy and both the Father and the Son are spirit. So to signify the communion of them both by a name which applies to them both, the gift of both is called the Holy Spirit.<sup>794</sup>

Augustine introduces here a new element to the Holy Spirit as *donum Dei*: he is gift not only because he has been given to the faithful but also because he is the *communio* of the Father and the Son. This passage sets the stage for his discussion in Book Six, which we have already seen, of the Holy Spirit as the *communio* of the Father and the Son that arises, ‘not in virtue of participation but of their own very being, not by gift of some superior but by their very own gift’.<sup>795</sup> The identification of *donum* with *communio* in 5.12 is Augustine’s attempt, alluded to by Burnaby, to solve the problem of binding the Holy Spirit to the temporal order. But Augustine actually develops this line of thought in 5.15-16, which then provides the foundation for the assertion of 6.7.

In 5.15, Augustine distinguishes between the processions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, suggesting that the Father is the ‘origin not only for what he begets or makes, but also for what he gives’. He then states that this distinction solves the problem that ‘worries many people’ of why the Holy Spirit is not also a son.

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<sup>793</sup> *trin.* 5.12.

<sup>794</sup> *trin.* 5.12.

<sup>795</sup> *trin.* 6.1.7.

Augustine concludes, 'He came forth, you see, not as being born but as being given...' Thus, the Holy Spirit's identity as gift is based in eternity on his procession from the Father. The Son is eternally begotten and the Holy Spirit eternally given. Yet Augustine is still concerned that he has not dealt sufficiently with the problem of temporality and so he tries a different approach. He asks about the Holy Spirit, '...if he only proceeds when he is given, he would surely not proceed before there was anyone for him to be given to?'<sup>796</sup> Apparently, Augustine is concerned that if the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as gift, then there must be a recipient of that gift. His answer is to distinguish between a *donum* and a *donatum*: 'There is a difference between calling something a gift, and calling it a donation; it can be a gift even before it is given...' One suspects this solution would only be satisfactory to a rhetor!

Fortunately, Augustine provides a better answer in *De Trinitate* 6.7, which echoes Burnaby's proposed solution to the problem of identifying the Holy Spirit as gift. There, as we have seen, he describes the Holy Spirit as 'that by which the two are joined each to the other, by which the begotten is loved by the one who begets him and in turn loves the begetter'. The Holy Spirit is seen here as the Father and the Son's mutual gift of 'unity of Spirit'.<sup>797</sup> Recalling what we discovered in our survey of *communio* and *dilectio*, we can safely state that love itself is the gift shared by the Father and the Son. Still, Augustine is unquestionably more comfortable discussing the Holy Spirit as the *donum Dei* to the faithful than as such within the Trinity. The reason for this will become more obvious as we take a closer look at his use of Romans 5.5. For now we will turn again to *De Trinitate* 15.31-32 to observe how

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<sup>796</sup> *trin.* 5.16.

<sup>797</sup> See also *trin.* 5.16.17 where Augustine speaks of the Holy Spirit as an 'eternal gift'.

the Holy Spirit as *donum Dei* interweaves with his identity as *communio* and *dilectio*. That observation will take us very close to the subject of delight.

Recall that in *De Trinitate* 15.31 Augustine argues that the Holy Spirit's role in enabling the faithful to abide in God and God in them not only proves that he is love but also explains why he is called *donum Dei*. There Augustine concludes, 'So it is the Holy Spirit of which he has given us that makes us abide in God and him in us. But this is precisely what love does. He then is the gift of God who is love'. The logic behind this passage suggests a tight interplay between the identities of the Holy Spirit as *communio*, *dilectio*, and *donum Dei*:

1. The Holy Spirit is *communio* because he is the mutual love shared between Father and Son that arise from 'their very own gift';
2. He is *dilectio* because the gift of communion is 'precisely what love does';
3. He is *donum Dei* because communion springs from the love shared between Father and Son and between God and the faithful.

If we now take these three points and examine them within the context of participatory redemption, we can begin to understand why *donum Dei* is such an important term for Augustine. The gift of love that is the *communio* of the Father and the Son makes possible the participation of the faithful in God. Because of that love, the faithful are able to 'abide' in God and God in them. Thus, Augustine writes,

Nothing is more excellent than this gift of God. This alone is what distinguishes between the sons of the eternal kingdom and the sons of eternal perdition....Why is the Spirit distinctively called gift? Only because of the love without which the man who has not got it, though he speak with the tongues of men and of angels, is booming bronze and a clashing cymbal...<sup>798</sup>

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<sup>798</sup> *trin.* 15.32.

And why does love differentiate between the sons of the eternal kingdom and the sons of eternal perdition? Augustine explains in a way that takes us to the heart of participatory redemption:

So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him the charity of God is poured out in our hearts, and through it the whole triad dwells in us. This is the reason why it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the gift of God. And this gift, surely, is distinctively to be understood as being the charity which brings us through to God, without which no other gift of God at all can bring us through to God.

By pouring love into the hearts of the faithful, the Holy Spirit becomes the conduit for the indwelling of the Trinity in their hearts, which brings them ‘through to God’. Thus, the ‘sons of eternal kingdom’ are those who have been converted towards God and reformed in the image of his Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the ‘sons of perdition’ are those who, because of their wickedness, continue their trajectory towards death. Romans 5.5 is, therefore, central to the relationship between the three identities of the Holy Spirit and the redemptive participation of the faithful in the life of God.

## **The Rhetorical Contest**

At this point it might be helpful to return briefly to what has so far been established. According to Cicero, the task that confronts an orator in any given contest is twofold: to gain the audience’s attention and then to persuade it of the orator’s position. Delight plays a role in both phases: it draws an audience’s attention away from the opposing speaker through charm and it provides the ‘sweetness’ that makes the orator’s position more attractive. The orator’s goal is ultimately to use argument and charm to induce the audience to desire what he wills: ‘I think nothing is more admirable than being able, through speech, to have hold of people’s minds, to

win over their inclinations, to drive them at will in one direction, to draw them at will from another'.<sup>799</sup> As we have seen, Augustine approves of both roles in book four of *De doctrina Christiana*. Secondly, without eloquence wisdom is mute. According to Cicero, eloquent wisdom—in other words, philosophy united with rhetoric—is what originally gathered scattered humanity, imparted divine and ethical knowledge, and formed civilisation. Victorinus's development of this second aspect of rhetoric provides a metaphysic whereby the fallen soul can eventually escape the prison of the flesh to ascend to the divine. Taken together, the task of the ideal orator is to draw the audience's attention away from this world and, through the eloquent imparting of philosophical knowledge, to enable it to begin the journey of reintegration into the One.

In Augustine's theology, God is the ideal orator who seeks to convert and draw people towards an everlasting participation in himself. In order to achieve this, the devil, who expresses a false fluency that yokes souls to worldly delights, must be overcome. In other words, the attention of the audience (humankind) is devoted entirely to the opposing orator (the devil) and so before its members can even begin to be persuaded by the ideal orator (God) their attention must be diverted. In keeping with Ciceronian principles, this will only happen if the devil's charming fluency is defeated by God's own eloquence: eternal wisdom and spiritual delight must overcome worldly wisdom and worldly delight. In a rhetorical contest, of course, there will always be a transitional period, a moment when the charm and argument of the two orators are, as it were, evenly matched and the outcome in doubt. Similarly, there will always be the danger that the opposing orator will mount a 'charm offensive' and once again draw the audience's attention back to himself. Such is the

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<sup>799</sup> Cicero, *De orat.* 1.30.

dynamic at play until the contest is finally concluded and one orator emerges as victor.

We have already examined Augustine's extended portrayal of this moment of balance in his account in Book Eight of the *Confessiones*, where he recalls praying for chastity but not yet.<sup>800</sup> Christian wisdom had convinced him of the need for conversion, but he had not yet been filled with sufficient delight to desire to live accordingly. This left his inner self divided and his will so conflicted that it seemed as though he had, in an almost Manichaean sense, two wills competing against each other. The cause of this intolerable situation was that his 'old loves' continued to try to 'persuade' him not to turn his back on them.<sup>801</sup> The very thought of forsaking those worldly delights kept him from complete conversion. The whole account is portrayed with rhetorical undertones. Sacred words and 'Lady Continence' tugged him in one direction while the 'whisperings' of old pleasures pulled him in the other.<sup>802</sup> He was as an audience caught between two masterful orators.

This is precisely the redemptive situation in which the Holy Spirit plays its most vital role. Augustine draws from Romans 5.5 the idea of God's delight being poured into the hearts of people through the agency of the Holy Spirit. This infusion of love and delight breaks the subject's obsession with worldly and diabolical delights so that he or she can be converted and sanctified. But this only introduces a second stage in which the rhetorical contest effectively divides the individual into two audiences: one still drawn to the old delights and the other increasingly drawn to God's delight. Now, the Holy Spirit's task is to impart an ever increasing 'delight in righteousness' (*delectatio iustitiae*) so that the individual's soul can be re-formed and

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<sup>800</sup> See pp. 201-206.

<sup>801</sup> *conf.* 8.11.26.

<sup>802</sup> *conf.* 8.11.27-8.12.29.

united in its service to God. Once the whole heart and mind of the individual have been conquered by *delectatio victrix*, he or she will ascend through love to that eternal contemplation of the Lord's delight that is a perfect participation in God. While Romans 5.5 is central to the development of Augustine's approach to the first phase, his exegesis of Romans 7.21-25 becomes central to the development of his approach to both *delectatio iustitiae* and *delectatio victrix*.

## Romans 5.5

Augustine expresses his conception of the Holy Spirit as God's gift to both creation and, more particularly, humankind in some of his earliest works. In most cases he discusses the Holy Spirit as a redemptive 'gift' and in many of these instances he either alludes to or directly quotes Romans 5.5; indeed the passage appears more than two hundred times in his writings, and this figure does not include examples where it lurks just beneath the surface of his thought.<sup>803</sup> In her brief article on Augustine's use of Romans 5.5, M.-A. La Bonnardière helpfully lists the various ways in which the verse is used both before and during the Pelagian controversy.<sup>804</sup> According to her, prior to 411, the verse was used primarily to discuss the joyful patience of the righteous in times of tribulation, express the sanctification of the faithful, or to undermine Donatism. After that date, Augustine employs the passage mainly to defend the supremacy of the Holy Spirit in initiating faith and to contend

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<sup>803</sup> A.-M. La Bonnardière, 'Le Verset paulinien *Romans*, V. 5 dans l'œuvre de saint Augustin', *Augustinus Magister* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1954), 657 lists two hundred and one times that Augustine cites Romans 5.5 and provides a comprehensive list of these examples.

<sup>804</sup> La Bonnardière, 'Le Verset paulinien *Romans*, V. 5', 658-662.

that all goods enjoyed by the faithful are owed entirely to the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>805</sup>

Augustine's first detailed discussion of the Holy Spirit in light of Romans 5.5 is found in the first book of *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus manichaeorum* (387-389). In chapter thirteen he defines living rightly as striving for happiness by an upright life, which means 'to love virtue and wisdom and truth—to love with our whole heart and with our whole soul and with our whole mind the virtue which is inviolate and invincible...'<sup>806</sup> Such a whole-hearted love, however, is beyond human capacity, and so the Holy Spirit sanctifies the faithful so they can be 'inflamed with the full and perfect love' that keeps them from being 'converted away' (*converti*) from God and conforms them to 'Him rather than to the world...'<sup>807</sup> Love sets the faithful apart from the world and enables them to be 'confounded no longer with those things which should be subject to us'.<sup>808</sup> This sanctifying love is the 'work of the Holy Spirit' that arises in the heart through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Finally, in a passage that is reminiscent of Victorinus, Augustine writes:

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, this love leads us to the Son, that is, to the wisdom of God through whom the Father Himself is known. If wisdom or truth is not desired with all the powers of the soul, it shall not be found at all, but if it is sought after as it deserves to be, it cannot withhold itself nor hide from those who love it....It is love that asks, love that seeks, love that knocks, love that discloses, and love, too, that abides in that which has been disclosed.<sup>809</sup>

Augustine presents wisdom or truth here as something that eludes human awareness without the aid of love. It must be sought after with 'all the powers of the soul', which Augustine identifies as love. If wisdom is desired with a whole-hearted love,

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<sup>805</sup> La Bonnardière, 'Le Verset paulinien *Romans*, V. 5', 659. La Bonnardière further categorises these instances into various themes.

<sup>806</sup> *mor.* 1.13.22.

<sup>807</sup> *mor.* 1.13.22 (CSEL 90.26).

<sup>808</sup> *mor.* 1.13.23.

<sup>809</sup> *mor.* 1.17.31.



then it cannot remain distant just as Victorinus's wisdom cannot remain beyond those who seek it philosophically. Augustine may have replaced philosophy with an infused love, but in both cases wisdom must somehow be mediated in order to be realised.

From this point onwards, we will return to texts that we have already examined to note how Romans 5.5 is used in each instance. First, at around the same time that Augustine wrote *De moribus*, he composed his *ep.* 11, the end of which can similarly be compared with Victorinus's thought: '...there flows through the Son both a knowledge of the Father, that is, of the one principle from whom all things come, and a certain interior and ineffable tenderness and sweetness of remaining in this knowledge and scorning all mortal things, which gift and function is properly attributed to the Holy Spirit'.<sup>810</sup> Wisdom is united here with an 'interior and ineffable tenderness and sweetness' (*interior et ineffabilis suavitas atque dulcedo*) that enables one to remain in that wisdom and apart from the world. Augustine reiterates this view a few years later in the passage from *De fide et symbolo* (393) from which we mined so much information about the Holy Spirit's identity. After quoting Romans 5.5, he explains that because of this outpouring, the Holy Spirit is called a gift, 'because no one enjoys what he knows unless he loves it. To enjoy the Wisdom of God is nothing else but to cleave to him in love; and no one has an abiding grasp of anything unless he loves it'.<sup>811</sup> From these three early passages we can already perceive a paradigm in which the human soul is aided by the Holy Spirit to detach itself from the world and become aware of and remain attached to Wisdom thereby performing the same function as eloquent philosophy in Victorinus's commentary. As Carol Harrison indicates, 'If understanding and reason are associated with the Son

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<sup>810</sup> *ep.* 11.4 (PL 33.77).

<sup>811</sup> *fid. et sym.* 9.19.

in the early works, then love and delight are associated with the Holy Spirit. Reason and delight are as inseparable in these works, however, as the union of the persons of the Trinity; we cannot have one without the other...'<sup>812</sup> As early as 389, therefore, Augustine was conceiving of the role of Christ and the Holy Spirit, Wisdom and Delight, in agreement with Cicero's idea of Wisdom and Eloquence: the faithful never receive one without the other.

This idea that faith can only really be present if it is conjoined with delight makes its clearest early appearance in *Ad Simplicianum*. As we have seen, Augustine begins his argument by indicating that Christians have been commanded to 'live righteously' so that they may enjoy everlasting felicity.<sup>813</sup> But this is impossible without faith since it is a prerequisite for the reception of the Holy Spirit who inspires a love for righteousness. Yet this faith may not be summoned by an act of will, but must come in response to a 'calling' (*vocatione*) and 'by some testimony (*testificatione*) borne to the truth', a phrase redolent of forensic rhetoric.<sup>814</sup> By now, we should not be surprised that Augustine conceives of the reception of faith in terms of a 'calling'. Both Scripture and Augustine's rhetorical and philosophical background push him towards the idea that truth is expressed by a 'testimony': it is the *doctrina* of which the subject must be convinced. But then he asks, 'Who can welcome in his mind something which does not give some delight? But who has it in his power to ensure that something that will delight him will turn up, or that he will take delight in what turns up?' For truth to enter the mind it must be accompanied by delight and Augustine the rhetor recognises that individuals have no more control

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<sup>812</sup> Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, 273.

<sup>813</sup> *Simpl.* 1.2.21.

<sup>814</sup> *Simpl.* 1.2.21 (CCL 46.53).

over this delight than an audience has over an ideal orator's charm.<sup>815</sup> But even to have a chance of receiving the expressed truth in such a way as to be moved or converted, that truth must be conjoined to a delight that is part of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Returning to the language used in *mor.* 1.17.31, Augustine advises that we should therefore 'ask that we may receive...seek that we may find...knock that it may be opened to us'. The will to seek out the truth through faith is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit, which in light of *mor.* 1.17.31 can be understood as arising from the outpouring of love. Delight therefore provides the 'motive-power' (*movente*) that 'stirs' (*excitante*) the mind to receive in faith the testimony of truth.<sup>816</sup>

In commenting on this passage from *Ad Simplicianum*, John Burnaby suggests that Augustine is arguing that delight works on the will to spur it into motion.<sup>817</sup> In other words, the reception of the Holy Spirit introduces a delight that compels the will to act: in this case, to receive the testimony of truth in such a way as to be converted and to begin living righteously. In Augustine's own words, the Holy Spirit does what the unaided will cannot: it 'persuades' or 'moves' the will towards faith (*voluntas moveatur ad fidem*).<sup>818</sup> And the manner in which the Holy Spirit persuades is by imparting the necessary delight for truth to be both known and loved. Without that infusion of delight the soul remains unconvinced; either it does not perceive the testimony of the truth or it remains untouched by its call. In other words, truth speaks mutely until it is united with delight. Only after the soul experiences a delight in the truth does it receive the motive to love God and the desire to live righteously.

Finally, *Sermo* 71.18 (416/17), written late in Augustine's career, allows us to begin to understand why the gift of delight originates in the Holy Spirit. In

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<sup>815</sup> See Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 223.

<sup>816</sup> *Simpl.* 1.2.21 (CSEL 46.54).

<sup>817</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 223.

<sup>818</sup> *Simpl.* 1.2.21 (CSEL 46.53).

discussing the nature of the Holy Spirit, he states that, ‘by what is common to them both the Father and the Son wished us to have communion both with them and among ourselves’.<sup>819</sup> What is ‘common to them both’ is none other than the Holy Spirit (as we have seen), and it is the Holy Spirit as *communio* that is given to the faithful to bind them together and make them one. Furthermore, ‘By this gift we are reconciled to the godhead, and by this gift we delight in God (*eaque delectamur*)’. The gifts of communion, reconciliation, and delight come to the faithful by the outpouring of the love into their hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit. That love, in turn, makes the knowledge of truth efficacious. Augustine asks what use would ‘knowing any kind of good’ be if one did not also love that truth and concludes: ‘Now just as truth is what we learn by, so charity is what we love by, and enables us both to know things more thoroughly and enjoy them when known more happily’. Here Augustine implies that delight is connected in some mysterious way to the communion shared between the Father and the Son, which he has repeatedly identified as the Holy Spirit. If one recalls that in *De Trinitate* 6.11 he conceives of the Holy Spirit as the ‘sweetness’ of Begetter and the Begotten pervading all creation, and in *ep.* 11 speaks of that sweetness being poured into the hearts of the faithful to enable them to cling to the truth of the Son, then we can begin understand the nature of this delight: delight is not simply the experience of having the Holy Spirit poured into the believer’s heart; it is the Holy Spirit himself.

These passages throw light on the various ways La Bonnardière notes that Augustine employs Romans 5.5. So, for example, in *ep.* 55 (400), Augustine connects the Sabbath rest directly to the ‘sanctification in the rest of the Holy Spirit’

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<sup>819</sup> s. 71.18 (PL 38.454).

that comes through delight.<sup>820</sup> Until the soul has experienced spiritual delight, it remains restless, moving ‘upwards and downwards’ seeking a permanent rest:

And many things delight us through the body, but there is no eternal rest in them, nor even a long rest, and for this reason they rather soil the soul and weigh it down so that they impede its pure weight by which it is carried to higher things. When, therefore, the soul finds delight in itself, it does not yet find delight in an immutable reality, and for this reason it is still proud because it regards itself as the highest, though God is higher....But when the soul finds delight in God, it finds in him the true, certain, eternal rest that it was seeking in other things and was not finding there.<sup>821</sup>

He concludes that the only way the soul can find delight in God, and therefore eternal rest, is through love being poured into the heart through the reception of the Holy Spirit.<sup>822</sup> Similarly, Augustine interprets the ‘joyful chariot’ mentioned in Ps. 67.18 as the Church, which is ‘thousands of joyful people’ made so by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.<sup>823</sup> Finally, in his long letter to Honorius on grace (411/412), Augustine suggests that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit evokes an inner song or praise of God that comes through the outpouring of love. Referring to Eph. 5.19, he writes: ‘For this joy is within, where the sound of praise is both sung and heard: by this sound he is praised who is to be loved gratuitously with the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole mind and who sets his lover ablaze for himself by the grace of his holy Spirit. For what else is the new song but the praise of God?’<sup>824</sup> As in Book Ten of the *Confessiones*, the experience of delight induces the praise of God.<sup>825</sup>

What we discover in all these passages is in a sense the logical conclusion of Augustine’s close connection of love with delight. First, he identifies the Holy Spirit as the ‘love from God’ and as the mutual love of the Father and the Son. From this,

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<sup>820</sup> *ep.* 55.10.18.

<sup>821</sup> *ep.* 55.10.18. See also *Gn. litt.* 4.9.16 for a similar argument.

<sup>822</sup> *ep.* 55.11.19. See also *trin.* 15.31; *En in Ps.* 86, 1; *Jo. eu. tr.* 17.6 (2); *s.* 34.2.

<sup>823</sup> *en. Ps.* 67.24.

<sup>824</sup> *ep.* 140.17.44.

<sup>825</sup> See *conf.* 10.6.8-10.7.10.

he naturally begins to think of the Holy Spirit as identified, in some special way, with God's delight. He is 'wholly blissful delight' and the 'sweetness of the Begetter and the Begotten'. And so, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into the faithful must then be also an infusion of love, and if so, then an infusion of delight: to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with love is to be filled with delight. Spiritual delight therefore springs from the Trinity, sweeping up believers into the sweet *communio* of the Trinity through the reception of that *communio*, i.e. the Holy Spirit, into their hearts.

A final aspect of Augustine's approach to Romans 5.5 that merits observation is that he does not seem to hold open the possibility of righteousness by itself delighting a person enough for him or her to embrace faith. People cannot, as is the case with the experience of beauty, be enamoured and delighted with righteousness. The delight must come from elsewhere: namely, the Holy Spirit. This becomes clear if we compare the dynamics of *Ad Simplicianum* with those of *De sermone Domini in monte*. There, the suggestion itself provides the delight that the will must resist or else be overcome. In *Ad Simplicianum* one has both the suggestion (God's *vocatione* or the '*testificatione* borne to truth') and the ultimate persuasion (*moveatur ad fidem*). But the delight that enables the suggestion to persuade seems to come from an external agency, the appearance and gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must invade the fallen heart and infuse the delight necessary for binding the believer to righteousness with the glue of charity. But this should not surprise us. The delight that charms an audience in Cicero's portrait is not found in the teaching itself but is conveyed by the manner in which the orator arranges and expresses that teaching. God, who expressed the teaching (the Law) also expresses the delight that persuades

the faithful to accept and hold fast to the teaching: God's eloquence is his spiritual delight.

### ***Romans 7***

It remains now to examine how Augustine understands the manner of the contest between God and sin and what the movement towards one or the other looks like. In the main, he accomplishes this approach through his interpretation of Romans 7. That chapter is filled with words and concepts that are central to Augustine's theology—bondage, the will and desire, the flesh versus the spirit, and delight—and so it should not be surprising that it plays such a commanding role in the development of his scheme of redemption. Moreover, the overarching framework of the passage avails itself of a rhetorical interpretation: sin and righteousness contend with each other to direct Paul's will. Augustine repeatedly turns to Roman 7, often in long and detailed exegeses, to develop his understanding of the inner struggle faced by one in the midst of both conversion and sanctification. Largely through his wrestling with this passage, Augustine ultimately develops the belief that for people truly to be free they must both delight in and desire to obey God's will; only then can the restless heart find peace. As with Cicero's orator, God must persuade the believer to want what he wants.

The passage itself, indeed the whole thrust of Paul's argument at this point in Romans, still causes difficulties for Biblical scholars.<sup>826</sup> But in general terms, Paul is in the midst of discussing the two types of slavery presented to people—slavery to sin or to God—and in Chapter 7 addresses more specifically the problem of the will. The

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<sup>826</sup> For a modern commentary on this passage, see N.T. Wright, 'The Letter to the Romans', *The New Interpreter's Bible, vol. 10: The Acts of the Apostles, Introduction to Epistolary Literature, The Letter to the Romans, The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 549-572.

presenting question—and one that naturally catches Augustine’s attention—is why people continue to commit sins even when they know right from wrong. Paul speaks of this as an inner struggle between his ‘carnal’ and his ‘inmost’ self that is beyond his own powers to resolve. His heart delights in God but his carnal self remains so committed to sin that he continues to do the things he no longer desires doing. Ultimately, the ‘law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ sets him free from bondage to sin and death.<sup>827</sup>

Scholars by and large agree that Augustine’s interpretation of Romans 7 changed over time.<sup>828</sup> J. Partout Burns argues that in his early works, Augustine ‘protected the inviolability of the human will’ by insisting that once the good that ought to be done is discovered the individual has the power to choose it. The inclination to act otherwise arises from the ‘concupiscence of the flesh’ and is reinforced by custom. Burns maintains that Augustine held that God frees the believer from this habit while at the same time respecting ‘a certain human autonomy’ by ‘dispositions already within the will’.<sup>829</sup> Charity then strengthens the will that has already chosen the good so that it can continue to overcome concupiscence and custom.<sup>830</sup> Burns concludes that grace ‘persuades and facilitates rather than [*sic*] coercing and necessitating’.<sup>831</sup> Burns also argues that according to Augustine’s early view, Romans 7 refers to a person under the Law not yet called to

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<sup>827</sup> Romans 8.2.

<sup>828</sup> For a contrary view, see Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology*, 121-163.

<sup>829</sup> J. Partout Burns, ‘The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy’, *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979), 44

<sup>830</sup> Burns, ‘The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy’, 43.

<sup>831</sup> Burns, ‘The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy’, 44. Burns argues that this persuasion is initially carried out through God’s use of the ‘external graces’ of teaching and calling to provoke a person to choose good and turn to God for help. He develops his idea of ‘external grace’ more fully in J. Partout Burns, *The Development of Augustine’s Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1980).



believe or given the grace to perform the good.<sup>832</sup> By the start of the Pelagian controversy, however, Augustine had changed his mind, insisting that a person can only perform the good through the help of the Holy Spirit, and therefore he reinterprets Romans 7 as Paul speaking about his own post-conversion struggle against sin.<sup>833</sup>

Burns' argument is supported by William S. Babcock who focuses more sharply on Augustine's interpretation of Romans during the period of 394-396. Babcock argues that through his study of Romans, Augustine came to realise that the carnal self can only be overcome through the intervention of God's grace.<sup>834</sup> Prior to this development, Augustine had held that a person's moral progress towards God was 'more or less a linear continuum, a steady progression from the recognition of God as the eternal good to the willing of God as one's own highest good'.<sup>835</sup> After studying Romans 7-9, however, he forsook this view for one that involves four stages that reflect humanity's relation to the Law and the Incarnation: *ante legem*, *sub lege*, *sub gratia*, *in pace*.<sup>836</sup> Augustine then concluded that the transition from *sub lege* to *sub gratia* is impossible without God's aid.<sup>837</sup>

Frederick Van Fleteren shares and develops Babcock's basic thesis. Drawing from Augustine's discussion of Romans 7 in *diu. qu.* 83 64, Van Fleteren argues that as late as 393 Augustine held that a person turns to God in an act of 'fiduciary faith'

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<sup>832</sup> Burns, 'The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy', 44

<sup>833</sup> Burns, 'The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy', 45. Burns does suggest that before conversion the individual can recognise the good, but will then only perform it out of fear. The Holy Spirit provides the ability to delight in performing the good.

<sup>834</sup> William S. Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394-396), *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979), 58.

<sup>835</sup> Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans', 59.

<sup>836</sup> Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans', 59.

<sup>837</sup> Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans', 61.

so that he or she may be helped by the ‘grace of liberation’.<sup>838</sup> At this point, Augustine believed that a person *ante legem* possesses concupiscence and consents to it in ignorance. A person *sub lege* possesses concupiscence, recognises what it is, but consents to it out of weakness; the Law is only ever performed out of fear. Concupiscence remains in the person *sub gratia* but he or she is not drawn to it nor consents to it. Now, the Law is performed with delight. Finally, only *in pace*, when the body perfectly serves the spirit, will there be a total absence of concupiscence.<sup>839</sup> Van Fleteren maintains that Augustine’s conversion to his later view occurs, not surprisingly, in the midst of composing *Ad Simplicianum* where (1.2.3) he determines in light of Romans 9.11-13 that faith itself is a gift from God.<sup>840</sup> Van Fleteren points to *Retractationes* 2.1, where Augustine states that he came to realise that Romans 7 actually refers to the spiritual man under grace wrestling with the pull of earthly desires.<sup>841</sup>

Leaving aside for a moment the argument about Augustine’s understanding of where the initiative of faith lies, it is worth noting that a rhetorical framework lurks unspoken behind all these accounts. Although, this can be seen most clearly in Burns’ portrayal of God as one who ‘persuades’ rather than coerces, it is also to be found in Babcock’s and Van Fleteren’s account of Augustine’s eventual embrace of a four-staged life of a believer in which the individual is drawn and consents to various delights. All implicitly agree that ultimately Augustine came to understand the will as being at the mercy of delight, drawn irresistibly to consent either to earthly pleasures or heavenly delight. In general terms, therefore, all these scholars

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<sup>838</sup> Frederick Van Fleteren, ‘Augustine’s Exegesis of Romans 7:22-23 in its Pauline Context’, *Augustinian Studies* 32:1 (2001), 91.

<sup>839</sup> Van Fleteren, ‘Augustine’s Exegesis of Romans’, 92.

<sup>840</sup> Van Fleteren, ‘Augustine’s Exegesis of Romans’, 95.

<sup>841</sup> Van Fleteren, ‘Augustine’s Exegesis of Romans’, 96.

understand Augustine as interpreting Romans 7 in terms of persuasion. According to their view, the early Augustine gave a higher place to the individual will than at the time of the Pelagian controversy, but even then God called and persuaded, even if only (in Burns' view) through the 'external grace' of teaching and calling, themselves rhetorical activities. None of these accounts, however, even mentions Augustine's rhetorical background or attempts to understand Romans 7 in the context of his wider theology. The shared hypothesis (albeit bolstered in Van Fleteren's case by Augustine's *Retractationes*) is that in the midst of composing *Ad Simplicianum* Augustine moved from a more philosophical position (that provided space for the initiating activity of the will) to a more conservative one. The assumption in each case is that the change in Augustine's position marked a new development in his thought.

But, assuming there was a change, what if this change were actually a reversion to an earlier understanding of the will? It is remarkable that Augustine's later interpretation of Romans 7 agrees remarkably with Ciceronian rhetorical theory. The journey from *ante legem* to *in pace* is concurrently a journey from a will ruled by worldly delights to a will ruled by the delight of the Holy Spirit. The movement from *ante legem* through *sub lege*, *sub gratia* to *in pace* is driven, as Burns recognises, by persuasion; in the midst of the movement the will is divided between the lure of two delights and becomes divided between the carnal and the inner self. Augustine's ultimate position is therefore not unlike Cicero's in the introduction of *De inventione*. In both, humanity moves through persuasion from a bestial nature to one that embraces a civilising truth. Cicero's wisdom and Augustine's Law are both equally impotent in converting carnal humanity; but when aided by Cicero's eloquence or Augustine's delight then carnal humanity is transformed. Consent is central to both,

and in both consent only really comes about through a transformation of the heart. Cicero and Augustine alike hold that the will must be not just convinced but also (and to a greater degree) affected if it is ultimately to be changed.

Although he does not connect Augustine's understanding to rhetoric, Eugene TeSelle does helpfully acknowledge this dynamic at play in Augustine's interpretation of Romans 7. He approaches Augustine's interpretation through his psychology of persuasion as presented in *De sermone Domini in monte* to argue that Augustine conceives of two conflicting delights, one binding the will to 'misdirected' delight and the other a delight in the law of God.<sup>842</sup> TeSelle argues that Romans 5.5 influenced Augustine's thinking, causing him to understand God as infusing delight into the subject so that he or she can overcome worldly delight.<sup>843</sup> He concludes, 'This new delight "draws" and "leads" the will, inviting consent and making it possible'.<sup>844</sup> What is this but the language of rhetoric, of winning consent through persuasion?

Augustine attempts first to grapple at length with Romans 7 in *De diversis quaestionibus* 83 66, written in the midst of his post-ordination intensive Scriptural study between 394 and 395.<sup>845</sup> His four stages of development towards eternal life make their first appearance here. He describes the first stage, prior to the reception of the Law, as 'an animal, carnal state' that is reminiscent of Cicero's original human state of living 'after the fashion of beasts'.<sup>846</sup> In the second state, under the Law, people recognise right from wrong, but 'overcome by sin's habits, we sin because

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<sup>842</sup> TeSelle, 'Exploring the Inner Conflict', 321-322, 324.

<sup>843</sup> TeSelle, 'Exploring the Inner Conflict', 325.

<sup>844</sup> TeSelle, 'Exploring the Inner Conflict', 325.

<sup>845</sup> For the dating of this text, see Daniel L. Mosher, 'Introduction', in Augustine, Saint, *Eighty-three Different Questions*, Daniel L. Mosher (tr.), 18-19.

<sup>846</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 66 3; Cicero, *De inv.* 1.2.

faith does not yet assist us'.<sup>847</sup> Eventually, this state gives way to the next when the believer 'trusts fully' in the 'Deliverer' and is 'no longer overcome by the delight of an evil habit (*vincimur delectatione consuetudinis malae*) when it strives to draw (*ducere*) us into sin'.<sup>848</sup> Still, sin continues to try to 'seduce' the believer, even though the believer does not yield. Finally, after the 'mortal body' is infused with the fullness of life in heaven, the believer is at long last at peace.<sup>849</sup> Again like Cicero's presentation of the origin of civilisation, the end result is unity, harmony and peace where before there was only disharmony and discord. Augustine understands the moment of transition to be between the person *sub lege* and *sub gratia*, which he identifies with Romans 7.24-25. The Law allows the individual to know the difference between good and evil; the Law also admonishes because even with that recognition the individual is powerless to perform the good. In other words, the Law allows people to perceive that they are in bondage to sin and ruled by their sinful habits.<sup>850</sup> This helplessness gives rise to the necessary humility whereby one will appeal for help. And once one has been raised up from bondage, he or she will then recognise the 'grace of the Deliverer'. What allows this freedom is the appearance of 'a love which would possess the mind by an inward delight (*interiore delectatione*), lest the mind be drawn to sin by the delight of temporal things'.<sup>851</sup> Finally, Augustine concludes, 'Therefore, in the first [phase of] activity, which is prior to the Law, there is no struggle with the pleasures of this world; in the second, which is under the Law,

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<sup>847</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 66. 3.

<sup>848</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 66.3 (PL 40.62).

<sup>849</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 66.3.

<sup>850</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 66.5.

<sup>851</sup> *diu. qu.* 83 66.6 (PL 40.64).

we struggle but are overcome; in the third, we struggle and overcome; in the fourth, we do not struggle, but we rest in perfect and eternal peace'.<sup>852</sup>

Augustine returns to this scheme in his short commentary on Romans. For the most part, his description reiterates what has already been described in *diu. qu. 83* 66: in the first stage, people consent to or approve of sin (*approbamus peccata*) and therefore enact it;<sup>853</sup> in the second, however, people 'confess' that they commit the sins they wish not to commit which results in the realisation that they cannot of their own will perform the good;<sup>854</sup> in the third, people resist the 'fleshly desires' because they are 'fixed in the grace and love of God';<sup>855</sup> and in the final, people enjoy perfect peace because they have been transformed through the resurrection of the body.<sup>856</sup> Once again, it is possible to read the movement of Augustine's scheme in rhetorical terms. At the beginning, people are entirely under the sway of sin to which they have given their approval. That approval or consent is essential to their transformation; in order to enjoy the final peace, that consent must be wrested away from sin and given over to God's righteousness. To begin the process of conversion, therefore, God presents his case, as it were, by providing the Law. The admonition of the Law makes those in bondage to sin aware of their state and instils in them a desire to be free. In this way, their attention is redirected towards God, who then provides the grace for them to be led to will what he wills. The lure of sin remains after this outpouring of grace, but as long as consent is withheld the faithful remain with God until at long last they enjoy the peace of his complete victory over their sinful desires.

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<sup>852</sup> *diu. qu. 83* 66.7.

<sup>853</sup> *ex. prop. Rm.* 12.3 (CSEL 84.7).

<sup>854</sup> *ex. prop. Rm.* 13.5-6.

<sup>855</sup> *ex. prop. Rm.* 13.8.

<sup>856</sup> *ex. prop. Rm.* 13.9.

Missing from these treatments of Romans 7, however, are the role of the Holy Spirit, an interplay with Romans 5.5, and the necessary presence of love and delight within the movement from sin to eternal life. Thus far, Augustine has only stated that in response to the penitent's plea for help, God leads him or her to a state of grace and freedom from the bondage of sin. In his commentary on Galatians, however, he finally gives both the Holy Spirit and delight their role within the dynamic of Romans 7. Although the reiteration of the scheme itself is found in *Expositio Epistulae ad Galatas* 46, of more interest is what precedes and follows that chapter. In chapter 44, Augustine draws upon Romans 13.10 to demonstrate how the Law is really fulfilled through love: 'And since faith obtains the Holy Spirit, through whom the love of God has been poured out in the hearts of those who work righteousness, no one should take any pride whatsoever in good works prior to the grace of faith'.<sup>857</sup> In his note for this passage, Eric Plumer points out that 'obtains' (*impetrare*) implies 'seeking' and 'asking', which suggests that Luke 11.9 may lurk behind this as it does in *mor.* 1.17.31 and *Simpl.* 1.2.21.<sup>858</sup> Augustine also refers to faith here as a grace, implying that faith itself originates with God. The grace of faith seeks out the Holy Spirit who then pours out love into the heart of the penitent so that he or she can be transformed from a life *sub lege* into a life *sub gratia*.

But Augustine has still not explained the dynamics of this transformation. Why does the infusion of love through the gift of the Holy Spirit free the penitent from a bondage to sin? After explaining the four stages of transformation, however, he turns to the heart of the matter. In a person *sub gratia*, the fruits of the Spirit as spelled out in Timothy 1.8-10 govern. Why? Augustine explains:

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<sup>857</sup> *ex. Gal.* 44.

<sup>858</sup> *ex. Gal.*, p. 207, n. 213.

Now these good things reign if they so delight (*si tantum delectant*) us that in the midst of temptations they keep the mind from rashly consenting to sin (*ne in peccati consensionem ruat*). For we necessarily act in accordance with what delights us more, as for example when the beauty of an attractive woman meets our eyes and moves us towards a delight in fornication. But if, through the grace that is in faith in Christ, that inmost loveliness—the pure beauty of chastity—delights us more, we will live and act in accordance with that, not behaving with sin reigning in us so that we obey its desires, but with righteousness reigning through love with great delight. And we know that whatever we do in love is pleasing to God. Now what I have said about purity and fornication I want to be understood of the other things as well.<sup>859</sup>

In the end, eternal life depends on delight; a person will go where delight leads. In grappling with Romans 7, Augustine has come to two convictions: first, that if to be free means to do as one pleases, then God must enable the individual to be pleased with righteousness in order for him or her to be free; second, that the dynamic of Romans 7 and of human salvation accords with his own rhetorical training. In order for God to transform sinners, he must infuse them with a delight in righteousness that will overcome their delight in the world and sin. God must be more eloquent than sin. In the end, the four stages of salvation conform remarkably well to Augustine's three stages of temptation: suggestion, delight, consent. The Law is the suggestion that is powerless unless it delights. The Holy Spirit infuses that delight in the Law so that the mind consents freely to perform it. In Ciceronian terms, the Law states the *doctrina* to which people must be persuaded and the Holy Spirit provides the *delectatio* that moves them towards final approval: the end result is a freedom that comes from delighting in what God wills.

In his *Retractationes*, Augustine later admitted that in initially working out this scheme, he 'tried hard to maintain the free choice of the human will, but the grace of God prevailed'.<sup>860</sup> Grappling with Romans 7 in light of Romans 9.10-29 in his letter to his old mentor Simplicianus, however, induced a change of heart that caused

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<sup>859</sup> *ex. Gal.* 49 (CSEL 84.126).

<sup>860</sup> *Ret.* 2.1.



him to believe that even faith itself is a gift from God. As we have already noted at length, Peter Brown made much of this conversion moment that transformed Augustine from a man with a high view of ‘human autonomy’ (to use Purtout Burns’ phrase) to the intractable foe of the Pelagians. While there is no need to review the merits of this viewpoint, it is important to note three things about Augustine’s supposed conversion.

First, considering Augustine’s earlier language about the movement from *ante lege* to *sub gratia*, his change of heart was not terribly momentous. If he did uphold a certain autonomy of the will in his earlier works, it was an autonomy undergirded by God’s internal call and external admonition without which the will would never have begun to turn towards God. Just as importantly, Augustine always conceived of the will as belonging to a rational creature entirely dependent upon God and subject to the direction of delight, be that an unwholesome, worldly delight or a higher delight in truth and beauty. Finally, the will that does respond to God’s call and the admonition of the Law is one that is utterly in bondage to the habit of sin. In the end, if *Ad Simplicianum* does show an adjustment, then it is an exceedingly small one from a concept in which a divinely aided will recognises through God’s admonition that it must turn to him to a concept in which a divinely aided will is infused with the recognition and ability to turn to God. On one level, *Ad Simplicianum* marks only a change of degree in the bondage of the will. As will be shown, however, the introduction of the Holy Spirit as the infuser of love and delight enriches Augustine’s scheme and brings it into accord with the rest of his developing thought.

Second, the change, however small it may be, is best understood as a reversion to something more akin to a Ciceronian understanding of motivation with a will passing, in spite of itself, from being governed by one master to another through

a movement of delight and persuasion. If the goal of Cicero's orator is to compel an audience to will what he wills then the contest between opposing orators is ultimately a contest of wills, both between the two orators and between the two orators and the audience. As has been shown, within such a presentation there is very little room for an active, autonomous will on the part of the audience; people are passively swayed by the presentation and charm of the speakers. They do not choose to give their rapt attention and to delight in the words of one orator over the other but are swept up by the charm of the more eloquent speaker. In much the same way, in *Ad Simplicianum* people do not choose to turn to God and to delight in righteousness; they are swept up by the unexpected arrival of delight through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Finally and importantly, Augustine states that in working through Romans 7 in light of Romans 9 he came to see Romans 7 as referring also to the 'spiritual man' or the person *sub gratia*.<sup>861</sup> This is a vital discovery on his part because it provides him with what one might call a pastoral insight into the on-going struggle of the faithful with sin and grace in terms of rhetoric. Now, the battle of wills and delights not only occurs during the process of conversion but also after conversion in the process of sanctification. The dramatic intervention of God in giving the Holy Spirit through that infusing delight does not automatically result in victory. Rather it results in a divided will as the rhetoric of the world and God battle through delight for governance. That contest only comes to its conclusion when God's delight is victorious over worldly delights. With this final apprehension, Augustine's rhetorical dynamic of salvation encompasses the process of both conversion and sanctification.

Augustine most clearly describes this new rhetorical dynamic of sanctification in his remarkable series of sermons on Romans 7 and 8 preached between 417 and

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<sup>861</sup> *Ret.* 2.1. See Van Fleteren, 'Augustine's Exegesis of Romans', 96 for a discussion of this point.

419 and in Tractate 41 of his sermons on the Gospel of John probably preached in 419. In these works we find a well-developed concept of a Christian's lifelong struggle with sin and virtue expressed in terms of delight. The governing metaphor, particular for the sermons, is of warfare, with Augustine employing various types of martial language to emphasise both the gravity and difficulty of progressing in faith towards salvation. In terms of his four-stage process of salvation, almost his entire focus is on the growth from *sub gratia* to *in pace*. His conclusion in all of these works is that the just will only enjoy a state of living *in pace* at their death when God's spiritual delight finally overcomes the seduction of temporal and sinful delights.

Between 417 and 419, Augustine preached ten sermons on Romans 7 and 8. Although the traditional ordering of the sermons is not entirely chronological (arranged instead according to the expounded Scriptural texts) many of them were, in fact, preached as a kind of sermon series. *Sermo* 151 in many ways sets the tone for all of the succeeding sermons: '...the life of the just in the body is still a warfare, not a triumphal celebration'.<sup>862</sup> Concupiscence and bad habits contend with the Holy Spirit for control of the will, seeking to lure the just into giving their consent to sin.<sup>863</sup> As always, consent is the key to the whole theory; all the efforts of sin are devoted to inducing the just to consent to enacting it. As long as consent is withheld, sin fails to reclaim the just, although it continues to plague them with sinful desires. Augustine asks:

So what is the good that I do? That I don't consent to a bad desire. I do good, and I don't carry the good through; and my enemy, lust, does evil and doesn't carry the evil through. How do I do good and not carry through with the good? I do good when I do not consent to the evil lust; but I do not carry

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<sup>862</sup> s. 151.2.

<sup>863</sup> s. 151.4. Augustine uses the example of drunkenness, not without a sprinkling of humour, to express his point.

through with the good, so as not to covet or have any lust at all. So again, how does my enemy too do evil and not carry through with the evil? It does evil, because it stirs up an evil desire; it does not carry the evil through, because it does not drag me into committing the evil.<sup>864</sup>

This passage can, of course, be easily understood according to Augustine's psychology of sin. Because they have not reached the stage of peace, the just remain plagued by sinful suggestions that stoke desire through the delights they offer. Augustine maintains that not even the holy are free from these suggestions.<sup>865</sup> But as long as these sinful suggestions are resisted and consent is withheld—in short, as long as they remain unpersuasive—they fail to divert the just away from their movement towards the peaceful rest of eternal life.

Augustine illustrates how even the holy are plagued by such sinful suggestions in *sermo* 154 by dwelling on Paul's own struggles: 'So what are we saying, my dear brothers and sisters? That the apostle had no lust in his flesh, which he would rather not have, but which he didn't consent to, though it arose, tickled his fancy, gave him ideas, drew him on, boiled up, tempted him?'<sup>866</sup> Augustine's reply is that Paul did struggle because he had not yet reached the perfection of the angels. This clearly establishes the state of the faithful: their fancy is tickled by sinful delights that stir them up and seek to draw them back towards slavery. But again, consent is crucial. Paul is worthy of imitation because even though he experienced the conflict of the spirit against the flesh, he withheld consent. Yet, until he reached the 'safe haven of

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<sup>864</sup> s. 151.7.

<sup>865</sup> s. 151.8.

<sup>866</sup> s. 154.3 (PL 38.834): '*Non habebat ullam concupiscentiam Apostolus in carne sua, quam habere nollet; cui tamen existenti, titillanti, suggerenti, sollicitanti, aestuanti, tentanti non consentiret?*'

that home country',<sup>867</sup> he remained, like all Christians, a divided person with the mind and the flesh opposing one another.<sup>868</sup>

The reason why people remain divided even after they have consented to the Law is that they have within them two opposing delights. The role of delight is key. The faithful do not withhold consent from sin through some exertion of the will. Augustine argues that one may will not to commit sin and yet sin anyway.<sup>869</sup> The just withhold consent because the 'delight in the Law of God' exceeds the delight of sin. Augustine illustrates this vividly:

You see lust kicking up a rumpus outside, you issue a decree against it, to cleanse your conscience. 'I don't want to,' you say, 'I won't do it. Granted it would be delightful, I won't do it, I have something else to delight in. For I delight in the law of God according to the inner self. Why are you rowdily proposing foolish, temporal, transient, vain and harmful delights, and telling me about them like a chatterer? (*garrula*)'<sup>870</sup>

The battle for consent then is a conflict of delights, each seeking to lure the will to consent and subsequently to move either towards or away from God. Augustine later describes this contest of delights in unambiguous rhetorical language: 'So now if the mind doesn't *consent* to sin tickling its fancy, making *suggestions*, beckoning it on; if the mind doesn't *consent*, because it has other inner *delights* of its own in no way to be compared with the *delights* of the flesh; so if it doesn't *consent*, and there is in me something dead and something alive, death is still striving, but the mind's alive and not *consenting*'.<sup>871</sup>

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<sup>867</sup> s. 154.7.

<sup>868</sup> s. 154.9.

<sup>869</sup> s. 154.10-12.

<sup>870</sup> s. 154.12 (PL 38.838).

<sup>871</sup> s. 154.14 (PL 38.839): '*Jam ergo si mens non consentit peccato titillanti, suggerenti, blandienti; si mens non consentit, quoniam habet alias interius delectationes suas, delectationibus carnis ex nulla parte conferendas: si ergo non consentit, et est in me quiddam mortuum, et quiddam vivum, mors adhuc contendit, sed mens viva non consentit.*' The emphasis is mine.

Although *sermo* 159 may have been preached in 417 rather than 419, it sums up the entire series of sermon about the inner conflict of the faithful in light of Romans 7 and 8 and conceives of that struggle most obviously in terms of delight; indeed, it contains much that we have examined in previous chapters. Augustine begins by describing the ‘present journey in exile’, the stage of *in gratia*, as a journey towards ‘the enjoyment of the final vision (*fruemur specie*)’.<sup>872</sup> The just begin with faith and ‘arrive at vision (*perveniat ad speciem*)’.<sup>873</sup> In other words, the life of the faithful, as we have seen, is a movement towards the *beata vita* which is a contemplative vision of the Lord’s delight. In order to make progress towards that Beatific Vision, the faithful must love justice and the first stage of sanctification is to prefer the love of justice to everything else that ‘gives delight (*delectant*)’.<sup>874</sup> This leads to the passage we have already examined in which Augustine allows for a delight in other things as long as one delights most in justice.<sup>875</sup>

Augustine now digresses by describing the types of delight that compete with a delight in justice. First he mentions lawful delights that appeal to the faithful in their ‘weakness’: food and drink, sunlight, the glow of the moon and stars, ‘melodious voice and a lovely ditty’, sweet smells, and lawful pleasures of the flesh.<sup>876</sup> These are examples of the delights woven by God into creation and examples of the created beauty that delight the senses and properly point towards God. Next he proceeds to describe unlawful delights by opposing each of the above examples with sinful alternatives: theatrical shows, songs of music halls, the odour of incense offered to demons, pagan banquets, and the embrace of harlots. He

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<sup>872</sup> s. 159.1 (PL 38.868).

<sup>873</sup> s. 159.1 (PL 38.868).

<sup>874</sup> s. 159.2 (PL 38.868).

<sup>875</sup> See pp. 165-166.

<sup>876</sup> s. 159.2. (PL 38.868): ‘...*delectat canora vox et suavissima cantilena, delectat odor bonus; delectant etiam tactum nostrum quaecumque pertinent ad carnis aliquam voluptatem.*’

punctuates each example by stating that the one delights in ‘the first sort lawfully, the second unlawfully’ until finally concluding, ‘So you see, dearest friends, that our bodily senses provide us with delights both lawful and unlawful. But let our delight in justice be such that it beats even lawful delights; and put justice before the delight that you enjoy lawfully’.<sup>877</sup> The faithful can only continue to love justice more than anything else if they delight in justice above all else.

This barrage of delights—lawful, unlawful, and in justice—creates an inner struggle as each kind of delight competes for the subject’s love. Augustine states that, ‘One only loves...what delights one’ before reminding his congregation that Psalm 36.4 (37.4) commands them to delight in the Lord.<sup>878</sup> Next, he identifies justice as God himself: to delight in justice is really to delight in God. He makes much the same point in Tractate 26 of his sermons on John’s Gospel. There he explains that people are drawn by pleasure, ‘not by necessity but by pleasure (*voluptas*), not by obligation but by delight (*delectatio*)’.<sup>879</sup> This being the case, then how much more powerful must be the pull of ‘those whose delight is in the truth, whose delight is in happiness, whose delight is in justice, whose delight is in eternal life...because each of those is Christ’.<sup>880</sup> And so the delight in righteousness that marks the faithful from the unfaithful is actually a delight in God that draws them towards the Beatific Vision.

Next, Augustine describes the dynamic involved in the conflict of delights. He offers the example of gold: it is ‘a delight’ and to say that it is anything but

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<sup>877</sup> s. 159.2 (PL 38.869): ‘*Justitia sic delectet, ut vincat etiam licitas delectationes; et ei delectationi qua licite delectaris, praeponere justitiam*’.

<sup>878</sup> s. 159.3.

<sup>879</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 26.4 (CCL 36.261).

<sup>880</sup> *Jo. eu. tr.* 26.4 (CCL 36.261): ‘...*qui delectatur veritate, delectatur beatitudine, delectatur justitia, delectatur sempiterna vita, quod totum Christus est?*’

beautiful would be ‘insulting the Creator’.<sup>881</sup> But then a ‘tempter’ appears who says that he will take the gold away unless the person delighting in the gold perjures himself. On the other hand, he will give more if he does as the tempter requires. And so the Christian is placed in a difficult position: ‘Two kinds of delight are fighting it out in you; now I ask you the question, which you prefer, which delights you the more, gold or truth?’<sup>882</sup> The obvious answer is that truth ought to delight more even though it is imperceptible to the senses. Augustine reminds his flock that they did not live as sinners out of fear but because sins delighted them. So Christians ought to live righteously not because they fear divine retribution but because they delight in the righteousness itself.<sup>883</sup> Justice should be preferred to gold because it is more delightful than gold.

The last sermon in our survey is Tractate 41 of Augustine’s sermons on John’s Gospel preached at roughly the same time as these other sermons. Though the sermon itself is an exposition of John 8.31-36, Augustine’s discussion of humankind’s slavery to sin leads him to dwell at length on Romans 7. The first state of freedom from slavery is to enjoy a life without crime, which Augustine defines as serious sin.<sup>884</sup> But there remains in the newly freed person an enticement to return to slavery, to a life of sin.<sup>885</sup> Both slavery and freedom coexist in the same person, each enticing the will with delight. Augustine explains:

...insofar as we are slaves to God, we are free; insofar as we are enslaved to the law of sin, we are still slaves. Hence the Apostle says what we began to say, ‘I am delighted with the law of God according to the inner man’. See wherein we are free, wherein we are delighted with the law of God. Freedom

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<sup>881</sup> s. 159.5 (PL 38.870) : ‘*Ecce delectat te aurum tuum, oculos tuos delectat: metallum est pulchrum, fulgentissimum, delectat.*’

<sup>882</sup> s. 159.5.

<sup>883</sup> s. 159.6.

<sup>884</sup> *Jo.eu. tr.* 41.9.2-10.1.

<sup>885</sup> *Jo.eu. tr.* 41.10.2.



delights (*libertas enim delectat*). For as long as you do what is just out of fear, God does not delight you (*Nam quamdiu timore facis quod justum est, non Deus te delectat*). As long as you do it, still as a slave, he does not delight you; let him delight you and you are free. Do not fear punishment, but love justice.<sup>886</sup>

Delight in justice therefore brings freedom with it because the faithful are finally living as they please; only that pleasure or delight comes from God. But that freedom cannot be fully enjoyed in this life, because worldly delights still seek to lure the faithful back into bondage to sin. The choice as ever, though, is between two forms of bondage—one that is death, the other that is, paradoxically, perfect freedom—and the reason for this is that the will is controlled by delight: bondage to God and bondage to sin are therefore both a bondage to delight.

### ***De spiritu et littera***

All of the themes that we have examined in the course of this study come together at the start of Augustine's second work against the Pelagians, *De spiritu et littera*, written in 412. The work is an epistolary response to his friend the tribune Marcellinus<sup>887</sup> who had asked Augustine how he could maintain that it was technically possible for someone to be sinless even though, apart from Christ, this had never happened nor was likely to happen. Augustine's reply dwells at length on the relationship of the Law and the Spirit by expounding 2 Corinthians 3.6: 'the law kills, but the spirit gives life'.

In his introduction, Augustine maintains that apart from God's assistance, the human will is absolutely unable to 'attain righteousness or make progress in tending

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<sup>886</sup> *Jo.eu. tr.* 41.10.3 (CCL 36.363).

<sup>887</sup> Augustine had written his first anti-Pelagian treatise, *Punishment and the Forgiveness of Sins*, to Marcellinus, an Imperial Commissioner, who not long after Augustine composed *De spiritu et littera* was executed for his apparent involvement in a local revolt. See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 337.

(*tenendo*) toward it'.<sup>888</sup> Then, after briefly laying out the Pelagian position—that God created human beings with a free will that is curbed by an ignorance that the commandments and the example of Christ remedy—Augustine describes what he means by ‘God’s assistance’:

Besides the fact that human beings are created with free choice of the will and besides the teaching by which they are commanded how they ought to live, they receive the Holy Spirit so that there arises in their minds a delight (*delectatio*) in and a love for that highest and immutable good that is God, even now while they walk by faith, not yet by vision. By this [love] given to them like the pledge of a gratuitous gift, they are set afire with the desire to cling to the creator and burn to come to a participation (*accedere ad participationem*) in that true light, so that they have their well-being from him from whom they have their being. And when what we should do and the goal we should strive for begin to be clear, unless we find delight in it and love it (*nisi etiam delectet et ametur*), we do not act, do not begin, do not live good lives. But so that we may love it, the love of God is poured out in our hearts, not by free choice which comes from ourselves, but by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.<sup>889</sup>

Here we have all the elements of Augustine’s thought presented in a concise manner. Free will and the commandments are not enough for salvation; delight must be poured into the human heart so that a yearning to participate in God, the highest good, arises. No one will begin to act, to tend in a direction that leads to an everlasting participation in God unless he or she is given a delight and love for the righteousness that is both a proper way of life and the goal of human existence. Delight drives the movement and is the motivation that compels the faithful towards participating in God for both their being and well-being; all of which comes from receiving the Holy Spirit. Expressed again is the conviction that the commandments—the knowledge of what the good life is—is not sufficient for salvation; one must delight in that knowledge in order to enact it. Truth must be delightful in order to be embraced by the fallen mind.

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<sup>888</sup> *sp. et litt.* 2.4 (PL 44.202).

<sup>889</sup> *sp. et litt.* 3.5 (PL 44.203).

The reason why God pours delight into the human heart is because otherwise humankind is utterly enslaved to sin and death: ‘...without this Spirit we find delight in sinning so that we are enslaved’.<sup>890</sup> Without the intervention of the Holy Spirit, people remain incapable of moving away from death and nothingness towards the wholeness of an everlasting participation in God. In order to convert them, to persuade them away from their subjection to the delights of sin, God infuses his own delight, through giving the Holy Spirit, so that they can then begin the process of sanctification. After delight is infused by the Holy Spirit, that process of sanctification finally begins, introducing a life of struggling against the old passions and delights as the ‘new condition [of delighting in righteousness] is being increased in the interior human being from day to day as we are set free from the body of this death by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord’.<sup>891</sup> Ultimately, freedom of the will only develops through the increase of a delight in righteousness; the gift of the Holy Spirit is necessary for one to ‘...delight in not sinning so that we have freedom’.<sup>892</sup>

### *Delectatio Victrix*

We can now see how Augustine’s approach to the process of salvation is multi-layered. First, he conceives of the Holy Spirit as the *communio* of the Father and Son, which he metaphorically describes as a loving embrace. The Holy Spirit is also a ‘blissful delight’ because he is supremely identified with the love of God and the love from God. Love and delight cohere, one might say, because they cohere as

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<sup>890</sup> *sp. et. litt.* 16.28 (PL 44.218): ‘...sicut praeter hunc Spiritum peccare delectat, ubi servitus...’

<sup>891</sup> *sp. et. litt.* 15.26.

<sup>892</sup> *sp. et. litt.* 16.28 (PL 44.218): ‘Hic autem Spiritus Dei, cujus dono justificamur, quo fit in nobis ut non peccare delectet, ubi libertas est...’

the Holy Spirit. As would be recognised in later medieval thought, if the Holy Spirit is the Love shared by the Lover and the Beloved, then he is also their shared delight.<sup>893</sup> Second, primarily because the Holy Spirit is given to those whom God wishes to save, Augustine prefers to conceive of the Holy Spirit as a gift. Drawing from Romans 5.5, he becomes convinced that the gift of the Holy Spirit must also be a gift of love and delight. This means that the delight that arises in one who comes to faith is not merely a subjective feeling, an individualistic ‘strange warming of the heart’, but the mind’s perception of the Holy Spirit who is God’s own delight. Third, all people must receive the Holy Spirit in order to overcome their slavery to worldly delights. Without that reception they remain absolutely bent on proceeding by their sinful habits further away from God towards death and damnation. Without the infusion of a divine delight, they blithely embrace their own ruin and destruction. But, fourth, by receiving the Holy Spirit and being infused with a divine delight, they are converted, turned back towards their Creator, and begin the process of sanctification, itself a growth in, through, and towards delight. The goal of this sanctification is the *beata vita*, an eternal participation in God that is nothing else than the eternal contemplation of the Lord’s own delight: in short, the Beatific Vision. Fundamentally, therefore, each saved soul is won and deified through a victorious delight that conquers the delights of sin, the world, and the devil.<sup>894</sup>

Finally, Augustine expresses this entire scheme of salvation in rhetorical terms. The scene, if you will, opens with the devil already in command of the audience. He has won them through his suggestion of delights that seduced the audience into consenting and performing sin or in placing their entire attention on

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<sup>893</sup> See, for example, Richard of St Victor, *De Trinitate* 3.15.

<sup>894</sup> See, for e.g., *Ench.* 22.81, 31.118 and *C. Iul. op. imp.* 1.107, 2.217, 2.226. See also TeSelle, ‘Exploring the Inner Conflict’, 386-387.

temporal delights. They are absolutely under his will and impotent to free themselves from his charming oratory. Like Cicero's corrupt orators, he has used deception and a false fluency to lead them to their own destruction. But God presents truth to the audience of humanity by giving his Son, the very Word through whom they were created and formed, who participates in their nature and who, through his death and resurrection, enables them to turn back towards him. But they cannot embrace this truth unless they are filled with a delight for that truth; they cannot believe in Christ the Word unless they are given the freedom—the love—to delight in him. The Holy Spirit therefore becomes God's eloquence, enabling through his own sweetness the audience to embrace the truth that turns them away from their own ruin. Once the audience has recognised God's Truth and responded to his Eloquence, they are at first swayed from one orator to the other as spiritual delight contends with worldly delights for control of the audience's will. Ultimately, however, God's Eloquence is victorious and the audience finds wholeness and freedom in at last willing what God wills. Then restless hearts become still, warfare gives way to peace, and a delight that is none other than God himself is all in all.

## **Conclusion**

This study began with two evocative moments in Augustine's life—his arrival in Milan in 384 and his final retirement to his library in Hippo in 427—when his thoughts turned to his first true intellectual mentor: Cicero. Between those two periods of his life lay over forty years of devotion not simply to God and the Church but also to words. Indeed, his devotion to words predated his later pious devotion, beginning in childhood under the tutelage of a grammarian, growing painfully in adolescence under a strict but facile rhetor, seething within a troubled heart in early

manhood before finally blossoming in his mature ministry, first as a priest and then as a bishop. From his discovery of *Hortensius*, Augustine's devotion to eloquence became enriched and governed by a deeper devotion to wisdom, and from then on he struggled, consciously or not, to become Cicero's ideal orator in whom wisdom and eloquence excelled. But ultimately it was in theology that he found a wisdom that was eloquent in its own right without the need of ornamented language or stylistic rhetoric.

Rhetoric remained central throughout Augustine's life: his conversion transformed him from an aspiring practitioner of philosophical rhetoric into the most accomplished practitioner of theological rhetoric of his day. The overwhelming majority of his works are examples of public literature: an obvious point if one considers that his sermons are no less oratorical than Cicero's orations. At a much deeper level, however, Augustine was converted from being a man who sought to use rhetoric to express wisdom (at least as an ideal, even though he spent his time teaching young, unappreciative aristocrats) into one who saw himself mainly as a vehicle through whom wisdom could express itself eloquently: by the time he composed Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana*, he no longer considered eloquence to be something he himself crafted because he had come to realise that true eloquence, an eloquence that always and reliably expresses wisdom, is simply the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

When one reads Augustine's theology in this light, it can be seen as more than simply the foundation for later medieval theology; more profoundly, his theological understanding of redemption is the theological fulfilment of Ciceronian rhetoric. By transforming Cicero's republic into the whole cosmos, his audience into all of humanity, and his ideal orator into God, Augustine unintentionally freed classical

rhetoric from its classical moorings at the very moment that the classical world in the West was crumbling. By conceiving of rhetoric theologically, Augustine enabled classical rhetoric to survive the eclipse of *civilitas* on which it had always depended.

As has been shown, Augustine inherited a rhetoric that was seeking a way to survive in an increasingly autocratic world. The facile rhetoric of much of Second Sophistic was a poor heir of the polished rhetoric of the Late Republic; the philosophical rhetoric of Marius Victorinus, Dio Chrysostom and Martianus Capella could not long survive the decline of western urban society. But Augustine's reshaping of rhetoric according to the principles of Christian theology, and in particular his emphasis on the role of delight within redemption, helped enable rhetoric to become situated in a theatre inconceivable to Cicero: the monastery, where deliberative *oratio* could elide into a prayerful *oratio*.

Thus, it is remarkable that Augustine, who produced in his confession, sermons, letters, treatises, commentaries, and controversies far more examples of oratorical literature than anyone else in the classical age, has not been better appreciated as a classical rhetorician arguably without equal. In this regard, hopefully this study has shown that Augustine the rhetorician demands as much scholarly attention as Augustine the classical philosopher. Moreover, a proper appreciation of Augustine the rhetorician will come not through a myopic focus on Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana* but through the study of his whole theological approach. In his thought, the two cannot be easily separated.

Finally, just as Augustine's conversion transformed him, so too did it transform both rhetoric and theology in West. Although he never devoted an entire work to his concept of a God who pours delight into the hearts of the faithful so they can be freed from a bondage to sinful delights, that scheme thereafter remained at the

heart of western Christianity. Thanks to his insights, *dilectio* and *delectatio* will recur with remarkable regularity in medieval monastic literature. No longer will God be conceived simply as the covenantal God of the Scriptures or the Supreme Being of Neoplatonic philosophy; now he will also be conceived as the Eloquent Wisdom who calls out to people in love, draws them to him by love, and transforms and sustains them through love. Thanks largely to Augustine, God came to be perceived as a persuasive God whose eloquence is ultimately a delight that captures the heart and converts the mind, thereby fastening the soul through love to himself.

At the same time, however, Augustine's insights helped to transform pastoral theology. As Kolbet demonstrates in *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, Augustine's development of the classical idea of a philosophical rhetor introduced to the world what we might call therapy: the idea that words and wisdom can help to heal the soul. His rhetorical genius provided him with a profound insight into both the matters of human motivation and the impotence of the will. In other words, his recognition of the potency of delight—particularly worldly delights—over the human will caused him to realise that the good and virtuous can never simply be chosen (in a Pelagian manner), let alone wilfully enacted, unless the heart is first wooed with delight. Freedom for Augustine is, therefore, not a capacity always to do what one wills but the capacity always to delight in what is good. That reliable delight only comes through the Divine Eloquence who is the Holy Spirit; only through his delight is the will given the power always to will the good. Ultimately for Augustine, 'blissful delight' makes the recipient soul delightful and leads it by an enjoyment of spiritual delight into the eternal delight of the Beatific Vision.



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