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Catherine Conybeare

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For Kevin

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PREFACE

I made my first real connection with Augustine's thought by a rather unusual route. I think it is safe to say that most people encounter him first through the *Confessiones* (especially the chattier, less theological bits), or through his mature doctrinal works—*De Ciuitate Dei*, *De Doctrina Christiana*, or *De Trinitate*. But I came to him first through his letters, in the course of preparing my study of the correspondence of Paulinus of Nola. I began by reading Augustine simply as Paulinus' correspondent, but was quickly captivated, and so proceeded to work through the entire letter collection. There I found a very different Augustine from the one I had expected. I was looking for the doctrinaire stance that could have begotten the later readings of Augustine, and have justified their appeal to his authority. To be sure, the dogmatic Augustine made an appearance, for example in the repeated letters challenging his religious opponents to public debate (and proceeding to demonstrate why they had already lost), or inveighing against Pelagianism. Augustine in political mode can be seen there too, including its more embarrassing moments: extricating himself from the forced ordination of Pinian, or beseeching advice over the Antoninus disaster.[1] What surprised me, however, was what I came to think of as the *anti*-dogmatic Augustine: the adviser who would take great pains even with a girl too young—or shy—to write to him for herself; who would develop an entire treatise on how to pray in response to a simple question;[2] who would trouble to change his mode of address and his range of reference according to the abilities and affections of his correspondent. Above all, I saw there Augustine's constant insistence on his lack of privileged access to knowledge; on the value of questioning and uncertainty; on

[1] *Epp.* 124-6 and 20*.

[2] *Epp.* 266 and 130 respectively. I discuss these in 'Spaces Between Letters: Augustine's Letters to Women', in K. Kerby-Fulton and L. Olson (eds.), *Voices in Dialogue: New Problems in Reading Women's Cultural History* (Notre Dame, 2005).

the smallness of any human endeavour against the greatness of God. It fascinated me.

The privileging of uncertainty and indeterminacy which I found in many of Augustine's letters seemed to me to have little reflection in his intellectual forebears (never mind his posthumous reputation). It would surely have been a delicate position to espouse, because of the long-standing association of the changeable with the ontologically and spiritually inferior. It was, moreover, unlikely to have been a position which Augustine actually set out to establish: it would have been totally counter to his training and assumptions. However, I resolved to investigate the origins and implications of this intellectual stance—this 'fruitful disenchantment', to conflate the words of two great contemporary scholars of Augustine's complexities.[3]

I began at the beginning, with Augustine's first surviving works. These are the philosophical dialogues produced while he was on retreat at a friend's villa at Cassiciacum in the autumn of 386, and just beginning to work out the implications of his new commitment to Christianity: *De Academicis*, *De Beata Vita*, *De Ordine*, and the *Soliloquia*. These dialogues proved so rich that I ended pretty much at the beginning, too. I include an Epilogue on Augustine's first commentary on Genesis, which seems to me the first time that he put into practice the insights of Cassiciacum; but otherwise, this is a study of the Cassiciacum dialogues. Specifically, it is a study *between the lines* of the Cassiciacum dialogues. They are ostensibly rather conventional productions, and have often been dismissed as such; in fact, if one attends closely to the way in which they are constructed, to the fissures and surprises and ironies which Augustine chooses to include, they are rich resources indeed for the sort of questioning and indeterminacy which I wished to examine.

Every time I return to Augustine I am struck by the modernity of his concerns, and of his techniques for addressing them. I don't mean 'modernity' as opposed to 'postmodernity'—indeed, his questioning and dissolution of binaries, the oppositions also interrogated by postmodernism, is one of my concerns here—but as representing our modes of engagement today. (Perhaps it is time to coin the word 'hodiernity'.)[4]

[3] Robert Markus and James J. O'Donnell. This is from O'Donnell's preface to his commentary on *conf.* 7; 'disenchantment' derives from Markus's 1984 Villanova Augustine Lecture, *Conversion and Disenchantment in Augustine's Spiritual Career* (Villanova, 1989).

[4] See my 'Note on Method' below, pp. 193 ff., for more explicit reflection on the theoretical infrastructure engaged in this work.

Be that as it may, I am picking up the gauntlet thrown down by another great contemporary scholar of Augustine, when he laments his own lack of attention to Augustine's style, and says, '. . . without the style, we shall lose not only much of the very essence of the man . . . but also much of his mentality and his spirituality'.[5] This study uses a close—in some cases, very close—reading of Augustine's Latin to produce a fuller vision of 'his mentality and his spirituality' (though I would be wary of claiming to capture his 'very essence'). Accordingly, it may be used as a thematic commentary to the Latin text of the Cassiciacum dialogues, with emphasis successively on genre (Part One), gender (Part Two), and the ideas built around *ratio* (Part Three). But I have also tried to gear this to the Latinless reader who is interested in Augustine's theological and intellectual development. The moment at Cassiciacum was one of remarkable freedom and experimentation for Augustine. Here, we can read him in the first freshness of Christian commitment, and at his least institutionally constrained. I hope this study will be of particular interest to those who wish to reclaim some part of Augustine's heritage for the innovative thinking in branches of philosophy of religion today.[6]

Augustine wrote cheerfully, towards the aporetic end of *De Academicis*, 'but since I am in my thirty-third year, I don't think I should despair of getting wisdom at some juncture' (*c. Acad.* 3.20.43).[7] Even in the course of the Cassiciacum dialogues, we see him losing that blithe confidence, and coming to value the 'fruitful disenchantment' that takes its place. I defy anyone, when engaging with the sweep of Augustine's thought, to emulate his initial confidence. His wisdom far outstrips his readers'; but obeying Augustine's imperative to seek wisdom, whether or not it can be found in this life, has proved an extraordinary journey. The point, then, lies in the seeking.

Special thanks are due to the British Academy, which awarded me a Post-Doctoral Fellowship to embark on this project. I held the Fellowship in the School of History and Classics at the University of Manchester; my thanks to my colleagues there for hosting me. I am now in the Department of Greek, Latin, and Classical Studies at Bryn Mawr

[5] John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge, 1994), 22.

[6] One of the particular inspirations for the type of question I have been asking in this study is the work of Grace Jantzen, especially *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Manchester, 1998).

[7] Summarizing Augustine's change of mind on this topic, see Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford, 2000), 30.

College, where my generous colleagues, beyond offering general support, have allowed me to teach several courses pertaining directly to my research: my courses on Augustine and the Classical Tradition, Cicero's Philosophical Dialogues, and Birth and Becoming have proved particularly rich, and my warmest thanks goes to all the students who participated in them for their attentiveness and insights. Among these, I should mention particularly Eric Hutchinson, who read this entire manuscript in draft and made some very useful comments; to him I owe a heightened awareness of the thematic traces of Paul in the Cassiciacum dialogues.

Several others must be mentioned here. At the very beginning of this project, Laura Holt generously sent me a copy of her recently-defended Notre Dame thesis, 'Tolle Scribe'; to her I owe especially the insight about the contrast between *schola illa* and *schola nostra*, and a careful mapping of the ambivalent attitude to philosophy in the sermons of Ambrose. I delivered parts of this work at numerous conferences and institutions on both sides of the Atlantic; I am especially grateful to Mark Vessey for his invitation to participate in the 'Augustine and the Disciplines' conference at Villanova University in November 2000, and to Philip Burton for his invitation to speak at St Andrews in April 2002 (and for his generosity at all times in replying to urgent linguistic questions), as particularly fruitful conversations ensued from those two gatherings. Joanne McWilliam read an early version of Chapter 3, and gave me an erudite critique of my approach; David Langslow read the whole of Part 2, which he annotated with his customary punctilio. Gene Vance gave Part 3 the honour of an energetic and provocative response. Gillian Clark, as Editor for this series, read the whole and made some typically acute observations. Above all, though, I am grateful to the readers selected by OUP, who have consented to be unveiled as Carol Harrison and—once again!—Philip Burton, and whose responses to my manuscript were a model combination of warm encouragement and detailed, thoughtful criticism. I have followed their advice, to the best of my ability, in almost every particular.

The preparation of this volume was, as it were, bookended by contributions from two brilliant colleagues in different fields. Véronique Pin-Fat, who works in International Relations theory, boasted that she could discern the theoretical infrastructure in any set of data. She proved herself right in conversations which led up to the development of my proposal for this project. And at the end of the process, I have been explicitly revisiting some of the theoretical presuppositions of this

work with my colleague in Film Theory, Homay King, who teaches with me the aforementioned seminar 'Birth and Becoming'. This has proved an incredibly exciting conversation: long may it continue.

I don't know whether this is the 'worthier tome' promised in my last; but it is, in any case, dedicated to my husband Kevin Marsh, with warmest gratitude for his love and support.

C. M. C.

BRYN MAWR, 2005

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Journal titles are abbreviated in the text (according to the conventions of *L'Année Philologique*), but spelt out in full in the bibliography. Abbreviations of primary sources are expanded in the bibliography.

Aug-Lex	Mayer, Cornelius (ed.), *Augustinus-Lexikon* (Basle: Schwabe & Co.)
Augustine through the Ages	Fitzgerald, Allan D. (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Mich. / Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans)
Blaise	Blaise, Albert, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens* (Turnhout: Brepols)
CCL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols)
Cetedoc	CETEDOC Library of Latin Texts: CLCLT-5, CD-ROM (Brepols: Turnhout)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky)
Ernout–Meillet	Ernout, A., and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la langue latine* (Paris: Klincksieck)
Forcellini	Forcellini, A., *Totius Latinitatis Lexicon* (Prati: Typis Aldinianis, 1858–75)
Hofmann–Szantyr	Hofmann, J.B., *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik*, rev. Anton Szantyr; vol. 2 of *Lateinische Grammatik* in *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1965)
ICUR	*Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores* ed. De Rossi (Rome: Ex Officina Libraria Pontificia, 1861–68)
L&S	Lewis, Charlton T., and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)
OLD	Glare, P. G. W., *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)
PCBE Afrique	*Prosopographie chrétienne du bas-empire* vol. 1: André Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l'Afrique*

	chrétienne (303-533) (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982)
PCBE Italie	*Prosopographie chrétienne du bas-empire* vol. 2: Charles Pietri and Luce Pietri, *Prosopographie de l'Italie chrétienne (313–604)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1999 [part 1], 2000 [part 2])
PL	Migne, *Patrologia Latina*
PLRE	*Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*. Volume 1, A.D. 260–395, ed. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris (Cambridge: CUP, 1971); Volume 2, A.D. 395-527, ed. J. R. Martindale (Cambridge: CUP, 1980)
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
Roy, *Intelligence*	Roy, Olivier du, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin: genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966)
TLL	*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*
Väänänen	Väänänen, Veikko, *Introduction au latin vulgaire* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1967)

Introduction

My title, of course, is disingenuous. It would be hard to call Augustine 'irrational' in any of the senses popularly used today. Nevertheless, this book traces Augustine's gradual realization that if he was to commit himself fully to the Christian faith, he would have to begin to detach himself from the primacy of reason, or *ratio*. He had grown up with the notion that *ratio* was the crucial constitutive part of a human being; he had excelled in a profession based on the showy exercise of *ratio*; and he had organized his religious quest to date around a search for the rational. On deciding to be baptized as Christian, he was obliged to reconsider all these assumptions.[1]

Augustine (354–430), later to be Bishop of Hippo (Annaba in modern Algeria), decided publicly to commit himself to his mother's Christian faith in the summer of 386.[2] He would be baptized at Easter of 387. He suspended his secular career, in which he had risen to be professor of rhetoric at Milan, and spent that autumn at the nearby villa of his friend Verecundus at Cassiciacum,[3] composing philosophical dialogues which tried to explore the new questions thrown up by his Christianity. It seems clear that at first he thought that Christian doctrine and biblical

[1] This overarching theme of the interrogation of *ratio* puts me in particular debt to Olivier du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin: genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris, 1966). I began, like Roy, with the presumption that Augustine moved in general from binary to trinitarian schemata in his thought, but this has been substantially modified in the course of my work.

[2] The standard modern life of Augustine is that of Peter Brown, recently reissued with an extensive Epilogue: *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley, 2000). Of other recent work, see especially Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1999) and Garry Wills, *St. Augustine* (Harmondsworth, 1999). J. J. O'Donnell's commentary on Augustine's quasi-autobiographical *Confessiones* is invaluable (print: Oxford, 1992; online at http://www.stoa.org/hippo); see also O'Donnell's re-envisioning of Augustine's life in *Augustine, Sinner & Saint: A New Biography* (London, 2005).

[3] Exact location unknown: see O'Donnell on *conf.* 9.3.5, where Augustine tells of the enterprise. For Verecundus, see Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1988), 371–2.

reading could simply be grafted on to philosophy—specifically, a form of Neoplatonist philosophy—to form a *philosophia christiana*. The dialogues produced at Cassiciacum map his gradual realization—partly wittingly and partly unconsciously, I think—that this would not be the case. My project here is to trace the course, and the implications, of that realization.

This I accomplish through a reading of the dialogues which looks very closely at their language, their modes of exposition, and their silences. To read these dialogues in their own right, and on their own terms, is a relatively unusual project: far more scholars have followed the lead of Courcelle, and read them against the *Confessiones* as a first attempt at the autobiographical form that Augustine was to 'perfect' ten years later.[4] Even Roy, who insists on the importance of reading Augustine's works in chronological order,[5] gives primacy to the *Confessiones* in his account of the period preceding Cassiciacum. I have inevitably made some use of the *Confessiones* in what follows, but I have tried not to read the preoccupations of the late 390s back into the productions of Cassiciacum. Quite the opposite: on occasion I show how profoundly the works from the different periods stand in contrast to each other. I do, however, use the *Retractationes* quite extensively as a guide to the Cassiciacum dialogues: while in some ways, of course, these reveal Augustine's preoccupations of thirty years later still (not least in the very fact of their existence), they do represent his own explicit and considered commentary on these very early texts. The silences of the *Retractationes*, too, are at least as significant as the words: the remarkable fact is that Augustine believed that so much of his early work could stand uncorrected, especially given his pressing sense of responsibility to his audience.

The philosophical dialogue was in many ways a conventional form for Augustine to express himself in; why he might have chosen the genre, and what he achieves with it, I discuss in Part One. Augustine sets himself against a Ciceronian background, and I concentrate on that in my discussion.[6] While it is often tempting to read his dialogues against those of Plato, such a reading is not well-founded (though I do succumb to temptation to produce a comparison in a couple of places

[4] See Pierre Courcelle, 'Les premières *Confessions* de saint Augustin', *REL* 21 and 22 (1943–44), 155–74.

[5] Roy, *Intelligence*, 15.

[6] For Augustine and Cicero, see especially Maurice Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron* (2 vols.: Paris, 1958).

of the main text, and indulge it wholesale in the final Note on Method). Augustine teases us with his announcement in the *Confessiones* that he had been reading the *platonicorum libri*, the books of the Platonists; it seems likely that these are the Neoplatonists, especially Porphyry, with probably some Plotinus, and not Plato himself.[7] These works he probably read in Latin translation (some at least those of Marius Victorinus[8]); the preaching of Bishop Ambrose at Milan would have been another way of mediating such knowledge.[9] Other than that, Augustine may well have known the segment of the *Timaeus* which Cicero translated.[10]

Seneca looks like another possible model for these dialogues—especially since one of his dialogues, the *De Vita Beata*, shares a title with one of Augustine's. Even if Augustine knew Seneca's dialogues, however, he does not seem to have used them in any significant way, and the *De Vita Beata* would not have been particularly congenial in the treatment of its subject.[11]

Augustine claims to have been captivated by his reading of Paul. 'And so—stumbling, hurrying, hesitating—I snatch up the apostle Paul . . . I read through the whole with the utmost concentration and care (*intentissime atque castissime*[12])' (*c. Acad.* 2.2.5). Paul does leave some significant thematic traces in the Cassiciacum dialogues, but they are not in general textually marked; the main intertextual dialogue remains with Cicero.

The importance of Cicero is signalled in the title and subject matter of the first of the dialogues, the *De Academicis*—or *Contra Academicos*—on which I concentrate in Part One. The 'Academic' school of

[7] See *conf.* 7.9.13 and O'Donnell ad loc. (*quosdam platonicorum libros*), summarizing a long tradition of speculation.

[8] *conf.* 8.2.3 and Pierre Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Paris, 1971). Note also that Victorinus produced commentaries, now lost, on Cicero's dialogues: id., *Marius Victorinus*, 211–14.

[9] See Goulven Madec, *Saint Ambroise et la philosophie* (Paris, 1974); Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les 'Confessions' de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1968[2]), 93–106. For a detailed study of parallels, see e.g. Pierre Hadot, 'Platon et Plotin dans trois sermons de saint Ambroise', *REL* 34 (1956), 202–20; wider implications and references drawn out by Courcelle, 'Nouveaux aspects du platonisme chez saint Ambroise', in the same volume of *REL*.

[10] Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, cites evidence in Augustine's later works, primarily *De Ciuitate Dei*.

[11] The notion of Seneca as a possible model for *De Beata Vita* is dismissed by Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Göteborg, 1967), 1:679; in general, he concludes that Augustine's acquaintance with Seneca's work was slender.

[12] An interesting choice of adverb: its meaning 'chastely' is clearer when it is used (e.g.) at *conf.* 10.30.41 of the state of mind when—even subconsciously—resisting lust.

philosophy was Cicero's own (following Philo of Larissa); it espoused a radical scepticism which questioned the foundations of all knowledge, and held that the person aspiring to be wise could never be sure of his own wisdom.[13] Augustine seems at first to be taking the threat of such thoroughgoing scepticism seriously, and it is indeed incompatible with a faith-based epistemology; I argue, however, that the despatching of Academic arguments plays a secondary role to the working out of other ideas in the dialogue, not least exploring the potential of the dialogue form itself.[14] The way in which these dialogues are 'staged' opens up repeated possibilities for reporting non-verbal (or 'paralinguistic') signals, for digression, mis-direction, and irresolution: these Augustine exploits to the full.

A second dialogue, the *De Beata Vita*, seems to have been composed in the middle of writing *De Academicis*.[15] Purportedly on how to attain a happy—or blessed—life, it settles into a discussion of how being *beatus* might be compatible with wisdom, and if so, with what sort of wisdom. This dialogue, and particularly the interventions there of Augustine's mother and their implications, I discuss in the first chapter of Part Two.

De Ordine is the most episodic of the dialogues. It begins as a discussion about the ordering of the universe, and narrates a dramatic dawn conversion. The second book of *De Ordine* moves into a discussion of memory, and then to a sketch for a programme of Christianized liberal disciplines; this programme is abruptly deflected, however, at the end of the dialogue, with the suggestion that one need only live well and accept religious authority to gain knowledge of God. The philosophical material is elementary, and the structure of the discussion repeatedly disrupted; once again, it is from within the disruptions that the innova-

[13] J. G. F. Powell provides an invaluable survey of Cicero's place in the history of philosophy in the introduction to his volume *Cicero the Philosopher* (Oxford, 1995), 'Introduction: Cicero's Philosophical Works and their Background': see esp. 18–23. Socrates' sceptical position is summarized approvingly at the beginning of Cicero's *Academica*, and linked explicitly to the dialogue form: *hic* [i.e. Socrates] *in omnibus fere sermonibus . . . ita disputat ut nihil affirmet ipse, refellat alios, nihil se scire dicat nisi id ipsum, eoque praestare ceteris, quod illi quae nesciant scire se putent, ipse se nihil scire id unum sciat, ob eamque rem se arbitrari ab Apolline omnium sapientissimum esse dictum, quod haec esset una hominis sapientia, non arbitrari sese scire quod nesciat*, Cic. *Ac.* 1.16.

[14] Hinted at, though never fully developed, by Cicero himself at *Leg.* 3.26; cited by Powell, 'Cicero's Philosophical Works', n. 56.

[15] Phillip Cary, in 'What Licentius Learned: A Narrative Reading of the Cassiciacum Dialogues', *AugStud* 29 (1998), 141–63, proposes the order *c. Acad.* 1 and *beata u.*; *ord.* 1 and 2; *c. Acad.* 2 and 3. Certainly, *beata u.* picks up the theme from Cicero's *Hortensius*, 'omnes certe beati esse uolumus', the starting point of *c. Acad.* 1, but the ordering as a whole is controversial.

tive moves take place. In the second chapter of Part Two, I discuss these innovations: notably, once again, the role played by Augustine's mother, and the insights which she seems to prompt—especially those following from a serious commitment to an inclusive Christianity, and those which assign value to temporary or shifting things. As I observed in the Preface, this was a complicated and counter-intuitive move for Augustine to try to make: the obliquity and multivocality of the dialogue genre seem, however, to facilitate it.

This completes the 'szenischen Dialoge', those dialogues which are 'staged' with a cast of more or less fully-realized characters.[16] The anomalous dialogue, the *Soliloquia*, was also composed at Cassiciacum, however, and must be read alongside the others. While it lacks the paralinguistic potential of stage-setting, it is of particular interest for my theme, as it portrays Augustine in conversation with his own *ratio*, or reason: the way in which the two are characterized, and their treatment of topics as they discuss 'God and the soul', forms the substance of Part Three, along with a look at how the *ratio* of the liberal disciplines might relate to the personified Ratio of the *Soliloquia*.

Again and again, through the course of these dialogues, Augustine seems purposely to be favouring flexibility, to be bringing into the foreground the indeterminate or the unanswerable. He sets up discussions (or allows others to set them up) in terms of simple polarities or doublets, and then complicates them. Often the complication results in a bridging device, or a displacement which shows that the polarities are rendered negligible within a third, fuller category.[17] In my Epilogue, I examine the work in which Augustine begins to put into practice some of the insights of Cassiciacum, the *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, his first commentary on Genesis.

That this is written expressly 'against the Manichaeans' reminds us of a third crucial factor in Augustine's intellectual formation at this point.[18] We have already alluded to his mother's Christianity, and to his training

[16] 'Szenischen Dialoge': the term is that of Bernd Reiner Voss, *Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Munich, 1970), 198. This offers an invaluable repertorium of the genre; see also Manfred Hoffmann, *Der Dialog bei den christlichen Schriftstellern der ersten vier Jahrhunderte* (Berlin 1966).

[17] Studying such tripartite schemata is the particular focus of Roy, *Intelligence*, who traces in them the foundations of Augustine's trinitarianism.

[18] And not only 'at this point': J. Kevin Coyle writes, 'a desire to prove himself non-Manichean is behind virtually everything [Augustine] wrote', *Augustine through the Ages*, 40 (under 'Anti-Manichean Works'); see also Coyle's *Augustine's 'De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae'* (Fribourg, 1978), esp. 50–7.

in the Latin letters of Rome; but Augustine himself is suspiciously silent about the nine years as a Manichaean *auditor* which had preceded his Christian conversion. The dogmatic certainties of the Manichaeans, however, their system based on bald dichotomies (especially, of course, that of Light and Dark), and their claims to a monopoly on *ratio* all seem to have been positions against which Augustine was tacitly reacting at Cassiciacum: it is not surprising that he should gather together his objections and solutions into a defence of the Christian story of creation at which the Manichaeans sneered. We see in this commentary on Genesis Augustine's privileging of process and potential, his eagerness to communicate with a wide audience, and his reluctance to claim superior knowledge: all of these have been developed and foreshadowed in the interrogations of the dialogues.

How 'Christian' was Augustine at Cassiciacum? In part, that is what this book sets out to discover; the individual reader's response will depend on what she thinks is constitutive of fourth-century Christianity. Alfaric's proposal that Augustine had just converted to Neoplatonism, not Christianity, has been long refuted;[19] but that does not mean that Augustine slipped into a ready-made garment of Christ. His commitment to a Christian way of life is clear, but he seems only to be beginning to think through what that might involve in his case. While he certainly had a leave of absence from his teaching position in Milan, he may not yet have actually resigned his post.

The name of Christ tends to be presented in the dialogues as rather a *coup de théâtre*, but this is in keeping with their theatrical nature: Christ *ought* to represent a moment of almost magical revelation or resolution—and so he does, at the end of *De Academicis*, *De Beata Vita*, and Book 1 of *De Ordine*.[20] (Given that one of Augustine's interlocutors had objected to Christ's name being included at all [*conf.* 9.4.7], such

[19] See Prosper Alfaric, *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin*, i. Du Manichéisme au Néoplatonisme (Paris, 1918). (It is doubtful whether it is even appropriate to invoke the category '(Neo)platonism' at this period: see Harrison, *Christian Truth*, 13.) Goulven Madec gives a chronological survey of attitudes to this question in 'Le néoplatonisme dans la conversion d'Augustin', in Mayer and Chelius (eds.), *Internationales Symposion über den Stand der Augustinus-Forschung* (Würzburg, 1989), 9–25; reprinted in Madec, *Petites Études Augustiniennes* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1994), 51–69. He traces the notion that Christianity and Platonism might be separable to Aquinas, but not before: *Augustinus autem Platonem secutus quantum fides catholica patiebatur*: *de spiritualibus creaturis*, art. X, ad 8m.

[20] Christ is named at *c. Acad.* 3.20.43; *ord.* 1.8.21, 1.10.29 (an important argument about Christ's status as both son of God and God), 1.11.32. There is an extended reflection on the nature of the son of God, *filius dei*, at *beata u.* 4.34. Reference to God as *pater* of various Christly synonyms at *sol.* 1.1.2; to begetter and begotten at *sol.* 1.1.4; to [*Christus*] *medicus* at *sol.* 1.15.27.

mentions may carry special weight.) There are a few traces of liturgical Christianity within the dialogues;[21] but no mention is made, for example, of attendance at church—even though other activities between the conversations are mentioned—or of sermons heard. Augustine was most certainly a devout convert; but he remained an intellectual as well. The dialogues serve as the forum in which he works through intellectually the consequences of conversion.

One further preliminary observation needs to be made about the Cassiciacum dialogues. So successful is Augustine's scene-setting that a long-standing debate has raged about whether these dialogues are simply the transcriptions they purport to be, or whether they contain invented material, and if so, how much.[22] The verisimilitude is at times extraordinary, and jolts the reader away from soothing assumptions about distance and fiction. This seems to me to be the point. The historicity of the characters is immaterial; so is the exactitude (or otherwise) of the reportage.[23] What matters is what Augustine is doing with his characters, and what he signals with his efforts for verisimilitude. Of this I treat particularly in Part One, but it runs as a background throughout *The Irrational Augustine*.

My textual scope in this study is fairly restricted—especially given Augustine's enormous output in the course of his life. I am reading in the interstices of these few dialogues, interstices which Augustine himself opens up for us through his choice of genre and his treatment of it. The results reveal an Augustine too little attended to: the Augustine who gives questioning, uncertainty, and human limitations their due role in his theology.[24] Gibbon famously observed of Augustine that

[21] Noted by O'Donnell at *conf.* 9.4.7 *libri disputati*: *sol.* 1.1.3, 'deus qui nobis das panem uitae'; and the *ueneranda mysteria* of *ord.* 2.5.16 and 2.17.46.

[22] O'Meara, 'The Historicity of the Early Dialogues of Saint Augustine', *VgChr* 5 (1951), countered Alfaric and other representatives of a chain of nineteenth-century historical positivism; the sequence of debate is crisply summarized by Goulven Madec, 'L'historicité des *Dialogues* de Cassiciacum', *REAug* 32 (1986), 208–9, who favours the dialogues' historicity. Joanne McWilliam presents excellent arguments for the opposite conclusion in 'The Cassiciacum Autobiography', *SP* 18 part 4 (1990), 14–43; but Madec's conclusions are still taken for granted by (e.g.) Stefan Faller, 'Die *Soliloquia* des Aurelius Augustinus—ein "innerer Dialog"?', in *ScriptOralia Romana* (Tübingen, 2001), 280.

[23] O'Donnell suggests, at conf. 9.4.7 *libri disputati*, that we should see the dialogues as 'an unusually privileged form of historical fiction'.

[24] This trend in Augustine's thought tends to be alluded to rather than analysed; though see Charles T. Mathewes, 'The Liberation of Questioning in Augustine's *Confessions*', *JAAR* 70 (2002), 539–60. Markus's *Conversion and Disenchantment* begins to sketch this picture too, especially in its early pages.

his arguments were 'too often his own'.[25] In the ensuing pages, I hope to turn that jibe to good effect: the very idiosyncrasy of Augustine's arguments and his manner of pursuing them are of immense significance. This in turn suggests possibilities for interpretation of the more idiosyncratic riches in his later works.

[25] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 28 n. 79.

Part One

Why Dialogues?

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1

On the Threshold

In later life, Augustine seems to have felt that he ought to be embarrassed by the Cassiciacum dialogues. After all, he was still a mere catechumen when he composed them, and still (he thought) over-involved with a distinctly pre-Christian notion of philosophy. He feels obliged to explain their inclusion in his *Retractationes*, the dossier which he began to assemble in 427, at the age of 73, in which he provides an annotated résumé of all his works in chronological order. 'I'm including even those things which I wrote as a catechumen (when I was still puffed up[1] with the habit of secular letters, even though I had left behind my former worldly ambition), because they too have gone out into the awareness of people who copy and read them—and they are read with profit (*utiliter*), if one forgives some bits . . . So whoever is going to read them should imitate me as I improve, not as I wander' (*nec illa sane praetereo quae cathecuminus iam, licet relicta spe quam terrenam gerebam, sed adhuc saecularium litterarum inflatus consuetudine scripsi, quia et ipsa exierunt in notitiam describentium atque legentium, et leguntur utiliter, si nonnullis ignoscatur . . . quapropter quicumque ista lecturi sunt, non me imitentur errantem, sed in melius proficientem*: *retr.* prol. 3).

Augustine was textually aware to an extraordinary degree.[2] This was bound up with an almost oppressive awareness of the moral and theological implications of his own words, and of the use of language more generally, which deepened throughout his life. It is absolutely typical of him—a man who kept copies of all his letters and their replies, and organized them by chronology and by correspondent[3]—that he

[1] *inflatus*: this recalls 1 Cor. 8: 1, *scientia inflat, caritas aedificat*, as noted by Gillian Clark in 'City of God(s): Virgil and Augustine', *Proceedings of the Virgil Society*, 25 (2004), n. 19.

[2] On the 'textualization' of Augustine's career, see Mark Vessey, 'From *Cursus* to *Ductus*: Figures of Writing in Western Late Antiquity', in Patrick Cheney and Frederick A. de Armas (eds.), *European Literary Careers: The Author from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Toronto, 2002).

[3] See Hans Lietzmann, 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Briefsammlung Augustins', in *Kleine Schriften* (Berlin, 1958).

should feel obliged to revise and reconsider his every published work, with such minuteness that he will point out his regret at having used particular words, because their pre-Christian associations are too strong (*fortuna* or *omen*, for example[4]), or their nuances misleading. Augustine says explicitly that his systematic revision is to forfend against divine judgement on his works: 'If we judged ourselves, we would not be judged by God' (*si nos ipsos iudicaremus, a domino non iudicaremur*: 1 Cor 11: 31; *retr.* prol. 2). Clearly his works are, in some way, himself. But he also feels deeply his responsibility not to mislead others: hence the concern that his works should be read *utiliter*, and the assumption that his readers will be using them as a spiritual guide. The combination of diffidence—in his urgency to correct his own faults—and of unquestioning confidence that his works will be used, read, and admired, is utterly Augustinian. So too is the obsessive concern with verbal precision, which he combines with the theological acknowledgement that all human communications are incomplete, imperfect, and endlessly open to interpretation (re- or mis-interpretation included) as compared with the divine and perfect Word which embraces a multiplicity of possible interpretations.[5]

It is hardly surprising that Augustine was 'still puffed up with the habit of secular letters' when, in autumn 386, he withdrew to the rural retreat or *otium ruris* of a friend's country estate at Cassiciacum. After all, he was still officially the professor of rhetoric at Milan, home of the imperial court; besides, the entire trajectory of his life to date had been shaped by the assumption that achievement in secular letters was the passport to success. His journey from Thagaste, the provincial town in North Africa which was his birthplace, to Milan had been a product of his extraordinary proficiency in classical learning, and especially in the art of rhetoric. (Augustine never lost confidence in his ability to apply that art, though he used it for different ends: witness the several letters in subsequent years challenging Donatists to public debate or, more formally, the project of *De Doctrina Christiana*.[6]) Timely patronage had assisted him, and was still doing so, as we shall see.

[4] See *retr.* 1.1.2a and e.

[5] See e.g. *conf.* 12.31.42; O'Donnell ad loc. compares *doctr. chr.* 3.27.38, on 'when not just one sense but two or more are detected in the selfsame words of Scripture', *quando autem ex eisdem scripturae verbis non unum aliquid sed duo vel plura sentiuntur.*

[6] See e.g. *epp.* 33, 34, and 35, calling Proculeianus, the Donatist bishop at Hippo, to debate; *epp.* 87 and 88, challenging specific Donatists to public epistolary engagement; *ep.* 93.17 shows Augustine despairing of this strategy, and turning to coercion. On the problem, see Peter Brown, 'St. Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion', *JRS* 54 (1964), 107–16.

Augustine's withdrawal to Cassiciacum was prompted by an ambiguous *pectoris dolor*, a 'pain in the heart', which seems to have bespoken both a nervous physical disorder of some kind and a state of spiritual anguish.[7] In the first instance, the *otium ruris* seems to have been conceived as a conventional reading party: two of Augustine's most promising students from Milan form the heart of the group of interlocutors; Cicero and Virgil are on the reading list; the setting boasts baths and meadows, the appurtenances of a luxurious villa.[8] But the conversations seem swiftly to have developed—in Augustine's own mind, at any rate—into a preliminary exploration of the tenets and goals of Christian life. This fertile retreat gave rise to the four works which constitute the principal focus of this study. In the order assigned to them in the *Retractationes*, they consist of *Contra Academicos* (or *De Academicis*—not, as we shall see, a redundant distinction), *De Beata Vita*, *De Ordine*, and the unfinished work, the *Soliloquia*. These works have one conspicuous feature in common: they are all cast in the genre of philosophical dialogues.

For Augustine, his time at Cassiciacum was a liminal period. He was poised—intellectually and culturally—between two very different courses of life. He was ill at ease with his pinnacle of secular achievement, but was only beginning to explore what a dedicated Christian life might hold for him. He had little in the way of independent means and could not afford to abolish links with his former patrons; at the same time, he clearly knew that his current course risked offending them. His composition of the dialogues was at least partly an effort of self-explanation, at this liminal juncture, and a bid for continued support. As he explained in *De Ordine*, 'quite a few people suddenly convert to a wonderfully good life, and until they draw attention to it with some more conspicuous actions, everyone believes them to be the same sort of people as they used to be' (*non pauci se subito ad bonam uitam miramque conuertunt, et donec aliquibus clarioribus factis innotescant, quales erant, esse creduntur*: *ord.* 2.10.29). The format and setting of the dialogues are intimate, and within the intimacy of that setting Augustine takes extraordinary intellectual risks. He *is* announcing that he is now a different

[7] *Pectoris dolor*: *c. Acad.* 1.1.3; *beata u.* 1.4. *Stomachi dolor*: *ord.* 1.2.5. On such terms in medical writers, see D. R. Langslow, *Medical Latin in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2000), 242–6; in defence of my simultaneously literal and metaphorical reading of the phrase, see Ch. 4, p. 109 below on *stomachus*.

[8] Here, the conventions of *otium ruris* and the possibilities of reportage overlap: this is also the appropriate setting for a philosophical dialogue.

sort of person: these *are* his 'more conspicuous actions'. But the intimacy also lends a playful quality to his experiments. It is with these risks, this playfulness, that the present volume is concerned.

The Problem of Patronage

Let us begin, as Augustine did, with the addressees of his dialogues. If we are to believe Augustine's self-portrayal in the *Confessiones*, his early life was dominated by the search for interlocutors—indeed, for dialogue in the most general sense. The letter-exchange with his great friend Nebridius, which dates from around the time of the Cassiciacum retreat, displays two young men hungry for conversation: Nebridius is eager to hear the results of Augustine's cogitations on soul and blessedness; Augustine is no less eager to share them, and there are repeated abortive plans to meet. (We shall hear more of this correspondence in Part Three.) The fate of Augustine's first ever literary composition, a dialogue 'on the beautiful and the fitting' (*De Pulchro et Apto*), had taught him that it was futile to dedicate literary works in a spirit of speculation to potential patrons whom he did not know. Hierius, the dedicatee, was a renowned orator at Rome, whose attention Augustine must have wished to attract. Augustine tells us that no one ever read the work—though he himself remained rather proud of it—and even by the time of the *Confessiones* it had vanished: apparently Hierius had not performed the desired function of promoting either the dialogue or its author (*conf.* 4.14.23).

However, Romanianus, to whom Augustine's dialogue *De Academicis* was dedicated, was an obvious choice. A local magnate in Africa, he had been Augustine's patron from early days, and his son Licentius was actually one of the party at Cassiciacum.[9] In the preface, he is addressed immediately; the sentiments seem conventional for the preamble to a philosophical dialogue (the 'harbour of wisdom', for example, does not admit the 'divine soul that sticks to mortal things'). Augustine prays to God—an ambiguously Christian presence at this stage in the dialogue, not incompatible with pagan monotheism—'that he should return you to yourself, and allow your mind, which has long been poised to take breath, to come out at some juncture into the airs of true *libertas*' (*ut te*

[9] For Romanianus, see *PCBE: Afrique* s.v.; for a sad commentary on Augustine's possible later dealings with Romanianus, see O'Donnell on *conf.* 6.14.24.

tibi reddat . . . sinatque mentem illam tuam, quae respirationem iam diu parturit, aliquando in auras uerae libertatis emergere: *c. Acad.* 1.1.1). A superabundance of riches, and all the worldly honour and sycophancy that they could bring with them, had always surrounded Romanianus; were it not for the current adverse turn in his fortunes, 'who, I ask you, Romanianus, would dare to mention to you that other blessed life (*beata uita*), which is the only one?' (*quisquam tibi, Romaniane, beatae alterius uitae, quae sola beata est, quisquam quaeso mentionem facere auderet*? *c. Acad.* 1.1.2). So, writes Augustine, providence decided to rouse that part of you 'with which you always desired noble and honourable things, and preferred to be liberal (*liberalem*) rather than rich'. The enticements of worldly gifts had almost taken possession of him (Augustine), 'were it not that a *pectoris dolor* forced me to abandon my windy profession and take refuge in the bosom of philosophy'. She it is who promises to reveal 'the truest and most mysterious God' (*uerissimum et secretissimum deum*: *c. Acad.* 1.1.3). In this pursuit Augustine is joined by *noster Licentius*, as well as another pupil, Trygetius; these two have been drawn to philosophy by Cicero's *Hortensius* (*c. Acad.* 1.1.4).[10]

The tone of the preface is intriguing: it is punctiliously crafted, and yet bespeaks some intimacy between the two men. Romanianus is being explicitly invited to join the conversation from afar (*inuito te; inductorium*). We never learn the precise nature of his misfortune, which suggests a prior relationship and perhaps a certain friendly discretion; Augustine refers to a separate letter in which he has given Romanianus an account of a dispute between his son and Trygetius. And the conventional allusion to the 'bosom of philosophy' develops into an arch extended metaphor, which again seems to suggest familiarity: 'Philosophy it is from whose breasts no age complains it is excluded. I wanted to send you a taste to induce you to hold on to her and drink from her more greedily, even though I well know your thirst' (*philosophia est enim, a cuius uberibus se nulla aetas queretur excludi. ad quam auidius retinendam et hauriendam quo te incitarem, quamuis tuam sitim bene nouerim, gustum tamen mittere uolui*: *c. Acad.* 1.1.4). We do not, however, get a specific sense from *within* the preface of why Augustine might have chosen Romanianus as dedicatee: there is no extended personal tribute except the one about Romanianus' worldly success, which is put into the mouths 'of stupid men—and

[10] Thereby mimicking Augustine himself: see *conf.* 3.4.7 and O'Donnell ad loc. Augustine seems to be 'setting the stage' with interlocutors designed to play earlier versions of himself (a version of this insight is developed by McWilliam, 'Cassiciacum Autobiography').

there's an immense crowd of those' (*stultorum hominum, quorum inmensa turba est*: *c. Acad.* 1.1.2). The emphasis is on Romanianus as someone who needs help—which, happily, Augustine (with philosophy) is in a position to offer.

Had Augustine misjudged the tone? Did Romanianus, on receiving the first book *De Academicis*, find it over-familiar? Late Roman aristocratic life was played out on a public stage: there was space for intimacy in literary production, but not without an eye on the audience. Augustine had not, perhaps, given the public honour due to his benefactor. At any rate, Book 2 of *De Academicis* begins with another preface, far longer than the first, which seems to be trying to recover lost ground.

This second preface begins by talking about the difficulty of overcoming the arguments of the Academics: 'when one meets them in hand-to-hand combat, their weapons seem invincible and—as it were—forged by Vulcan, even to sharp, well-educated men (*acutis et bene eruditis*), never mind the mediocre ones.'[11] Augustine prays daily for favouring winds to bring Romanianus into the port of philosophy: 'I pray to the highest virtue and wisdom of God. What else is it [but wisdom], the son of God whom the mysteries reveal to us?' (*oro . . . ipsam summi dei uirtutem atque sapientiam. quid est enim aliud, quem mysteria nobis tradunt dei filium*? *c. Acad.* 2.1.1). 'But,' Augustine continues, 'you will help me a great deal when I pray for you, if you don't despair of being heard . . . '. He compliments the 'natural loftiness' of Romanianus' mind, and invites him once again, *ergo, adgredere mecum philosophiam*: 'so, attack philosophy with me.' There follows a remarkable tribute to Romanianus' influence on Augustine's life:

> Am I not going to return a favour to you? Do I really owe only a little? When I was an impoverished and insignificant young man, progressing towards my studies, you embraced me with your hospitality and your wealth and—most important of all—with your heart; you consoled me with friendship when I was deprived of my father, you heartened me with encouragement, you aided me with resources; in that dear town of ours, with the favour, friendship, intimacy of your household you made me almost as renowned and prominent as you . . .
>
> egone tibi gratiam non repensabo? an fortasse paululum debeo? tu me adulescentulum pauperem ad studia pergentem et domo et sumptu et, quod plus est, animo excepisti; tu patre orbatum amicitia consolatus es, hortatione animasti, ope adiuuisti; tu in nostro ipso municipio fauore familiaritate communicatione domus tuae paene tecum clarum primatemque fecisti . . . (*c. Acad.* 2.2.3)

[11] For the combat imagery, compare *ep.* 1 to Hermogenianus, discussed below.

When Augustine wanted to leave his position at Carthage to advance his career in Italy, Romanianus hesitated 'because of your patriotic feelings (*patriae amore*)', and tried to discourage him, but then supported him and equipped him for his journey. Even when Augustine embarked without telling his patron, 'you remained undamaged in friendship'. In short, the current *otium philosophandi* in which Augustine delights, in which 'I breathe again, I recover my senses, I return to myself . . . you inspired, you induced, you made possible' (*respiro resipisco redeo ad me . . . tu animasti, tu inpulisti, tu fecisti*: *c. Acad.* 2.2.4). Romanianus it is, apparently, who has given him the means for Cassiciacum.

After this belated but fulsome acknowledgement of his debt to his patron, Augustine—now the dutiful beneficiary—produces a summary report on his intellectual progress. Certain books,[12] it seemed, had kindled an 'incredible fire' in him, and caused him to turn back into himself 'at a run' (*totus in me cursim redibam*) and look back over his journey towards his boyhood religion—which was, he reminds his patron, also Romanianus'—which had drawn him to her unwittingly, *nescientem*. 'And so—stumbling rushing hesitating—I snatch up the apostle Paul . . . I read through the whole with the utmost concentration and care' (*itaque titubans properans haesitans arripio apostolum Paulum . . . perlegi totum intentissime atque castissime*: *c. Acad.* 2.2.5). To Augustine, Paul reveals the 'face of philosophy'. There follows a mythical genealogy of *philosophia* and *philocalia*, which Augustine later dismisses as utterly redundant (*retr.* 1.1.3)—and he then returns to his purpose: 'but let's get back to ourselves, let us, I repeat, Romanianus, do philosophy; thanks to you, your son has begun to do philosophy' (*sed ad nos redeamus, nos, inquam, Romaniane, philosophemur; reddam tibi gratiam, filius tuus coepit philosophari*: *c. Acad.* 2.3.8). And 'we', he urges, are one; hence (this is implied, not stated) their philosophical project must be the same. He continues with a caveat: beware of thinking that you won't find truth in philosophy; believe him who said 'seek and ye shall find'(Matt. 7: 7; *c. Acad.* 2.3.9).[13]

Augustine apologizes that his introduction has exceeded its proper *modus*. It has: Augustine's second preface closes at almost twice the

[12] These must be the *platonicorum libri* of *conf.* 7.9.13: see Introduction, n. 7. Note, however, that direct attribution is passed over here, in favour of a swift progression to the letters of Paul.

[13] What exactly does Augustine mean by 'philosophy' here? There has been a deluge of scholarly debate on the subject, and no universally agreed solution. Part of the debate revolves around the 'Neoplatonism' issue (see Introduction, n. 19): to what, exactly, has Augustine converted? From this passage, however, it is clear that Augustine's 'philosophy' must be somehow compatible with the truth of the Gospels. See Ragnar Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse: saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris, 1962), 80–1.

length of the first. He ends with a little joke: 'I will be more circumspect, when I am wise.' (Remember that the whole focus of the Academics' arguments is the impossibility of attaining wisdom.) The joke depends on the content of the dialogue: can one attain wisdom in this life, and if so, how does one know?

I have spent so long with these two prefaces because they tell us a great deal about Augustine's starting point at Cassiciacum. His preoccupations and enthusiasms of the moment are on display; some we shall see being transformed, some quietly left aside. (He goes nowhere with *philocalia*, for example.[14]) The importance of turning in towards oneself—whether Augustine's self, or whomever he is teaching—is already keenly felt and repeatedly expressed. Augustine is, quite naturally, preoccupied with wisdom and the desire to attain it, and hence more generally preoccupied with the possibilities of knowledge. His use in the first preface of *libertas* and its cognates, including *liberalitas*, reveals (unconsciously, I think) another anxiety: freedom, yes, including freedom of speech, but also gentlemanliness; how a member of the social class for which Augustine has spent thirty years preparing himself should comport himself.[15] As we shall see, such dismissive asides as that about the 'immense crowd of stupid men' (*c. Acad.* 1.1.2) become more or less unthinkable as the Cassiciacum dialogues unfold. But at the beginning of autumn 386, they may be part of Augustine's self-positioning in a class not quite his own. Above all, Augustine is quite convinced, in these prefatory remarks, that there is no difference between reading Paul and doing philosophy; we shall see, in the course of the dialogues, how complicated the relationship between the two becomes.

The prefaces also reiterate the point that Augustine must begin with his patron. The anxiety of focus is apparent: two direct addresses to Romanianus in the first preface, four uses of the name (all but one in the vocative) in the second; a number of claims about what 'you' or 'we' do, or ought to. The recovery, the tribute, the far more careful self-positioning of the second preface—giving Romanianus elaborate credit for the participants' presence at Cassiciacum while preserving the tone of intimacy and privileged communication—give a sense of the patron's power to shape the content. Romanianus, it would seem, had written

[14] And remarks on the fact in *retr.* 1.1.3 f.

[15] Recognized by O'Donnell, who notes that Augustine at Cassiciacum is learning how to be a Christian *and* a gentleman, on the model of Ambrose: see 'The Next Life of Augustine', in William E. Klingshirn and Mark Vessey (eds.), *The Limits of Ancient Christianity* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 225.

(or visited?) and pointed out the inadequacy of the initial dedication. That Augustine seems to forget his obligations in his enthusiasm for his project at Cassiciacum is revealing. So is the fact that he is apparently brought up short.

By the third book of the *De Academicis*, incidentally, it seems that Augustine's dues are paid. The discussion begins quite abruptly, with none of the elaborate tributes of Book Two: 'After that conversation which the second book contains, when on another day we had settled down in the baths—for the weather was too dreary for it to be pleasant to go down to the meadow—I began as follows . . . '. Nor does he return to Romanianus at the end of the dialogue; indeed, the closing remarks are almost risibly under-stated. But let us not forget the extravagant allusion to Romanianus that has occurred in the course of Book Two. Had Augustine misjudged the tone again? He says to Licentius:

> After a long thirst, your father is certainly on the point of drinking in philosophy more eagerly than anyone: what if you see him also seeking these things and debating with us (at which point I will think I have never been more fortunate): what then is it appropriate for you to feel and say?—Here [Licentius] actually cried a little and, when he could speak, he gazed up to heaven with his hand stretched out: O God, when shall I see this? But one should not despair of You.[16]
>
> quid, si enim patrem illum tuum, quo profecto nemo philosophiam est post tam longam sitim hausturus ardentius, nobiscum ista quaerentem ac disserentem uidebis, cum ego me fortunatiorem numquam putabo, quid te tandem sentire ac dicere conuenit?—hic uero ille aliquantum lacrimauit et, ubi loqui potuit, porrecta manu caelum suspiciens: et quando ego, inquit, deus, hoc uidebo? sed nihil est de te desperandum. (*c. Acad.* 2.7.18)

At this point, the entire company is distracted from the course of the discussion and dissolves into tears. Augustine struggles to collect himself, and brings them to order with a quotation from the *Aeneid*; and Romanianus reappears in the next section, delivered of this emotional freight, as an exemplum in a simple epistemological discussion.

These variations of tone seem in many ways to capture the potential awkwardness of Augustine's relationship with his patron at this point; they also begin to indicate the uneasy competition between form and

[16] Note that this recalls the exhortations not to despair of finding the truth which were linked, in the passage cited above from *c. Acad.* 2.3.9, with the relationship between 'philosophy' and the Gospels: see Roy, *Intelligence*, 114–23, on certainty overcoming scepticism.

content in these works. Once again, Augustine does not quite succeed in managing the tension between emotional engagement and the deference due to Romanianus. He seems to be struggling with the conventions of his genre, the balance between detachment and familiarity. So why choose the philosophical dialogue at all?

It may well be that the emphasis on philosophy, and the use of the genre of the philosophical dialogue, is in part due to the expectations of Augustine's patrons. Philosophy is what gentlemen did when they were at leisure;[17] his patrons knew that from Cicero; and Augustine reinforces that assumption with his immediate invocation of the *Hortensius*. If leisure, then, had been procured for a promising young man, was it not the leisure to do philosophy, *otium philosophandi*? This may also contribute to the tension around explicitly Christian references, which perhaps we see most poignantly in the strange episode above in which all the discutants start weeping at Licentius' appeal to God on his father's behalf. Augustine is at pains to remind Romanianus of that religion 'which was instilled in us as boys, and deeply folded into our bones' (*quae pueris nobis insita est et medullitus inplicata*: *c. Acad.* 2.2.5); this looks like a testing of the ground. But philosophy is the god(dess) who counts.

That Augustine risked losing his audience (and offending his patrons) with too much explicit Christianity emerges from a contemporaneous letter to Hermogenianus (*Letter* 1), in which he is clearly responding to Hermogenianus' comments on the *De Academicis*. Hermogenianus has been complimentary ('you write—perhaps more fondly than truthfully—that I have conquered the Academics'), but it looks as if he has completely ignored one important passage:

> Since I consider your most welcome judgement about my little books as trustworthy, and place on you so much reliance that neither could error occur in your judgement nor pretence in your friendship, I ask further that you should consider more carefully, and write back to me, whether you approve of that part at the very end of the third book which I thought should be believed, perhaps conditionally rather than firmly, but nevertheless with profit (*utilius*)—or so I think—rather than without conviction.

[17] See Dennis Trout, 'Augustine at Cassiciacum: *Otium Honestum* and the Social Dimensions of Conversion', *VChr* 42 (1988), 132–46; on the complicated construction of a Christian *otium rusticum*, see Jacques Fontaine, 'Valeurs antiques et valeurs chrétiennes dans la spiritualité des grands propriétaires terriens', in *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au cardinal Jean Daniélou* (Paris, 1972), 571–95.

quam ob rem cum gratissimum habeam fidele iudicium tuum de libellis meis tantumque in te momenti ponam, ut nec error in tua prudentia nec in amicitia simulatio cadere possit, illud magis peto diligentius consideres mihique rescribas, utrum adprobes, quod in extremo tertii libri suspiciosius fortasse quam certius, utilius tamen, ut arbitror, quam incredibilius putaui credendum. (*ep.* 1.3)

In his letter, Hermogenianus has conspicuously passed over the one part of the dialogue in which Augustine had ventured into an explicit commitment to Christianity, and even—counter-generically?—presumed to name Christ; Augustine seems to be trying to force a response. It is revealing that he uses the same term (*utilis*) for the efficacy of the Christian content as he chose in the *Retractationes* forty years later, to describe the Cassiciacum dialogues. Has Augustine chosen the dialogue form because he thinks it will be the genre most *utilis* to his chosen audience?

It looks, in fact, as if Augustine may recently have been re-reading his letter to Hermogenianus when he wrote the entry for *De Academicis* in the *Retractationes*. The letter begins:

I would never dare to harm the Academics, even in jest—for when did the authority of such great men not move me?—if I didn't think that their doctrine was far different from what is commonly believed. So I imitated them, as far as I could, rather than fighting against them, of which I am completely incapable.

Academicos ego ne inter iocandum quidem umquam lacessere auderem—quando enim me tantorum uirorum non moueret auctoritas?—nisi eos putarem longe in aliam, quam uulgo creditum est, fuisse sententiam. quare potius eos imitatus sum, quantum ualui, quam expugnaui, quod omnino non ualeo. (*ep.* 1.1)

In the *Retractationes*, Augustine repeatedly uses the same language as he does in the letter; he states that his purpose in composing the dialogue was 'to remove their [the Academics'] arguments from my mind with *rationes* as powerful as I could muster, because they really did move me' (*ut argumenta eorum . . . ab animo meo, quia et me mouebant, quantis possem rationibus amouerem*: *retr.* 1.1). We see that his view of what he had accomplished in this dialogue had shifted somewhat. At the time, he was using the strategies of the Academics to explore their doctrines, not to combat them; forty years later, the encounter is confidently portrayed as far more aggressive: as fighting *argumenta* with *rationes*—perhaps to be translated as fighting contentious statements with rational proofs. He also refuses in the *Retractationes* to dismiss the importance of his earlier work, objecting to the way in which he had referred to his anti-Ciceronian *rationes* jokingly as trifles, *nugae*. In both instances, he is clear that he admires and is influenced by the Academic arguments.

This may seem a minute distinction to which to draw attention. But it is important because it underscores, once again, how carefully Augustine had to tread in 386. He was indeed challenging the intellectual heritage which he had taken for his own; this could well have been taken as challenging the preferences of his patrons. He could not at first be too explicit—perhaps even to himself—about the nature of that challenge. This is why the title *De Academicis* seems to me more suitable for his project at the time; he could not afford to take a view of the work as being *Contra* Academicos—*against* the Academics—until later.

The dedication of *De Ordine* to Zenobius seems, so far as we can tell (the prosopographical evidence for Zenobius being confined almost entirely to internal references in Augustine's own works), to bespeak a less hierarchical client–patron relationship.[18] An affectionate letter to Zenobius, *Letter* 2, indicates the spirit in which the dialogue was composed. It takes as its starting point the commonplace philosophical notion that nothing which pertains to the corporeal senses really exists; 'true, divine philosophy', *uera et diuina philosophia*, teaches the mind to rein in the desire for such things, and to become self-reliant (*ut se toto animus feratur*). Augustine protests that he is not self-reliant: he is longing for Zenobius, and he hopes he is desired in return. Yet 'I am as vigilant as I can be, and I strive to love nothing which can be absent from me against my will' (*inuigilo tamen, quantum queo, et nitor, ut nihil amem, quod abesse a me inuito potest*: *ep.* 2). The motive for writing the letter is to keep Zenobius with him.

This plays with the opening themes of *De Ordine*—which is, we later learn, a response to a poem written by Zenobius (*ord.* 1.7.20). Augustine proposes an exposition of the *ordo rerum*, the ordering of the universe, but says that the human mind is too weak to see the full pattern: man doesn't even know himself (*homo sibi ipse est incognitus*: *ord.* 1.1.3). To know himself, he needs to withdraw from the senses (of the body, Augustine adds in the *Retractationes*), gather his *animus* into himself, and hold it in himself. The only possible solutions are solitude, or the liberal disciplines. This suggests a problematic tension between engagement and disengagement: how can removal from the world be the key to understanding the world? And the playful spirit in which Augustine acknowledges this can be seen from his letter to Zenobius: it *is* a paradox; he knows he should turn aside from the corporeal senses,

[18] See Zenobius 1 in *PLRE* 1; Zenobius 1 in *PCBE: Italie.*

but he loves Zenobius anyway. There is an odd twist in the preface to *De Ordine*, when Augustine hastily explains that when he speaks of the need for segregation from the crowd, he means the crowd of sense-perceptions, not of people: this seems to acknowledge the confusion, while not wholly making sense of it.

Zenobius is, it seems, an intimate. Both in the letter and in the preface, Augustine describes himself and his associates as 'very dear' to him (*carissimi tui*). Zenobius seems also to be intimate with Verecundus, in whose villa the conversations are taking place, and with Romanianus. (This is made a source of by-play with Licentius, as Augustine tries to detach him from his devotion to poetry. At several points in this dialogue, the patrons seem very close indeed.) Later on, Augustine wishes that 'all our intimates whose talents I admire could be here' to discuss the place of order, which will lead them to God; or, if not all, at least Zenobius, 'who, because of his importance, I have never received at leisure (*otiosus*), though he struggles with this great matter' (*ord.* 1.9.27). At least this way, he adds, the dialogue will be written down for them to read; perhaps *ordo*—some ordering principle—has in fact secured Zenobius' absence. This may seem a trite compliment; but the way in which the web of human engagement complicates the pure detachment of philosophy will prove, as we shall see, very important to the course of the conversation in *De Ordine*.

The question of whether Augustine had 'converted', in 386, to Christianity or to Neoplatonism has been much discussed.[19] But the associated question of to what degree he was publicly abandoning conventional worldly ambition has not—despite the fact that it was of considerable concern to Augustine himself at the time, if we may judge from his depiction in the *Confessiones*.[20] Claiming an *otium philosophandi*, a sort of 'philosophical break', was a safe choice: it kept Augustine's options open, and wouldn't—in principle—frighten the patrons.[21] The example of Mallius Theodorus, the third Cassiciacum dedicatee, is instructive. At the time that he received the dedication of *De Beata*

[19] See Introduction, n. 19.

[20] A notable exception is Claude Lepelley, 'Un aspect de la conversion de saint Augustin', *BLE* 88 (1987), 229–46: 'La conversion de 386 représente . . . une rupture radicale avec les mentalités du temps et avec celles du milieu social d'Augustin', 245. See also Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, i. 135–7; and, most recently, O'Donnell, *Augustine, Sinner & Saint*, ch. 4: 'Augustine unvarnished'.

[21] On the issues in general, see Trout, 'Augustine at Cassiciacum'.

Vita, he was himself committed to the *otium philosophandi*; but in 399 he re-emerged into public life as a consul.[22] (Of the success of that particular dedication, we shall treat in Part 2.) Clearly not even a protracted philosophical interlude precluded a return to the public eye.

So choosing the philosophical dialogue as the genre in which to announce that he was 'not the same person as [he] used to be' was in some ways a conservative move for Augustine. It signalled publicly that he was simply doing (a sort of) philosophy. He intimates from the very beginning of *De Academicis* that philosophy is his genre, and his inspiration. Augustine sets the conversational scene for Romanianus:

> A very few days had passed since we began to live in the country: I urged and inspired them [his companion-pupils] to study, and since I saw them prepared and actually panting for it well beyond my expectations, I wanted to try out (according to their age) what they could do—especially since Hortensius, the book of Cicero's, seemed principally to have won them over to philosophy.
>
> pauculis igitur diebus transactis posteaquam in agro uiuere coepimus, cum eos ad studia hortans atque animans ultra quam optaueram paratos et prorsus inhiantes uiderem, uolui temptare pro aetate quid possent, praesertim cum Hortensius liber Ciceronis iam eos ex magna parte conciliasse philosophiae uideretur. (*c. Acad.* 1.1.4)

And so the dialogue begins with the proposal of the *Hortensius* that 'we certainly all wish to be happy' (*beati certe esse uolumus*). The exact influence of the Ciceronian work is hard to assess, given the fragmentary state in which it has come down to us (several of the *testimonia*, indeed, are supplied by Augustine himself); but both the *Hortensius* and other Ciceronian works, notably the *Academica* and the *Tusculanae Disputationes*, remain prominent in the background to this dialogue.[23]

Cicero is not the only influence—in Augustine's mind, at any rate. At the end of the dialogue, Augustine embarks on an ambitious philosophical genealogy for the Academics. It ends, not with 'our dear Cicero,' *Tullius noster,* though he is present, but with 'that utterance of Plato, the purest and most limpid in philosophy, which (once the clouds of error had been removed) shone forth above all in Plotinus' (*os illud Platonis,*

[22] (Flavius Mallius) Theodorus 27 in *PLRE* 1; (Flavius Mallius) Theodorus 3 in *PCBE: Italie*. The poet Claudian wrote a panegyric to celebrate his consulship. Courcelle calls him 'un des plus grands philosophes contemporains', and discusses his work at some length in *Les lettres grecques en occident* (Paris, 1943), 122–8; quote from 122.

[23] See Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, i, esp. 98–101 (though the perspective of *conf.* repeatedly imposes itself in this account), 209–15; Hagendahl, *Latin Classics*, i: *Ac.* testimonia 109–14, 117–23 (note especially the long comparative passage of *c. Acad.* and *Ac.* on p. 56, and the huge quotation from *Ac.* in *c. Acad.* 3.7.15–8.17 on pp. 57–8); *Tusc*: testimonia 291, 308, 313, 321, 322. For a recent discussion, see Michael P. Foley, 'Cicero, Augustine, and the Philosophical Roots of the Cassiciacum Dialogues', *REAug* 45 (1999), 51–77.

quod in philosophia purgatissimum est et lucidissimum, dimotis nubibus erroris emicuit maxime in Plotino: *c. Acad.* 3.18.41). This comes as rather a surprise: Plotinus has not been conspicuously present in the dialogue. But it is easy to see that the dialogue has been set up in the Ciceronian mode, as a debate between philosophical schools.

The notion of 'schools' brings to the fore another way in which Augustine's choice of philosophical dialogue satisfies convention. At the beginning of *De Academicis*, he is portrayed in his rural retreat at Cassiciacum with two promising pupils from Milan, Licentius and Trygetius; they are joined by Augustine's old friend and interlocutor from his school days, Alypius. There is much play, in the course of the dialogue, with the contrast of *schola illa* (the sense seems to hover between that school back in Milan, and outmoded trains of thought) and *schola nostra*, their current endeavour. Is Augustine simply writing philosophical dialogues because that is the generic mode in which one teaches?[24]

Perhaps. The suggestion above, that he is 'trying out' his pupils, would lend itself to this conclusion. He proceeds, in Book 1, with a course of powerfully directive questioning, and concludes that this has been by way of a test: 'When I began to encourage you to seek the truth, I started seeking from you how much importance you placed on it; but you all placed so much that I couldn't ask for more' (*cum instituissem uos ad quaerendam ueritatem magnopere hortari, coeperam ex uobis quaerere, quantum in ea momenti ponneretis; omnes autem posuistis tantum, ut plus non desiderem*: *c. Acad.* 1.9.25). This approach is reiterated to Alypius towards the end of Book 2: 'My initial play with these young men, in which philosophy (one might say) joked freely with us, ought to suffice' (*satis sit quod cum istis adulescentibus prolusimus, ubi libenter nobiscum philosophia quasi iocata est*: *c. Acad.* 2.9.22). These moments in which Augustine steps back and comments on the process by which the dialogue is being conducted are utterly Socratic: compare, for example, Plato's *Theaetetus*, in which Socrates is persuading Theodorus to explore a concept with him:

> You see that all the people here are children, apart from you. So if we're to do as Protagoras tells us, it's you and I who must give his theory serious treatment by questioning and answering each other about it. That way, at least he won't have this charge to bring against us: that we examined his theory by way of a childish diversion with some boys. (*Tht.* 168e; McDowell's translation)

[24] An idea developed by Laura Holt, 'Tolle, Scribe' chs. 1 and 2. *Schola illa/rhetorica/grammatici*: *c. Acad.* 3.7.15; *beata u.* 1.4; *ord.* 1.2.5, 1.9.27, 1.10.30. *Schola nostra*: *c. Acad.* 3.4.7, *ord.* 1.3.7.

Pierre Hadot writes, 'the subject of the dialogue counts less than the method which is applied to it; the solution of the problem has less value than the route travelled together to resolve it.'[25] In the emphasis on method here, Augustine shows himself still very much the schoolmaster. Just as with Socrates in the extract above, there is no doubt who is the teacher, however purportedly egalitarian the format: while in theory the initiator of the philosophical dialogue is moving with his interlocutors towards a greater appreciation of the truth, he is in fact evaluating them and their responses, and assuming that he is entitled to do so. The importance of process, then, connects with the issue of control: who is deciding what the process should be? who is directing the course of the discussion? and for whom? The questions might seem particularly pressing in a situation where the principal interlocutor is also, as it were, writing his own part. In this ostensibly multivocal format, how much space for variation and dissension can there actually be?

And yet Augustine insists that he doesn't want to do business as usual—on some level, he does not wish the process to be the purpose of the dialogue. The comment to Alypius above, about his 'initial play' with the young men, is bracketed by the determined statement: 'I don't want this debate to be undertaken for the sake of debating . . . We are dealing with our life, our habits, our soul' (*non ego istam disputationem disputandi gratia susceptam uolo. . . . de uita nostra de moribus de animo res agitur*: *c. Acad.* 2.9.22). We are still, of course, encountering what Augustine wants—both within the dialogue as directive interlocutor, and outside it as framer of the narrative. He still, in fundamental ways, controls the dialogue. But, within the logic of the genre, he repeatedly resists the authoritative position, staging (as we shall see) a dialectic of subversion. This becomes ever more apparent as the 'conversations' at Cassiciacum proceed; but even in *De Academicis*, we already see the chinks.

So Augustine's choice of the philosophical dialogue as his medium of expression at this stage of his life may well have been dictated by the tastes and preferences of his patrons. It may also have been dictated by the notion that this is how a teacher of *philosophia Christiana*, Christian philosophy, ought to express himself. But as I have said, one should never underestimate the liminality of Augustine's position at this time—both intellectually and

[25] Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris, 1981), 36: 'la sujet du dialogue compte donc moins que la méthode qui y est appliquée, la solution du problème a moins de prix que le chemin parcouru en commun pour la resoudre.'

socially. He was caught in a queer moment of suspension between his professional duties and his baptism. The traditional form of the dialogue, and Augustine's departure from tradition in its content, mirrors his own situation: his exterior is the same, but his 'content' is Christian. The genre is ideally suited to conveying his sense of liminality, and Augustine manipulates it as such.

The Speaking Text

I have spoken repeatedly of Augustine's 'choice' of genre. If Augustine chose to write these works as philosophical dialogues, they cannot be the simple transcriptions of conversations which they purport to be. Why I am convinced that this is so, and that something far richer and more elaborate is going on in the presentation of these works, should be apparent from what follows.

The genre of the philosophical dialogue is one which emphasizes constantly, in conventions and content, the tension between speaking and writing. So far from eliding or dissimulating this emphasis, Augustine actually exploits it, to a degree unparalleled in any of his predecessors. (The framing device in Plato's *Phaedrus* is perhaps the closest comparandum: Socrates comments on the way in which Phaedrus might have memorized the speech, and finally extracts the full text from under his cloak: *Phdr.* 228a–e.) Consider the programmatic statement at the beginning of the *Soliloquia*, the conversation between Augustine and his own reasoning capacity:

Ratio: Right, suppose you've discovered something: to what will you entrust it, so that you can move on to other things?

Augustinus: To memory, I suppose.

Ratio: And is memory so powerful that she can preserve everything satisfactorily, once you've thought it through?

Augustinus: It's difficult—or rather, impossible.

Ratio: Well then, there must be writing.

R: ecce, fac te inuenisse aliquid; cui conmendabis, ut pergas ad alia?

A: memoriae scilicet.

R: tantane illa est, ut excogitata omnia bene seruet?

A: difficile est, immo non potest.

R: ergo scribendum est. (sol. 1.1.1)

This, then, is why the—apparently impersonal—writing down of the Cassiciacum dialogues is called for: to circumvent the pitiful inadequacies of memory.[26] Augustine provides a similar rationale in *De Academicis*—again, in the passage about testing and playing with the young men: 'I wanted what we've worked through among ourselves to be reported in writing [*in litteras*], because memory is a faithless guardian of thought processes' (*propter memoriam, quae infida custos est excogitatorum, referri in litteras uolui quod inter nos saepe pertractauimus*: *c. Acad.* 2.9.22). Once again, the emphasis is on the unsatisfactory nature of memory; we shall see in Part Two the significantly more positive construction which Augustine places on it later at Cassiciacum. Indeed, as the dialogues proceed, this utterly conventional *causa scribendi* is gradually interrogated and undermined; the liminal space between the spoken and the written word in the dialogue form contributes to the interrogation. The relationship between speech, writing, and memory proves to be crucial to Augustine's philosophical—or should we say theological?[27]—revisionism.

Ergo scribendum est, Ratio concludes. With this passive periphrastic construction, we would usually expect an agent in the dative; however, Ratio does not say 'I, you, or we have to write', but simply 'there must be writing'.[28] The sense of an impersonal obligation to write, a disembodied process by which the dialogues are recorded, is sustained and exploited throughout the Cassiciacum works, with the possible exception of *De Beata Vita*. Augustine first refers to a secretary (*notarius*), whose task is to record the conversations: 'So that our hard work should not be scattered to the breezes,' he writes to Romanianus, 'I employed a secretary, and allowed nothing to be lost' (*adhibito itaque notario, ne aurae*

[26] Compare the long tradition of Greek debate about whether writing helps or hinders memory, stemming from the *Phaedrus*: the passage mentioned above is in a sense glossed towards the end of the work, in the encounter of the scientific Theuth and King Thamus: 'your invention [writing]', says the king, 'will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it, through lack of practice at using their memory' (275a: Rowe's translation).

[27] This is, of course, to 'propose a distinction which [Augustine] did not know': Rist, *Augustine*, 5.

[28] Harm Pinkster, 'The Latin impersonal passive', *Mnemosyne*, 45 (1992), 172, regarding impersonal constructions in finite passive forms, observes that cases (of which this seems to be an instance) in which the identity of the agent cannot be inferred from the context 'are relatively rare', and cites Martianus Capella's explanation of the notion 'impersonal': '*[impersonale genus] ideo sic uocatur, quod cum omnes personas contineat nullam habet certam*' (Mart. Cap. 3.309). Compare Andrew Taylor on Abelard's *Dialectica*, 'A Second Ajax', in *The Tongue of the Fathers* (Philadelphia, 1998), 16: 'Personal involvement is dissolved into a series of passive periphrastic constructions, whose unspecified obligation encompasses all right-thinking logical men.'

laborem nostrum discerperent, nihil perire permisi: *c. Acad.* 1.1.4). (Is there the whiff of justifying expenditure to a patron here?) But thereafter the *notarius* vanishes from view, to be replaced by an impersonal pen, *stilus*, with no hand holding it. In the introduction to *De Ordine*, it is the pen, not the secretary, which is employed (the same verb is used)—only this time, it only records what seems 'useful' (*utilia*: *ord.* 1.2.5). Contrast, for example, the use of the pen in the prologue to the *Retractationes*: Augustine is embarking on the project 'to reconsider my little works with a certain severity of judgement, and to mark out what offends me with—as it were—a censorious pen [*censorio stilo*].' No doubt about who is holding the pen here.

But who decides what is useful? The pen so strangely detached from human agency? So it would seem. In the middle of the third book of *De Academicis*, the company baulks at Augustine's remorseless questioning, and Alypius begs him to expound his thoughts in continuous prose, *oratio perpetua*, instead (*c. Acad.* 3.7.15). Augustine observes that he had hoped for some rest after his hard work in the school of rhetoric (*schola rhetorica*), and that accordingly he prefers conducting the enquiry through dialogue (*interrogando*); but they are few, he concedes, so he won't have to shout, and he appeals to the pen as *auriga* and *moderator* of his speech. Driver and director: the pen is not merely recording, but in some way steering the content. It's amusing that no sooner has Augustine made this appeal than he gives us by far the longest single quote from a written source in the whole Cassiciacum dialogues, a large section from Cicero's *Academica*[29]—apparently, when the pen takes over, it prefers the products of its own kind.

This is not an entirely frivolous point. Despite occasional moments of optimism (the pen 'would not allow you to lose' the points of the discussion: *ord.* 2.7.21), the guiding presence of the pen tends to highlight not the accuracy of the reportage, but the discrepancy between the words spoken and the written record. The question of whether there is sufficient light for writing provides a clear example of this. Twice, the excuse of impending darkness is used to close or to hasten the proceedings (*c. Acad.* 1.5.54, 2.3.14): the pen will no longer be able to perform its function. The final book of *De Academicis* closes at night—'but a lantern was brought in, and something else was written down' (*et aliquid etiam lucerna inlata scriptum erat*: *c. Acad.* 3.20.44). But the dialogue *De Ordine* opens with Augustine lying awake in darkness so

[29] Hagendahl, *Latin Classics*, i. Test. 122, defends the length of the quotation.

total that he doesn't realize his companions are awake too, until they move or speak. Then he takes the opportunity to engage *schola nostra* in conversation, and they talk all through the night. There is no mention of who, or what, might be recording the dialogue at this stage. Perhaps it is no coincidence that before the conversation starts, Augustine tells us that he had ordered his young interlocutors 'to do something with themselves beyond books (*praeter codices*), and to habituate their souls to live in themselves' (*ut aliquid et praeter codices secum agerent et apud sese habitare consuefacerent animum*: *ord.* 1.3.6). The pen is silently jettisoned, and the moment of *éclaircissement* which occurs at dawn (and which I discuss further in Part Two) is also a symbolic moment of moving *praeter codices*. The paradox is that we are still reading a naturalistic conversation—complete with hesitations, interruptions, and comments on demeanour (of which more anon)—recounted in writing in a *codex*. This would not be noticeable had Augustine not insisted elsewhere on the process of creating a record—and, by contrast, here spent some time discussing the density of the darkness 'which in Italy is pretty much obligatory even for the rich' (*quod in Italia etiam pecuniosis prope necesse est*: *ord.* 1.3.7).[30]

The striving for verisimilitude of the dialogues is, then, called into question; and at the same time, the success of their portrayal of 'real' conversations is highlighted. We are hovering in a liminal space between writing and speaking, between fiction and reportage—and Augustine, having caused us to ponder that liminality, goes on to exploit it.

A dialogue conducted (purportedly) between two ambitious young men and their teacher, *De Academicis* offers literary space for intense competition. The eristic training of late Roman schools of rhetoric—which Augustine himself had of course undergone—maps almost too readily onto this type of debate. Augustine's pupils, within the dialogue, find it difficult to distinguish between the satisfaction of a personal victory and the formulation of a superior doctrine; in their struggles, he portrays them as playing out the tension between conventional worldly ambition and the very different ambition for spiritual (or philosophical) progress.

At the end of *De Academicis* 1, Augustine himself (within the dialogue) seems to be feeding his interlocutors an antagonistic self-definition. He

[30] Augustine does say later that he recorded 'all the little works of our night' (*omnia nostrae lucubrationis opuscula*: *ord.* 1.8.26) as soon as he could; but again, he draws attention to their unreliability by asking the pre-emptive question 'when could such remarkable things escape the memory of three attentive people?' (*quando poterant tam insignita trium studiosorum memoriam effugere?*).

offers a recapitulation of the discussion so far that reads almost like a visual re-enactment of a full-scale battle. 'When you [Licentius] put the barricades of authority in his way, he . . . immediately straightened up and with a certain noble obstinacy leapt to the summit of freedom (*libertatis*), and snatched back what had been violently dashed from his hands . . . ' (*cui loco tu cum molem auctoritatis obiceres, . . . tamen se statim erexit et generosa quadam contumacia in uerticem libertatis exsiluit rursumque arripuit quod erat de manibus uiolenter excussum*: *c. Acad.* 1.9.24). As the battle goes on, Augustine reports that 'he has occupied your garrison: you had been driven from it and had lost the entire point of things, except that a truce had restored you' (*occupauit praesidium tuum, unde pulsus omnino summam rerum amiseras, ni te indutiae reparassent*). And so on. Afterwards, Augustine invokes the arena, pointing out that he had merely been training the young men: 'The whole thing could have been finished after a few words, if I hadn't wanted to exercise you, and to test out your sinews and your enthusiasm' (*quae post pauca omnino posset uerba finiri, nisi exercere uos uellem neruosque uestros et studia . . . explorare*: *c. Acad.* 1.9.25). Augustine is firmly in control, and he is envisaging the verbal encounters between the young men as eristic.

The antagonism is differently framed, however, towards the end of *De Academicis* 2. Licentius, laughing, says to Augustine, 'Tell me, please, are you already confident of your victory?' And after some banter, he concludes:

> I wish I were already vanquished, so that I could listen for a while to your discussion—and, which is more, watch it: as far as I'm concerned, there can be no happier spectacle (*spectaculo*) to watch. Since you've decided to display those words rather than pour them away, as you're catching them with a pen as they burst from the mouth and not allowing them to fall (as it were) to earth, it will be possible for us[31] to read them; but somehow or other, when the people between whom the conversation is battled out are actually presented before the eyes, a good discussion suffuses the mind—perhaps no more profitably (*utilius*), but certainly more pleasantly.
>
> utinam . . . iam uincar, ut aliquando uos audiam disserentes et, quod plus est, uideam, quo mihi spectaculo nihil potest felicius exhiberi. nam quoniam placuit uobis ista fundere potius quam effundere, si quidem ore prorumpentia stilo excipitis nec in terram, ut dicitur, cadere sinitis, legere etiam nos licebit; sed nescio quo modo, cum admouentur oculis idem ipsi, quos inter sermo caeditur, bona disputatio si non utilius, at certe laetius perfundit animum. (*c. Acad.* 2.7.17)

[31] Reading *nos* for the *uos* of Green's text, of which I cannot make sense.

This could be programmatic for the paradoxes of the dialogues. The premise has been eristic; but now, Licentius is wishing he were 'already vanquished'. Why? So that he can sit back and concentrate on watching the spectacle, which is much more fun than reading the proceedings later. But even while the dialogues are being presented as a spectacle, there is a simultaneous emphasis on the fact that they are written—not just because of the reference to the pen (which, once again, seems to be playing an unmediated role, simply 'catching' the words), but because this speech is crafted in such a way as to draw attention to its composition. There is, for example, a showy contrast between the verbs *fundere* and *effundere* (translated here as 'display' and 'pour away'), which is picked up at the end with *perfundere* ('suffuse'). All the crucial transactions of the dialogue—the writing, the uttering, and the apprehension of the words—are thus summed up in a tightly-knit set of cognates. Finally, there is the appeal, once again, to the *utilitas* of the dialogues: the benefits are the same if you read them; but how much more fun (*laetius*) it is to witness them!

Thus we, the reading audience, seem to be invited simultaneously to read and to 'see' the dialogues: Augustine is playing with the idea that they can simultaneously be beneficial and fun (*utilis* and *laetus*). And I emphasize, once again, the notion of playing—just as he portrays his encounters with his pupils as a preliminary game. There is much playful risk-taking here.

Augustine subsequently proposes a slightly different method of proceeding—depicting himself as in a sense following Licentius' lead:

> Unless I have persuaded myself that it is possible for the truth to be found, before they have persuaded themselves it is impossible, I won't dare to pursue the inquiry, nor will I have anything to defend. So please take away that awful style of debate (*istam interrogationem*), and instead, let us discuss amongst ourselves, as sagaciously as we can, whether it might be possible for the truth to be found.
>
> nisi . . . prius tam mihi persuasero uerum posse inueniri, quam sibi illi non posse persuaserunt, non audebo quaerere nec habeo aliquid quod defendam. itaque istam interrogationem remoue, si placet; potius discutiamus inter nos, quam sagaciter possumus, utrumnam possit uerum inueniri. (*c. Acad.* 2.9.23)

Ista interrogatio must refer to the conventional, didactic method of question-and-answer which Augustine has for the most part been pursuing up to this point (*ista* is surely, as so often, derogatory); he suggests instead a more egalitarian method of discussion 'amongst ourselves'. But this passage depends, also, on the assumption that it *is* possible for 'truth to be found'—which is Augustine's principal area of

debate with the Academics. Here, therefore, he admits that the matter is already decided: they are proceeding from a counter-Academic basis. In a sense, the ostensible point of the dialogue is buried here, less than two-thirds of the way through: Augustine and his interlocutors are striving together to discuss the possibility of finding truth, *despite the fact* that they would not be striving if they did not think it was possible to do so. The real point of the dialogue—if one can use such terms as 'real' here!—must be elsewhere.

Augustine gives us a hint a few paragraphs later; again, he puts the hint in someone else's mouth (another instance of his attempts not to portray himself as driving the discussion). He askes the young men to 'recall to memory for me how Alypius responded yesterday to that little query which was troubling you'. And Licentius answers, 'It's so short, that it's no effort to remember . . . He forbade you, when a thing (*res*) is settled, to start an enquiry about words (*uerba*)' (*tam breue est . . . ut nihil negotii sit hoc recordari . . . uetuit te, res cum constaret, de uerbis mouere quaestionem*: *c. Acad.* 2.11.25). This distinction between *res* and *uerba* is of course one upon which Augustine was to reflect throughout his life, and which he gives most lapidary expression at the beginning of *De Doctrina Christiana*. But what is a dialogue if not 'an enquiry about words'?[32] This is why Augustine needs to insist on the dialogues as spectacle; this is why he needs to throw into relief the dependency of the written word upon that spectacle by emphasizing the pen. (Note that, in the passage above, there is no question of reading the record of the previous day's conversation: the emphasis falls entirely on memory, in which—it is implied by extension—*res* rather than merely *uerba* are to be found.) We shall return to the importance of *res* and *uerba* in Part Three. For now, we can simply note how cleverly Augustine makes us believe that we are, in some way, watching a spectacle, not reading words on the page—and hence, that we are privileged to move beyond the level of words, and reflect on the realities behind them.[33] This must, I think, be why the argument about the historicity of these dialogues has been so long-lived: Augustine has been ridiculously successful as a dramaturge, and has

[32] Seth Lerer, *Boethius and the Dialogue* (Princeton, NJ, 1985) has some suggestive remarks on the properties of Augustinian dialogues.

[33] Contrast Pl. *Ep.* 7 (341c) for a different approach to moving beyond the level of words: 'it [philosophy] does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but, as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark . . .'.

made his readers over the centuries believe that they are in fact not readers, but audience.

Augustine uses this counterpoise between the dramatic presentation and the process of recording it in both the other Cassiciacum dialogues with external interlocutors, and to great effect. In each case, the dialogic moment turns round a confrontation about what is, or is not, to be 'on the record'. And each case again contains, I think, a joke with a point.

In the course of *De Beata Vita*, Augustine catches Licentius in a logical impasse. Licentius sees that he has been trapped.

'So,' he said, laughing rather irritably, 'the man who doesn't have what he wants is happy.' When I ordered this to be written down, he called out, 'I didn't say it!' And when I indicated that that too should be written down, he said, 'I did say it.'—I had ordered on one occasion that no word should overflow the writing (*praeter litteras funderet*). And in this way I held the young man torn between embarrassment and consistency.

prorsus beatus est, inquit, qui quod uult non habet, quasi stomachanter arridens. quod cum iuberem ut scriberetur: non dixi, inquit exclamans. quod item cum annuerem scribi: dixi, inquit. atque ego semel praeceperam, ut nullum uerbum praeter litteras funderet. ita adulescentem inter uerecundiam atque constantiam exagitatum tenebam. (*beata u.* 2.15)

Once again, here, Augustine is playing with the notion that 'the pen' is capturing absolutely everything that passes, including the falsehoods and the various volte-face. And so he again calls attention, not to the reliability, but to the mutability of the record: it *can* be falsified; by implication, it requires Augustine's constant self-exertion to ensure that it should not be. Words can mislead and be misused; poor Licentius, 'torn' (*exagitatum*), is being forced to reflect on that.

In the second case, which occurs in *De Ordine*, the dialogic moment turns round the purported rivalry between Licentius and Trygetius. As the subject here is the issue of whether Christ, son of God, is correctly (*proprie*) to be called God,[34] the effect is to dwell for a few extra minutes on an important theological issue, and to familiarize the audience, both within and without the text, to the correct response.

I said [to Trygetius], 'Restrain yourself; it is not improper for the son to be called God.' He was moved by religious shame, and didn't want his words written down, while Licentius insisted that they should stay . . .

[34] Denying the divinity of Christ was particularly associated with Arianism: the heretical stance had been corrected at Nicaea (325) with the credal phrase 'of one substance with the Father' (*homooúsios tôi patrí*), but heresies continued to accrue around the issue. See Rowan Williams, *Arius* (London, 2000), esp. 226–9.

cui ego: cohibe te potius, inquam; non enim filius improprie deus dicitur.—at ille religione commotus cum etiam uerba sua scripta esse nollet, urgebat Licentius ut manerent . . . (*ord.* 1.10.29)

Augustine reproves the two young men at some length (treated further in Part Two); and the end result is a complete reversal of roles. Licentius begs that the whole section be removed from the record (pleading that they are running out of space on the tablets!). It is Trygetius, this time, who argues that the account, their 'punishment,' should stay, and that their awareness of reputation should act as a correction. 'We will exert ourselves not a little that this manuscript should only come to the attention of our intimate friends' (*ut enim solis amicis et familiaribus nostris litterae istae innotescant, non parum desudabimus*: *ord.* 1.10.30). So the lesson is learned—but not *too* well: Augustine must have smiled as he re-read the passage while composing his *Retractationes*, well aware that the dialogue had circulated some way beyond the circle of 'intimate friends'. Even at the time, the line must have been written as a double-edged joke: it declares an intention to restrict the circulation; by implication, then, anyone reading it automatically counted as an 'intimate friend', and could be drawn in to assent to the theological point.

Dialogues and Logic

Other than observing that Augustine seems to move away from casting himself as leader and initiator in the dialogues, I have so far paid little attention to his—or his dedicatees'—actual expectations of the dialogic process. Of the expectations set up by Augustine's Ciceronian models, we shall treat in the next chapter; but we might think that there should be a special link between philosophical dialogue—particularly one composed against the logical arguments of the Academics—and that discipline of logical disputation, the *disciplina disciplinarum* (*ord.* 2.17.46), dialectic.[35] Much of the multivocal part of the dialogue is staged as some sort of dialectical combat, the counterposing of propositions to test their logical consistency; but Augustine does not step back to deal with the discipline as such until the middle of Book 3 of *De Academicis*. The context within the dialogue is the place of the data from sense-perception in the formation of the *sapiens*, the wise man. 'There remains

[35] Johannes Brachtendorf provides an interesting view of this relationship: 'The Decline of Dialectic in Augustine's Early Dialogues', *SP* 37 (2001), 25–30.

dialectic, which the wise man certainly knows well, and no one can know what is false' (*restat dialectica, quam certe sapiens bene nouit, nec falsum scire quisquam potest*: *c. Acad.* 3.13.29)—otherwise, of course, it would not be knowledge: one of many reflexive jokes at the expense of the Academics. Augustine claims to know more about dialectic than about any other part of philosophy.

Augustine proceeds to develop a set of propositions: first those where the truth of the second statement follows from the first; then mutually exclusive either/or propositions: either we are awake now, or we are sleeping; either it is a body which I seem to see (*sic*), or it is not a body. He goes on to say:

> It [dialectic] has taught me that, when one is dealing with the thing (*re*) about which words (*uerba*) are spoken, one should not argue about words. Whoever does this through inexperience should be taught; through malice, abandoned; if he cannot be taught, he should be advised that he had better do something else . . . ; if he doesn't obey, he should be ignored.
>
> docuit etiam me, cum de re constat, propter quam uerba dicuntur, de uerbis non debere contendi, et quisquis id faciat, si imperitia faciat, docendum esse, si malitia, deserendum, si doceri non potest, monendum, ut aliquid alius potius agat . . . si non obtemperat, neglegendum. (*c. Acad.* 3.13.29)

Augustine is parodying his own first type of proposition, the 'connective' type, where the second part is logically dependent on the first—but the key point is to assert, once again, the supremacy of *res* over *uerba*. To reinforce this point, he goes on to develop the absurd image—dubbed a *spectaculum*—of the wise man squabbling with wisdom (*c. Acad.* 3.14.31). The result is that 'either the Academic is not wise, or the wise man will assent to something—unless perhaps the wise man who is ashamed to say that he doesn't know wisdom will not be ashamed to say he doesn't *consent* to wisdom' (*aut igitur sapiens Academicus non est aut nonnulli rei sapiens assentietur, nisi forte, quem dicere puduit sapientem nescire sapientiam, sapientem non consentire sapientiae dicere non pudebit*). Augustine amuses himself at the expense of this wise man for some time, finishing up, 'For the time being I have probably, within my abilities, persuaded myself of this concerning the Academics. If it's false, I don't care (*nihil ad me*): it is enough for me that I now don't think that the truth can't be found by a human being' (*hoc mihi de Academicis interim probabiliter, ut potui, persuasi. quod si falsum est, nihil ad me, cui satis est iam non arbitrari non posse ab homine inueniri ueritatem*: c. Acad. 3.20.43).

Dialectic as such plays a surprisingly circumscribed role in the Cassiciacum dialogues: its principal purpose, for Augustine, is to point to the

realities beyond the words, the *res praeter uerba*, and by extension to the inadequacies of language. Augustine's summing-up of his own discussion steps, with exquisite disdain, outside the terms of Academic dispute. 'If it's false, I don't care.' How can he just dismiss the notion of falsehood? By relying, it seems, on the double indeterminacy of a double negative: 'I now don't think that the truth can't be found.'[36]

Destabilization of language is of course the ultimate argument against the Academics. If one emphasizes the unreliability of language as a whole, then their linguistic caution becomes meaningless. We may note, at the same time, that Augustine's lists leave no space for Christian paradox—and that will become important: he will be obliged to move beyond the simple expression of logical absurdity.[37]

So we may take it that Augustine's epistemology too is in a liminal state at Cassiciacum. In his debate *De Academicis*, he ends up by dismissing the grounds for their truth-claims (such as they are), but he has, as yet, developed nothing to put in their place. He knows (*sic*!) that there are realities beyond words, but he does not know how to reach towards them. The ecstatic ending to the philosophical genealogy which serves as the peroration to Augustine's *oratio recta* manages simultaneously to surprise, and to say very little: he speaks, as we have seen, of 'that utterance of Plato, the purest and most limpid in philosophy, which (once the clouds of error had been removed) shone forth above all in Plotinus' (*c. Acad.* 3.18.41). A few lines later he adds that there is at last 'one discipline of truest philosophy. And that is not the philosophy of this world, . . . but of the other, intelligible world . . . ' (*una uerissimae philosophiae disciplina. non enim est ista huius mundi philosophia . . . sed alterius intellegibilis*: *c. Acad.* 3.19.42). It is hard not to think of the *sapientia huius mundi* (1 Cor. 1: 20), though Augustine does not make it clear that he intended the allusion. At the same time, the world which is susceptible only to the intellect has been neither explored nor epistemologically justified in this dialogue. And perhaps Augustine shows that he is aware of the intellectual leap which he has demanded of his audience when he concludes:

[36] The Epilogue suggests how the linguistic force of *nihil ad me* is subsequently developed in Augustine's thought.

[37] On Christian paradox, see Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Oxford, 1991), ch. 5; Catherine Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster* (Oxford, 2000), chs. 4 and 5.

No one can doubt that we are compelled to learn by the twin weight of authority (*auctoritas*) and of *ratio*.[38] I am determined forthwith not to depart from the authority of Christ; for I do not find a more powerful one. But what I should pursue with subtlest *ratio*... that I am confident I shall find with the Platonists for the time being [his own caveat].

nulli autem dubium est gemino pondere nos impelli ad discendum auctoritatis atque rationis. mihi ergo certum est nusquam prorsus a Christi auctoritate discedere; non enim reperio ualentiorem. quod autem subtilissima ratione persequendum est... apud Platonicos me interim... reperturum esse confido. (*c. Acad.* 3.20.43)

The 'authority of Christ' has come, within the terms of the dialogue, from nowhere. Augustine has pointed us to the epistemological gap—to, as it were, the limitations of *subtilissima ratio*—but he has not told us why it should be filled with Christ. That is the issue round which the remaining Cassiciacum dialogues fence, with varying degrees of success. They explore the implications of making the *res* beyond the *uerba* the realm of Christ; they never quite tell us why we should do so. They teach by misdirection—by directing the attention of us, their readers and pupils, elsewhere; or they succumb to the pressure of their patrons' expectations; or they express Augustine's own ambivalence at this stage of his life.

Augustine has exploited the indeterminacy of the dialogue form to explore the liminal space between speaking and writing, between a present and an absent audience—with the motif of the *spectaculum* (whose importance we shall explore in the next chapter), his readers are quite literally cast as audience—and between his own expectations and those of his patrons. One of the particular features of the dialogue is the space it leaves for aporia—for a lack of closure, for irresolution. Debate may simply be deferred to another (putative) day; discrepancies between interlocutors need not be adjudicated. To close this chapter, I shall look at the techniques of closure—or otherwise—in the three multivocal Cassiciacum dialogues. The *Soliloquia* are a different case—not least because they are officially unfinished (*sed imperfectum remansit*: *retr.* 1.4.1), and I shall treat of them in Part Three.

We have already spoken of the leap to Christ which seems to come out of nowhere at the end of *De Academicis*. Following this, the final speech is put in the mouth of Alypius. He asserts his satisfaction at being conquered in the debate, and concludes, 'We have a *guide*, who will lead us into the mysteries of truth, with God showing the way'

[38] I do not translate *ratio*: its flexibility of meaning is explored in my subsequent argument. Here, however, it seems predominantly to refer to (human) reasoning.

(*habemus ducem, qui nos in ipsa ueritatis arcana deo iam monstrante perducat*: *c. Acad.* 3.20.44). This might be read as a grandiose claim on the part of Augustine (working through Alypius), not least because of a possible echo from the *Tusculanae*, *o uitae philosophia dux!*,[39] which would imply that Augustine had supplanted philosophy herself. But it is undercut by the irony that he is hailed as *dux* just after the invocation of the *auctoritas Christi*. And in fact, a certain proportion of the dialogue has been devoted to Augustine's attempts to divest himself of the role of *dux*, to encourage his interlocutors in their own enquiries, and to show that the search for truth is a communal endeavour. He portrays himself as moving into *oratio perpetua* (at Alypius' behest, of course) only under protest. And here he remarks on the young men's disappointment that Alypius has refused to continue the debate—the implication being, again, that he does not want to embrace the role of *dux*—and refers them instead to Cicero's *Academica* to carry on the argument *and to see his own frivolities defeated*. This is the passage he later regretted writing, as I remarked above; but within the logic of *De Academicis*, it is important, for it signals Augustine's awareness that the conversation is, in fact, far from closed. This he shows again in the closing words of the dialogue. We may note that there is no return to Romanianus, no grand claims for the conclusion—just a joke to Alypius about his 'false praise' (and 'false', of course, rings false after all the discussion about the impossibility of attaining true knowledge: this may be a self-referential wink). 'At this point, when the company had laughed, we made an end of so great a contest; whether it was an absolutely definite one, I don't know—but it was certainly more temperate and quicker than I expected' (*hic cum arrisissent, finem tantae conflictionis—utrum firmissimum nescio—modestius tamen et citius quam speraueram fecimus*: *c. Acad.* 3.20.45). The sense of closure is distinctly provisional: within the characterization of the dialogue, Alypius wants things neatly wrapped up, the young men want to carry on arguing, Augustine himself wants to underscore his unwillingness to be a *dux*. The notion that the ending was 'more temperate and quicker than expected' leads us to suppose that there will be longer, more intense struggles as Augustine engages with Christianity. Overall, the sense of a dialogue as a conversation to be continued is gestured towards, but not really exploited.

De Beata Vita is presented as the most personal and *ad hoc* of the dialogues, a discussion that starts on Augustine's birthday and for which

[39] 'O philosophy, guide of life!' Cic. *Tusc.* 5.2.5.

the running conceit is of dialogue as an intellectual birthday feast. The penultimate move of the dialogue, a surprise intervention by Augustine's mother, I shall discuss in Part Two. At the very end, Augustine gives thanks to God and to his companions: 'You have brought so much to our conversation, that I could not deny that I have been sated by my guests' (*nam tantum in nostrum sermonem contulistis, ut me negare non possim ab inuitatis meis esse satiatum*: *beata u.* 4.36). Trygetius wishes they could be fed like that every day; Augustine points out that moderation in this, too, should be preserved. And so they put an end to their discussion and depart: the last word of the dialogue is *discessimus*.

The ending to *De Ordine* is perhaps the most anomalous. Augustine has expounded, in *De Ordine* 2, an educational programme for approaching God—a version of the liberal disciplines; but the conclusion to that programme has been, to say the least, ambivalent. So it comes as rather a surprise when Augustine describes the *sapiens*, the wise man, using a line from the *Aeneid*: 'he stands firm against the sea, like an unshaken crag.'[40] 'And this', Augustine concludes briskly, 'became the end of the discussion, and though everyone was happy and hoping for a long meeting we dismissed them, since the lamp had just been brought in' (*hic finis disputationis factus est laetisque omnibus et multum sperantibus consessum dimisimus, cum iam nocturnum lumen fuisset inlatum*: *ord.* 2.20.54).

Each of these endings is surprising within the context of the dialogue. As we shall see, some intellectually revolutionary moves have been made in each of the dialogues; but in each case, the ending is deflationary. It seems that Augustine uses the relative informality of the genre to ensure that his conclusions are provisional. The obvious comparanda, the dialogues of Cicero, tend to close with a peroration of sorts; if Augustine attempts a peroration at all—as he seems to in *De Academicis*—it is called into question by what follows. The casual quietness of the endings contrasts with the intensity of the conversations themselves; Augustine is, it seems, exploiting the open-endedness of the genre, but not for explicitly theological ends.[41] He simply leaves his audience each time with the clear impression that the group has scattered only for a while, and that the conversation will continue.

[40] *ille uelut pelagi rupes immota resistit*: Verg. *Aen.* 7.586.

[41] This is, however, reminiscent of Plato's practice: cf. e.g. the end of the *Symposium* (which I discuss briefly in my Note on Method).

The dialogues are eminently suited to a liminal, enquiring state. Their genre bespeaks a pursuit that Augustine's patrons will find acceptably gentlemanly; at the same time, by foregrounding its artificiality, Augustine can use it to open up questions about the relationship of language to reality. And there is sufficient generic informality for Augustine to underplay his conclusions, to end with a careless vignette, and to let his readers take the conversation further for themselves.

2

A Christian Theatre

Let me now pursue the idea of the dialogues as *spectaculum*. We may remember that Licentius has cast the dialogues as such (*c. Acad.* 2.7.17[1]), and Augustine picks up on the notion that these are texts to be watched, not read. If they are indeed presented in some way as a theatrical event before us, the readers, all sorts of further questions are raised: how are we, the audience, engaged in the action? how is the *dramatis personae* selected, described, stage managed? Above all, what is the relationship here between reality and fiction? This matters, when the purpose of writing is both to map the author's change of life, and to provoke it in his readers.

Spectacular Dialogues

The relationship between philosophical dialogues and the theatre is well established in Cicero, with his frequent allusions to Terence and his use of the conceits of the stage.[2] This is particularly evident in the *Laelius*, where it befits the characterization of the central figure: he was a cultivated literary man, and a friend of the playwright. Cicero writes, 'I have, as it were, brought the characters on stage to speak in person, avoiding the frequent insertion of "I said" and "he said", and giving the impression of a conversation between persons actually present.'[3]

[1] 'I wish I were already vanquished, so that I could listen for a while to your discussion—and, which is more, watch it: as far as I'm concerned, there can be no happier *spectacle* to watch': *utinam . . . iam uincar, ut aliquando uos audiam disserentes et, quod plus est, uideam, quo mihi spectaculo nihil potest felicius exhiberi.*

[2] Passages where Cicero indubitably recalls Terence are listed in Testard, 'Cicéron lecteur de Térence', *Caesarodunum*, 4 (1969), 158 and n. 3. The vast preponderance of these passages is found in philosophical dialogues.

[3] Cic. *Amic.* 3: *quasi enim ipsos induxi loquentes, ne 'inquam' et 'inquit' saepius interponeretur, atque ut tamquam a praesentibus coram haberi sermo uideretur.* This is Powell's translation; see also his helpful note ad loc.

Dialogues are, in a way, the thinking man's theatre. And I do not use 'thinking man' unadvisedly. That Augustine manages significantly to expand the category is one of the achievements of Cassiciacum.

It cannot be a coincidence that Licentius' self-consciously staged conversion experience at the beginning of *De Ordine* 1 is framed with quotations from Terence. Augustine—the persona of the dialogue—has erupted in frustration at Licentius' preoccupation with composing classically inspired verse, in this instance a poem inspired by the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, 'which is trying to raise a bigger wall between you and the truth than the one between those lovers of yours' (*qui [uersus] inter te atque ueritatem inmaniorem murum quam inter amantes tuos conantur erigere*: *ord.* 1.3.8). Licentius is stunned into silence, 'since I had spoken more severely than he expected'. When he speaks again, it is to voice a 'je m'accuse' in the words of Terence: 'I, like a mouse, by my own squeaking . . . ' (*egomet meo indicio quasi sorex*)—and having named the author, and exclaimed at the just sentiment, he completes the line: '. . . have condemned myself today' (*hodie perii*). (This is relevant in more ways than one. Licentius is casting himself as the slave Parmeno of Terence's *Eunuch*, in an abject moment; but within Augustine's own dialogue, it is the skittering of the mice that has revealed that Licentius is awake. Licentius later draws the parallel himself [*ord.* 1.5.14].) The conversation proceeds on the subject of the ordering of the universe, and in particular on the problem of the place of evil. Trygetius catches out Licentius: 'You definitely said that evil is contained in the ordering which flows from the highest God and is loved by him. From which it follows, both that evil proceeds from the highest God, and that God loves it' (*certe enim et mala dixisti ordine contineri et ipsum ordinem manare a summo deo atque ab eo diligi. ex quo sequitur, ut et mala sint a summo deo et mala deus diligat*: *ord.* 1.7.17). 'In this conclusion,' Augustine comments, 'I feared for Licentius.' But Licentius rebuffs the attack by appeal to the notion of a just God, and Augustine celebrates—again with a line from Terence: 'Now this new sense of religion has entered you, I allow' (*noua nunc religio istaec in te incessit, cedo*). (The juxtaposition here with the *Andria* is ironic. The line is said sarcastically; *cedo* is in fact the archaic imperative, 'hand it over'—'it' being a baby, deposited in dubious circumstances—but Augustine must be using the verb in its more current sense.) Shortly afterwards, Licentius has his moment of *éclaircissement* as dawn breaks: 'I've suddenly been made less keen on that sort of poetry' (*pigrior sum ad illa metra subito effectus*: *ord.* 1.8.21). Touchingly, he prefaces the claim with, 'perhaps you'll laugh at my boyish shallowness' (*siue . . . puerilem leuitatem ridebitis*).

Augustine is using Terence to signal his participation in the Ciceronian genre of the philosophical dialogue. In this extract, he initially uses the playwright to show Licentius' shamed alienation from Christianity, then depicts himself drawing in Licentius with a comically inapposite quotation. However 'new' the religion is, it is expressed in comfortably old terms. While Terence is not used again in the conversion scene, he is not abandoned (there is a prominent quote from *Phormio* at *ord.* 2.7.21), any more than Virgil or Cicero himself are left aside.[4]

But the use of Terence is not, as such, theatrical: the lines are divorced from context and glossed to suit their new one. The presence of these lines seems to be a shorthand for Augustine's recognition of the theatricality of the dialogues, while the theatrical *content* lies elsewhere.

First, it lies in the care with which scenes are set. We have already mentioned the pitch blackness out of which the conversation starts in *De Ordine* 1, when we discussed the question of recording the dialogues. We may pick another example almost at random, from the middle of *De Academicis*:

> On the next day, even though it dawned no less calm and pleasant, we scarcely disengaged ourselves from our domestic duties. We had consumed a great part of the day writing letters, mostly, and when there were barely two hours left, we proceeded to the meadow. The absolutely beautiful weather enticed us, and we agreed not to waste the little time remaining. And so we came to our accustomed tree…
>
> postridie autem, quamuis non minus blandus tranquillusque dies inluxisset, uix tamen domesticis negotiis euoluti sumus. nam magnam eius partem in epistolarum maxime scriptione consumpseramus et, cum iam duae horae uix reliquae forent, ad pratum processimus. nam inuitabat caeli nimia serenitas placuitque, ut ne ipsum quidem quod restiterat tempus perire pateremur. itaque cum ad arborem solitam uentum esset… (*c. Acad.* 2.11.25)

From this we learn a considerable amount about the scene. We know what the weather is like; we know what the characters have been doing before they—as it were—come on stage: they have been sitting indoors engaged in their 'domestic duties,' which turns out to mean writing letters. We know where they are sitting now; and we know too that

[4] Terence may serve a more expansive purpose here, to signal membership in a wider community of letters; we may perhaps compare Aug. *conf.* 1.16.26 (O'Donnell ad loc. points out that 'all four standard school authors of A.'s time [i.e. Cicero, Virgil, Terence, Sallust] are expressly cited in the early pages of *conf.*'), or Sulpicius Severus, *V. Martini* praef., invoking Homer and Plato and the relative uselessness (!) of their work compared with his own. Cicero himself seems to be doing something similar in the early pages of *De Finibus*, citing Terence, Licinius, Ennius, and Lucilius in the space of three chapters.

there will be a certain sense of urgency to the conversation, for it is squeezed into the remaining hours of the day (it is autumn, remember, and so the *horae* will be short). There are variations on this scene: on other days, the participants have used the morning reading Virgil (*c. Acad.* 1.5.15); in one instance, the conversation is delayed for a week to read Virgil (*c. Acad.* 2.4.10).[5] When the weather is inclement, the party convenes in the baths. But we are generally told where they are, and where they have just come from.

That the participants are presented as characters in scenes does not need labouring. The conceit is generically consistent, though perhaps performed particularly attentively in Augustine's case. The more significant gesture here relates to the *dramatis personae*. If the dialogues are 'the thinking man's theatre', who are the thinking men chosen to participate? They are rather a surprising lot; and their treatment, too, is surprising.

Other than Augustine himself, Trygetius and Licentius, purportedly two of Augustine's students from Milan (Licentius is demonstrably an historical figure, the son of Augustine's patron Romanianus; Trygetius' lineage is more shadowy), are the most consistent and vocal participants at Cassiciacum.[6] Navigius, Augustine's brother, puts in the occasional contribution.[7] Alypius, Augustine's childhood friend and later also a bishop in North Africa, is generally present, and tends to insert a note of caution into the conversation; as Augustine portrays him, he can be relied upon to say the courteous thing to smoothe over moments of impasse.[8] This is the sum of the interlocutors in *De Academicis*. For *De Beata Vita*, Augustine adds a motley ragbag of extras: Navigius again, who says little but tends to interpose with a sceptical remark (in the non-technical sense) at crucial points in the discussion;[9] Augustine's uneducated relations Lartidianus and Rusticus (*sic*!), who scarcely utter; his son Adeodatus, 'whose talent, if love doesn't mislead me, promises

[5] On Virgil in Augustine, see Sabine MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1998); she treats of the Cassiciacum dialogues in passing, remarking on the 'lighthearted ease and grace' with which Augustine uses Virgil (136).

[6] Licentius: *PCBE: Afrique* s.v.; *PLRE* 2 (Licentius 1). Trygetius: *PLRE* 1 (Trygetius 2). The only evidence for Trygetius' existence is that contained in these dialogues; McWilliam argues that he 'was probably not an historical person', but a representation of facets of Augustine's youthful personality: his name suggests restlessness and also ripeness for conversion ('Cassiciacum Autobiography', 23–24).

[7] Navigius: *PCBE: Afrique* s. Nebridius 1. See also O'Donnell on *conf.* 9.11.27, 'fratrem meum'.

[8] Alypius: *PCBE: Afrique* s.v.

[9] See *beata u.* 2.7, 2.12, 3.19–20.

great things' (*beata u.* 1.6), and who will later be Augustine's interlocutor in *De Magistro*; and his mother, who provides most of the crucial turns in the conversation.[10] She also plays a leading role in parts of *De Ordine*, the most episodic of the dialogues; Licentius and Trygetius again fight for space through much of the work, with the occasional interjection by Alypius. Navigius is present too, again very much in the background. As for the *Soliloquia*, they are *sui generis*: what is one to make of a personification of the author in conversation with his own powers of reason? This I shall address in Part Three.

By contrast, Cicero leads us to expect a *dramatis personae* of the great and the good—and perhaps their sons; the select band of luminaries may be drawn from the present, but are more likely to hail nostalgically from a generation or two earlier, before the delinquency of the republic was so oppressive.[11] Laelius and Scipio are heroic and distant figures to Cicero. (This seems of a piece with the nostalgia of Cicero's claims to be reworking Greek philosophy. Augustine resists making similar claims for his own work: while he repeatedly makes reference to Cicero, he does not claim to be reworking him.[12]) It is therefore already significant, though not unprecedented, that Augustine depicts speakers drawn firmly from his own times. It is also significant that they are in no way luminaries: Augustine himself is the most distinguished interlocutor by far, and he has yet to make his name outside a fairly small circle of *litterati*. A Ciceronian *dramatis personae* for his times would have portrayed, perhaps, a debate between Bishop Ambrose and Symmachus (readily imagined, as such a debate is in fact played out in the *Relatio Symmachi* and Ambrose's response[13]); perhaps Augustine would have played a large expository role (like Cicero in the *De Finibus*), perhaps he would have cast himself merely as reporter or compère, as commensurate with their respective social situations.

So to portray a group at once humbler and more eclectic is again a departure. We might consider it to reach back more apparently to the

[10] For Monnica, Augustine's mother, see more fully Part Two below.

[11] Cicero makes clear the political expediency of this retrospective setting for *De Re Publica* in a letter to his brother: *Q. fr.* 3.5.2.

[12] Augustine reflects the pattern charted for Cicero in Dickey, ' "me autem nomine appellabat": avoidance of Cicero's name in his dialogues', *CQ* NS 47 (1997): he never shows himself being named in direct address (not even by his mother as *fili*). Contrast (e.g.) seven direct addresses to Licentius in *c. Acad.*, and 13 in *ord.* This seems unlikely to be coincidental: it is more probably a product of Augustine's utter immersion in Cicero's dialogic style.

[13] See Symm. *Rel.* 3, Ambr. *Ep.* 72, and the discussion of the episode in Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1994), 166–7.

personnel of Plato's Socratic dialogues, were there not two problems. First, the *libri platonici* which Augustine claims in the *Confessiones* to have read seem unlikely to have included many of these dialogues—it is generally concluded that they refer instead to the Neoplatonic works of which there are indisputable traces in the Cassiciacum productions.[14] Second, though the Platonic personae do indeed include those in the relationship of pupil to the main interlocutor—as Licentius and Trygetius are to Augustine—we do not see the substance of the debate handed over to the pupils for significant stretches of the work, as Augustine allows to happen with his two pupils. (I use 'debate' advisedly; obviously, there are some extended passages of *oratio recta* given to other interlocutors in Plato.)

At the same time, Cicero makes quite explicit that the participants in his dialogues are realized as characters. The way they act is circumscribed by their supposed personalities and abilities. In a letter to Atticus of 54 BC, he explains that his treatment of Scaevola in his dialogue *De Oratore*—the character is dropped after the first book—echoes Plato's treatment of Cephalus in his *Republic*: an old man should not be kept in a long-drawn-out conversation.

> I felt this consideration arose for me much more strongly in Scaevola's case, in view of his age and state of health, which were what you remember, and the eminence of his career, which made it seem hardly proper for him to be spending several days in Crassus' Tusculan villa.
>
> multo ego magis hoc mihi cauendum putaui in Scaeuola, qui et aetate et ualetudine erat ea qua esse meministi et iis honoribus ut uix satis decorum uideretur eum pluris dies esse in Crassi Tusculano. (*Att.* 4.16.3; *Loeb translation*)

The verisimilitude which the dialogue genre demands of its *personae* suggested that Scaevola should hurry back to work. Moreover (Cicero asserts) the subject matter of the rest of the dialogue was of less interest to him!

[14] *conf.* 7.9.13 and O'Donnell ad loc. There is an intriguing possibility (suggested to me by Carol Harrison) that the theatrical intertext might have been supported by Plot. *Enn.* 3.2.17–18, *On Providence* (*Perì Pronoías*), where Plotinus develops the notion that the *lógos* is the 'plot' (in the theatrical sense) of the universe, and the soul plays a part in that plot. 'We ought certainly not to introduce actors of a kind who say something else besides the words of the author, as if the play was incomplete in itself and they filled in what was wanting . . . the actors . . . would not be just actors but a part [*méros*: not a dramatic part] of the author, and an author who foreknew what they were going to say, so that he might in this way be able to bring the rest of the play and the consequences of their interventions into a coherent whole' (*Enn.* 3.2.18, Loeb translation).

It is intrinsic to the dialogue genre as Augustine would have known it (never mind in its Platonic form[15]) to play with verisimilitude. Basil, almost contemporaneous with Augustine but drawing on the Greek tradition, recognizes the need for characterization, but takes the point a step further: such characterization must have its purpose within the dialogues: 'Plato, such is the power of his writing, simultaneously grapples with ideas and satirizes personalities . . . '. We, he tells his addressee, should do the same—so long as it is pertinent to the argument of the dialogue; 'but if the figure participating in the dialogue has no determinate character, then *ad hominem* confrontations disrupt the continuity and achieve no useful purpose' (*Ep.* 135; Trapp's translation). Even if Augustine's roster of characters really does represent those present at Cassiciacum, then, he must have been aware that in using them he was evoking a particular set of generic expectations: that they would play certain roles in the dialogues, that they should be actors as well as people, and that their combined presence would serve the intellectual purpose of the dialogue as a whole.

The imaginary example of the more 'Ciceronian' option, a debate between Symmachus and Ambrose, shows just how idiosyncratic a point of departure Augustine chose for himself in these dialogues. Think of his own social origins, think of his need of his patrons: it seems almost a gesture of defiance to be so eclectic. We may expect no lapidary statements, no clash of giants. The dialogues are oddly domestic and unassuming; the cast of characters presupposes no grandiose claims for the intellectual results. If part of the purpose of dialogue form is to situate the resultant philosophy in time and space,[16] Augustine is using his *otium liberale* in a quietly unconventional way: he has certainly gathered more than just gentlemen around him. In fact, he has included in his choice of participants those (Lartidianus, Rusticus, his own mother) who have not the barest rudiments of a gentlemanly education, and will probably never be able to read the conversations for themselves. This is quite out of kilter with anything presented by Plato or Cicero.

Moreover, given that at least some of the participants are demonstrably real living people, it matters how they are used. Augustine clearly recognizes this when he points out to Alypius that there is no reason—

[15] For remarks on Plato that stimulate reflection on later writers of dialogue as well, see Ruby Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge, 2002).

[16] So Blondell, *Play of Character*, 48; on the specificity of a Ciceronian setting, see Zetzel's Introduction to Cic. *Rep.*, 12–13.

or at least, no opportunity—for lying (*non . . . ulla causa mentiendi, aut saltem occasio*), because everyone knows everyone else anyway! (*ord.* 2.10.28) Does the very inability of some of the participants to read the results call forth a greater sense of responsibility for how they are depicted? We seem to receive a hint of this later in *De Ordine*, when Augustine refuses to repeat a section of the argument for Licentius' benefit (punctuating the reproof with yet another tag from Terence: ' "don't do what's been done", as they say': *actum, aiunt, ne agas*). Augustine sees that Licentius is not paying attention, 'so I suggest you should at least bother to read what was said earlier, if you couldn't listen to it' (*quare moneo potius, ut ea, quae supra dicta sunt, uel legere cures, si audire nequiuisti*: *ord.* 2.7.21). This tart response—as often with Augustine's mockery or chastisement of Licentius—suggests his priorities. Here, they lie with his unlettered interlocutors; the rest of the audience can simply fill in the blanks by reading.[17]

Documentary Details

This gives a whole new flavour to the clever remarks about dialogues as *spectaculum*—not least those of Licentius. On the one hand, for some of the speakers—and perhaps we may infer, for some of the intended audience too—the dialogues are only ever a spectacle, something enacted, whether literally, or in the mind's eye as they are read aloud; for all the remarks about 'the pen', they never achieve the status of written text. The thinking men whose theatre this is need not be *reading* men too; they need not even be men. On the other hand, the nature of this textual spectacle leaves its audience—especially its contemporary audience—in acute suspense between the real and the imaginary; and Augustine does his best to augment that suspense. We have already seen how the ambiguous nature of the written and the spoken contributes to this. The 'staged' properties of the dialogues take the suspense still further. Where do things of the real fleshly world end, and things of the mind begin?

This tension has been best expressed by someone contemplating a medium of our own times. The film theorist Gilberto Perez writes, 'What has been is documentary, what comes into being is fiction; a

[17] Contrast the far milder treatment of Alypius at *c. Acad.* 2.4.10; but he requests 'that your conversation should be *read* to me'.

movie is a fiction made up of documentary details.'[18] This exactly describes what Augustine is doing: with the help of the references to theatre already embedded in the genre, he is composing 'a fiction made up of documentary details'. Only this 'fiction' has a point outside itself—as well as a life outside itself, in the realness of the interlocutors and addressees. The more convincingly Augustine can elaborate his 'documentary details', the more worthwhile these dialogues will be as protreptic exercises.

The documentary details manifest themselves in the minutest of ways. Look at the example already given in the course of Licentius' conversion tale, prefacing the first citation of Terence: 'he fell silent for a while, since I had spoken more severely than he expected' (*quod cum seueriore quam putabat uoce dixissem, subticuit aliquantum*: *ord.* 1.3.9). Or look at a later encounter in the same book, again between Augustine and Licentius, when Augustine has put his pupil on the spot by asking him to define *ordo*, order—which is after all the entire topic of the dialogue. 'When he heard he was being forced to offer a definition, he shuddered as if he'd been sprayed with cold water, and turned a troubled face to me, actually giggling with nervousness' (*tum ille ubi se ad definiendum cogi audiuit, quasi aqua frigida adspersus exhorruit et turbatiore uultu me intuens atque, ut fit, ipsa trepidatione subridens*: *ord.* 1.10.28). In both these instances, the precise observation brings the moment before us: we pause over its details—and, incidentally, over what are crucial intellectual moments as well. There is a degree of narrative realism here, and an attentiveness to emotional nuance, which is most unusual. We have certainly moved well beyond the 'staging' in Cicero's dialogues.

There are many such realistic markers of informal observation. Look at the spot in *De Ordine*, where motion is inadvertently defined by the slave (*puer*) who summons them in for lunch! *Hic cum arrisissent, discessimus*: 'at this point, we laughed and left' (*ord.* 2.6.18). *De Academicis* ends with laughter; so does the first day of discussion in *De Beata Vita* (discussed in Part Two). Laughter smoothes over differences; it provides deceptively benign endings; it also, as we shall see, separates the interlocutors, or (the 'giggling' above) marks moments of anxiety. Or absurdity: at another point in *De Academicis*, Licentius is warned off a hasty response:

'Do the new Academics please you?' I said. 'Very much,' he said. 'So do they seem to you to be telling the truth?' He was on the point of agreeing when the

[18] Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost* (Baltimore, 1998), 34.

laughter (*arrisione*) of Alypius made him more circumspect; he paused for a little and then said, 'Repeat your tricky little question.'

placentne, inquam, tibi noui Academici?—plurimum, inquit.—ergo uerum tibi uidentur dicere?—tum ille cum iam esset assensurus arrisione Alypii cautior factus haesit aliquantum et deinde: repete, inquit, rogatiunculam. (*c. Acad.* 2.7.16)

Alypius, of course, is laughing at the verbal catch which would force Licentius to assent to the notion that the Academics tell the truth which they deny can be found; Augustine uses the laughter to point up the contradiction, and portrays it as prompting Licentius instead to take refuge in the *probabile*. This is one of many moments which points the way to Augustine's self-referential joke at the end of the dialogue: if his discussion about the Academics proves false, 'I don't care: it's enough for me not to think that truth can't be discovered by a human being' (*nihil ad me, cui satis est iam non arbitrari non posse ab homine inueniri ueritatem*: *c. Acad.* 3.20.43). The dialogues, indeed, are replete with such self-referential lines—often greeted with laughter: *De Academicis* with jokes about truth, *De Ordine*—predictably—with arch asides about the ordering of anything, down to the wax tablets on which the words are purportedly being recorded (e.g. *ord.* 2.1.2). This seems, again, to be a generic trait, but its tendency here is to add to the effect of intimate banter.

Trygetius and Licentius have set the tone for this banter early in *De Academicis*, and we are led to suppose that it means more than its face value.

If I'm not wrong, the right way for life is called wisdom [Trygetius suggests]. Then Licentius said: That definition seems absolutely ridiculous to me.—Perhaps, he said, but I'm making my enquiry little by little, so that *ratio* might prevail over your laughter; for nothing is more repellent than laughter which deserves to be laughed at.[19]

si enim non fallor, recta uia uitae sapientia nominatur.—tum Licentius: nihil mihi tam ridiculum quam ista definitio uidetur, inquit.—fortasse, ait ille; pedetemtim tamen quaeso, ut ratio praeueniat risum tuum; nihil enim est foedius risu inrisione dignissimo. (*c. Acad.* 1.5.13)

[19] We may note the way in which words for laughter can be nuanced by a prefix. *Inridere* is to mock; *subridere* tends also to have a negative or sarcastic connotation: compare the 'giggling' above (which might also be translated 'grimacing') with Claud. *in Eutr.* 2.108, or Juv. 2.38. *Arridere*, the most common verb after the unmarked *ridere*, generally indicates particularly warm engagement between two or more people—'smiling *at*' someone in a gesture of approval; this is why the description of Licentius (*beata u.* 2.15) *quasi stomachanter arridens*, 'laughing rather irritably', is startling. We shall discuss this more fully in Part Two.

Poor Trygetius later complains that as soon as any notion of his leaves port, it is promptly struck by a thousand shipwrecks! This sort of playfulness is an important part of the strategy of *De Academicis*. It leavens the philosophical content; it also sets the tone for a flexibility that Augustine will exploit in his themes. And it is surely good pedagogy.

Another apparent leitmotif of the dialogue is that of fear, and that might seem to act against the pedagogy of laughter. The interlocutors repeatedly express the fear of speaking rashly: for example, Trygetius declares that he will not squander words rashly (*temere* is a frequent word), or—a page or two later—feels that he has rashly conceded that Cicero was a wise man (*c. Acad.* 1.2.5; 1.3.8). But it soon emerges that the fear is mock-trepidation, merely a continuation of the joke in hand. Take the case of Alypius: 'I would like to help your side a bit, as my strength allows, if your portentous speech didn't terrify me; but I can easily put this fear to flight (!)' (*uellem quidem . . . ut meae uires patiuntur, auxiliari aliquatenus partibus uestris, nisi mihi omen uestrum terrori esset. sed hanc formidinem . . . facile fugem*: *c. Acad.* 2.8.21). Later, Augustine says that he hasn't dared to seek out the truth from which most learned and intelligent men (the *doctissimi* and *acutissimi*) were debarred—and then observes cheerfully that he's already made up his mind on the issue of whether the truth can be found, anyway (*c. Acad.* 2.9.23). When the company comes upon Licentius, who has slipped away from lunch without bothering to drink anything because he is so eager to pursue his poetry, Augustine mocks him mercilessly. 'He blushed, and went away to have a drink. He was very thirsty; and anyway, it gave him the opportunity of avoiding me, when I might have been about to say more—and sharper—things' (*erubuit ille discessitque, ut biberet. nam et multum sitiebat et occasio dabatur euitandi me plura fortasse atque asperiora dicturum*: *c. Acad.* 3.4.7). Remember that this is dedicated to Licentius' father!

The stage directions in the dialogue, especially the laughter, create the jaunty tone and perhaps do more than anything else to set off the work thematically, as well as formally, from Cicero's œuvre. Augustine has his eye on an audience all the time—why else would he trouble to record every shrug and wriggle?—and seems to be signalling: this is, at bottom, not a complicated matter; the truth does exist. His real attention is elsewhere.

Towards the end of *De Academicis*, in the section of *oratio recta*, Augustine indulges his audience with an extended parable. There are two travellers, each heading for the same place. One sets out believing

nobody; the other is 'too credulous'. (*c. Acad.* 3.15.34). They are stuck at a crossroads. The credulous one asks the first person who comes along—'a shepherd, or some sort of country chap' (*pastori uel cuipiam rusticano*)—for directions, and promptly follows the route indicated. His fellow-traveller mocks him for giving his assent so readily, and stays at the crossroads. Eventually 'a smooth city type' (*lautus quidam et urbanus*) comes along on horseback—one of those, says Augustine, popularly called 'charlatans', *samardoci*[20]—and authoritatively gives the wrong directions: 'he deceived and left' (*decepit atque abiit*), writes Augustine. The traveller reflects that 'this has the semblance of truth, and it's neither respectable nor profitable to hang idly around here' (*est ueri similis, et hic otiosum esse nec honestum nec utile est*); as a result, he is still casting about in the woods long after the 'too credulous' one is taking his ease at their destination.

Augustine spells out his parable, beginning his explanation with the quasi-biblical *uere uobis dicam*:[21]

> Truly I will say to you that when I think of these things I can scarcely contain my laughter: that through the Academics' words it somehow happens that the one who takes the true way, albeit by chance, is wrong, while the one who under the influence of probability [*probabiliter*] is led through trackless mountains and doesn't even find the area he's looking for seems not to be wrong.
>
> uere uobis dicam, cum ista cogitarem, risum tenere non potui, fieri per Academicorum uerba nescio quo modo, ut erret ille qui ueram uiam uel casu tenet, ille autem qui per auios montes probabiliter ductus est nec petitam regionem inuenit non uideatur errare. (*c. Acad.* 3.15.34)

The *probabiliter* is of course another in-joke about Academic doctrine: remember Licentius' cautious introduction of the notion of the *probabile* in response to Alypius' laughter, earlier in the dialogue (*c. Acad.* 2.7.16). Here too, laughter bubbles through the exchange. The mockery of the Academic traveller at his companion's credulity is answered by Augustine's laughter at the Academic's absurd privileging of method over results. The point is that the Academic didn't give his assent too willingly; to him, it didn't matter that he failed to get where he had planned to go. But Augustine's rich sense of the absurd is suddenly displaced:

[20] Not 'popularly' enough, unfortunately: this is one of only two occurrences of the word in Christian Latin literature, and 'charlatan' is Blaise's guess at a translation. The other occurrence is in the *Quaestiones Veteris et Noui Testamenti* long attributed to Augustine, now edited under 'Ambrosiaster': *quaest.* 114.4 (CSEL 50).

[21] A Lukan trope: *uere dico uobis* is repeatedly used to point a parable, where the other evangelists will use *amen (amen) dico uobis*.

At this point, I became more alert to those words, and I began to ponder the actual deeds and characters of [these] men. Then so many charges against them—and capital ones—came to mind, that I couldn't laugh: I was partly furious, partly sorrowful that incredibly learned and intelligent men should have become ensnared in such evil, shameful opinions.

hinc iam aduersum ista uerba uigilantior ipsa facta hominum et mores considerare coepi. tum uero tam multa mihi et tam capitalia in istos uenerunt in mentem, ut iam non riderem sed partim stomacharer partim dolerem homines doctissimos at acutissimos in tanta scelera sententiarum et flagitia deuolutos. (*c. Acad.* 3.15.34)

So the parody of Academic method becomes a serious matter. It is one thing to laugh at a deluded traveller, another thing to consider the ethical consequences of such delusion.

We should note, too, that embedded in this parable are the positive solutions that Augustine will pursue at Cassiciacum—though Augustine himself does not indicate them at the time. The parable proves to be programmatic. First, it is no coincidence that the man who gives correct directions is a mere shepherd. He is greeted with *salue, frugi homo!* and we may look to *De Beata Vita* for the cardinal role in the blessed life which is suddenly given to *frugalitas*, temperance: 'With good reason have many people said that temperance is the mother of all the virtues' (*merito etiam uirtutum omnium matrem multi frugalitatem esse dixerunt*: *beata u.* 4.31).[22] If we involve *De Beata Vita*, the man's status as a *rusticanus* is notable too: remember Lartidianus and Rusticus, Augustine's relations, chosen as participants for their common sense. The shepherd's presumably humble origins are relevant: the point is that he looks like an implausible source of accurate directions. The trajectory at Cassiciacum in general is to become more inclusive, to move away from assumptions based exclusively on privilege of class and education about whose word 'counts': this is anticipated here. Finally, we note that the correct way arrived at 'by chance' (*casu*) is recognized as a valid eventuality. In this set-piece, Augustine is beginning to prise open a closed epistemology, where a certain process of ratiocination must be observed. He regrets, in the *Retractationes*, the role he gives to 'chance' in these early dialogues;[23] but we can see here that it is an important way of recognizing

[22] Augustine says that '*frugalitas* takes its name from *frux* (fruit)'; it is the opposite of *nequitia*, 'wickedness', on the grounds that the first is bound up with being, the second with not-being. 'Temperance', therefore, is only an approximate translation: the point of *frugalitas* is that one puts to good use such resources as one possesses.

[23] 'Chance' (*fortuna*) regretted at *retr.* 1.3.2a and 1.1.2a: *unde et illa uerba sunt, quae nulla religio dicere prohibet: forte, forsan, forsitan, fortasse, fortuitu, quod tamen totum ad diuinam reuocandum est prouidentiam.*

the places in which convention may be challenged. Augustine will later say that there is no such thing as chance, that credit should instead be given to the divine ordering of things: this, however, is an early indication that a faith-based epistemology is to come. As I wrote above, the truth does exist, according to Augustine; how one arrives at it is the matter in hand.

The way in which this parable is narrated, and its results played out, demonstrates a further purpose for Augustine's dramaturgy. As we have noted, the emotional responses are part of the 'documentary details' from which Augustine builds the impression of realism in his dialogues. Laughter, in particular, tends to mark significant moments—either benignly, or in the malign form of mockery. Here, too, laughter is Augustine's first response; but its transformation into rage and grief is significant. What he is trying to capture is the unquantifiable, the things which cannot be expressed in words, however cautiously they are arranged: the depiction of emotions is an important way of organizing that response. The Ciceronian dialogue gives some generic space in which to portray those emotions; Augustine has significantly expanded it. He has shown his readers that an emotional response is sometimes not just fitting but necessary, and that it may drive moments of insight. And now we see the purpose in immediate terms: after the parable of the two travellers, we launch into a full-scale challenge to Cicero himself.

Using the Emotions

The challenge to Cicero is even couched in Ciceronian language: *te te consulo, Marce Tulli* . . . (*c. Acad.* 3.16.35). Will a young man who espouses Academic doctrines use them to justify adultery with another's wife? He can simply plead that he hasn't assented to the deed as true—it is merely probable. Augustine may well have had in mind the passage of Terence's *Eunuchus* which he uses in the *Confessiones*, in which a young man is inspired by Jove's antics to justify his own adultery; there is a verbal echo from the same play a few lines later.[24] But it is more significant that, in the scenario of the dialogue, Augustine's main interlocutors are two young men for whose spiritual development he has begun to hold

[24] *conf.* 1.16.26, citing Ter. *Eun.* 583–91; the 'verbal echo' in *c. Acad.* 3.16.35 is *liquet deierare*, which recalls *Eun.* 331.

himself responsible. He continues: 'we are dealing with the character and life of young men: that's the life for which those writings of yours [Cicero's] are wholly preoccupied with preparing and instructing them' (*de adulescentium moribus uitaque tractamus, cui educandae atque instituendae omnes illae litterae tuae uigilauerunt*: *c. Acad.* 3.16.35). If the adulterous young man could find Cicero to defend him, perhaps Cicero would argue that he merely seemed to himself to have done the deed. The husband—foolish man (*homo fatuus*)—may litigate anyway. Cicero himself is brought on as an actor: 'let him lay aside the mask of the patron and put on that of the consoling philosopher' (*ponet . . . personam patroni et philosophi consolatoris suscipiet*). And so on.

Sed uos me iocari arbitramini—'but you think that I am joking', says Augustine. (How comprehensive is 'you' here?) He uses the favourite Ciceronian device of *praeteritio*:

> I am silent about murder, parricide, sacrilege, absolutely all the shameful sins which can happen or be planned, which are defended in few words and (which is worse) before the wisest of judges: I didn't consent to them, and therefore I did no wrong; but how could I not be doing what seemed probable?
>
> taceo de homicidiis parricidiis sacrilegiis omnibusque omnino quae fieri aut cogitari possunt flagitiis ac facinoribus, quae paucis uerbis et, quod est grauius, apud sapientissimos iudices defenduntur: nihil consensi et ideo non erraui; quomodo autem non facerem quod probabile uisum est? (*c. Acad.* 3.16.36)

As with his parable of the travellers, Augustine dwells on the ethical consequences of the Academic withholding of assent. The savage sequitur to 'but you think that I am joking' leaves his readers in no doubt that he is propelled by his rage and sorrow.

Suddenly, we see how it has helped Augustine's argument in this dialogue to keep the dramatic conceit so very much alive. When he elicits an emotional response from his readers, it is not merely a bid for verisimilitude; it is a crucial argumentative stance. The introduction of the various interlocutors gives context to the prosopopoeia when Cicero is brought on to answer the charges against him; the emotions of the audience (within and, by implication, outside the text) open up a space for their engagement with the issues at hand. And when the leisurely, joking façade is dropped to reveal the deep ethical concerns beneath, the effect is more striking because the previous scene-setting has been so convincing.

It is immaterial, for Augustine's purposes, that this is a parody of Cicero's actual intellectual position. What matters is that he has thought

through the moral consequences of the Academic position taken *ad absurdum*; he has portrayed his interlocutors testing its appeal; and he has finally dismissed it on grounds which have nothing to do with the internal logic of the arguments. As we remarked earlier, he tipped his hand half-way through the dialogue: he couldn't even have embarked upon the conversation if he had not already made up his mind about the possibility of attaining truth. So we can conclude that the success of this dialogue—and this may, indeed, be argued of the others at Cassiciacum—is due not so much to its intellectual trajectory as to its portrayal of process;[25] to the subtler messages delivered by who is included and how they are depicted as acting and reacting. The emotional responses, especially, prepare the ground for a type of argumentation that leaves more to the human actors, and more space for what cannot be controlled. The value attached to uncertainty is nicely summed up in a remark which Augustine makes to Trygetius in *De Ordine*: 'I don't understand how you can say these things if you haven't seen them, and I don't understand how you could have seen them; *therefore* I suspect that they are both true and profound' (*nam ea dicitis, quae nec quomodo dicantur non uisa nec quomodo ea uideatis intellego; ita ea et uera et alta esse suspicor*: *ord.* 2.4.12). Being alert to uncertainty in its turn leaves space—eventually—for God.

If this thoroughgoing 'staging' of the dialogues is such an effective way of leaving space for God, why, we may ask, does Augustine write no more fully-realized pieces like this after Cassiciacum? To be sure, he continues for a while to write in dialogic form, but in a more schematic mode, and within a couple of years, he has abandoned formal dialogues altogether.[26]

First, Augustine gets less and less diffident about 'leaving space for God'. We observed that clearly one of his reasons for choosing the genre of the philosophical dialogue for his literary productions at Cassiciacum was to avoid frightening his patrons. (Those patrons may have consisted only of Romanianus and Verecundus at this stage; if Augustine hoped to extend the group, caution would be all the more desirable.) This was the way in which a promising young man ought to celebrate his *otium liberale*. The spiritual material takes one almost by surprise; it is inserted suddenly, and under-justified—think of the

[25] Which of course takes us back to Hadot, *Exercices spirituels* (Ch. 1, n. 25).

[26] For a more generous view of Augustine's commitment to the dialogue form, see Therese Fuhrer, 'Augustin: un homme du dialogue', in *Augustinus Afer* (Fribourg, 2003) 183–91.

sudden appeal to the 'authority of Christ' at the end of *De Academicis*, which seems to have made Hermogenianus so uncomfortable.[27] And many of the undercurrents which I have traced as significant—particularly the flexibility afforded by the choice and depiction of the participants—only gradually emerge as such. But as time goes on, Augustine no longer needs the obliquity and misdirection that the staging technique affords him. He can afford to be more straightforward about his themes. And we should remember, as his commentators so often have not, what a cumbersome construction this staged realism is. The moments of laughter, shrugging, bickering are fleeting; these exchanges could not possibly have been set down in real time. The verisimilitude on which the intellectual developments of these dialogues rely, and which contributes so substantially to their charm, depends on the slow accretion of 'documentary detail'. Only when we read dialogues without that accretion of detail—or, still more, the purported notes for dialogues, like the *De Dialectica*—do we realize how bald their composition would be without it, and how time-consuming its insertion must have been. At Cassiciacum, the staging of the dialogues becomes a delightful way to symbolize the leisurely pace of the time, as well as subtly hedging Augustine's intellectual bets. We shall see in the ensuing chapters how far the flexibility afforded by this staging can take its impresario.

Early in *De Academicis*, Augustine lines up the participants in the debate. Navigius, it seems, is so far on Licentius' 'side',

> . . . and I look forward greatly to seeing what sort of supporters of your opinions you can be. For it is an important subject, most worthy of careful discussion.—If it's an important subject, said Licentius, it needs important men (*si res magna est . . . magnos uiros desiderat*).—Don't look for people whom it would be difficult to find anywhere, I said, especially in this villa; instead, explain why that [account] was proposed by you (not rashly, I think) and on what rationale it might seem good to you. For when the most important subjects (*maximae res*) are inquired into by insignificant people, they generally make the people important too.
>
> . . . magnopere specto quales sententiarum uestrarum patroni esse possitis. res enim magna est et diligenti discussione dignissima.—si res magna est, ait Licentius, magnos uiros desiderat.—noli quaerere, inquam, praesertim in hac uilla, quod ubiuis gentium reperire difficile est, et potius explica, cur id quod abs te non temere, ut opinor, prolatum est et qua tibi ratione uideatur. nam et maximae res cum a paruis quaeruntur, magnos eos solent efficere. (*c. Acad.* 1.2.6)

[27] We can counterpose Alypius' reported reluctance (*conf.* 9.4.7) that Christ be mentioned at all—but cf. Ch. 4, n. 17, for another interpretation of this episode.

This, then, is the first broadside to Cicero, delivered just lines after Trygetius has quoted the first lines of the Hortensius, *beati certe esse uolumus*, we certainly wish to be blessed. Augustine makes a point of proclaiming that he is departing from Ciceronian practice: the participants in his dialogues are 'insignificant people'. But they are illuminated by their subject matter. This is the possibility that he is opening up in these dialogues: he is holding out greatness to those who would normally be passed over, for they can attain it through treating of great things. This he accomplishes above all, as we shall see in Part Two, through the persona of his mother.

This passage also makes clear, however, the renegotiation of the past which is crucial to Augustine's project—not just in his contravention of Cicero, excellent representative figure though he might be, but in more general ways. It is no coincidence that Licentius has just invoked the presence of *maiores nostri*—which may be construed as 'our ancestors' but also, of course, 'greater men than we'. Augustine needs to find a way of shaking off the reverence for his intellectual *maiores* which so far in his career has served him so well; he accomplishes it in the first instance from within the parameters that they have set, by stretching the generic boundaries as far as possible. In every way, he slyly subverts the conventions. The participants are humble, and all too human. The artifice of the product is highlighted by the emphasis on how—and whether—it is recorded. The conventions of staging are used to direct attention to the importance of non-verbal responses, and to begin to break away from the primacy of conventional reasoning. Then Augustine completes the manoeuvre by claiming that the players are lent glory by their subject matter.

Notwithstanding the nostalgic choice of genre, these dialogues are tantalizingly experimental. They commemorate in text an extraordinary process of searching; the emphasis on the human limitations of the participants makes the dialogues feel convincingly provisional. So convincing is their 'staging' that it is hard not to use words like 'real' and 'authentic' when writing about them. But in fact, as I have shown, they hover on the boundaries between truth and fiction. And on those boundaries a new set of possibilities is revealed. The trajectory at Cassiciacum consists of Augustine's creative exploration of those possibilities.

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Part Two

Women Doing Philosophy

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3

Theology for Lunch

We have seen how the Cassiciacum dialogues present Augustine to us in a liminal state: he is on the threshold between his secular success and his commitment to Christianity; between the Italy that symbolizes that success and the Africa that will represent his Christian homecoming; between the catechumenate and baptism. We have suggested that he chooses the genre of the philosophical dialogue for his first public statements as a would-be Christian to encapsulate that sense of liminality: it looks back to his role of teacher; it reflects his mastery of the classical milieu; and yet, at the same time, it provides an opportunity to argue with his philosophical predecessors on their own ground, and to exploit the open-endedness of their generic conventions for his own purposes. Even within this genre, Augustine emphasizes its liminal properties. He comments repeatedly on the process by which the dialogues come to be recorded, emphasizing the presence of the pen or the *notarius*, and on paralinguistic phenomena—laughter, glances, arrivals, and exits; and the effect, paradoxically, is to make the reader more aware of the mutability of his words, and of the slippery status, midway between reality and fiction, of his interlocutors. The dialogues are, in many ways, staged events; and the staging is, again, a significant component in their liminal nature.

Now we begin to consider the ways in which Augustine uses the flexibility of his genre. Our starting point is a simple one: the fact that he chooses, somewhat counter-generically, to include his mother Monnica in these works. However, this leads—as we shall see—to a variety of interesting and far from simple developments, as soon as we ask: *why* did he include his mother? What is her function in the dialogues? And what are the theological implications of the role she performs?

The Erasure of Monnica

The *De Beata Vita* seems like Monnica's dialogue.[1] She is present throughout the work, and makes several pointed comments. It comes as some surprise, then, that when a scholar calculates the number of speeches allotted to each of the participants in the Cassiciacum dialogues, he reports that Monnica contributes only six speeches to *De Beata Vita*.—This may be compared, for example, with 81 speeches for Augustine, or 18 for Licentius.[2]—He observes, nevertheless, that Monnica's status in this dialogue is exceptional.[3] It turns out that his instincts are better than his calculations: Monnica actually makes her sixth contribution to the dialogue less than half way through (at *beata u.* 2.12). Not only does she speak almost twenty times in the course of *De Beata Vita*, many of her interventions are instrumental in driving forward the theological development of the dialogue[4]—this small, but significant, interlude in the composition of *De Academicis*.[5]

Perhaps, however, this scholar has done us a favour of sorts; for he has indirectly alerted us to two issues. The first, obviously, is the issueof Monnica's erasure in the modern scholarly tradition, not just from this dialogue *tout simple*, but from the role which Augustine himself portrays her as playing in his intellectual and theological development. He later seems to recast this role in a more negative light, with Monnica as the example of embarrassingly simple piety with which we are, perhaps, over-familiar;[6] and

[1] As observed by McWilliam, 'Cassiciacum Autobiography', 29. For Monnica's significance, see further (e.g.) Emilien Lamirande, 'Quand Monique, la mère d'Augustin, prend la parole', *Signum Pietatis* (Würzburg, 1989), 3–19 (treating her contributions as directly reported); Ragnar Holte, 'Monica, "the Philosopher" ', *Augustinus*, 39 (1994), 293–316; and the important, if jaded, reading of André Mandouze, 'Monique à Cassiciacum', *REL* 47 bis (1969), 131–41.

[2] Manfred Hoffmann, *Der Dialog bei den christlichen Schriftstellern der ersten vier Jahrhunderte* (Berlin, 1966), 144: 'Monika [spricht] 6[mal]'. Compare with 11 speeches for Navigius, 18 for Licentius, 21 for Trygetius, 1 (!) for Lartidianus—and 81 for Augustine. He does not mention Adeodatus' important interventions—in fact, he observes (144) that 'Rusticus und Adeodatus sind Statisten', walk-on parts.

[3] Hoffmann, *Dialog*, 146. Contrast with (e.g.) Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader* (Cambridge, Mass./London, 1996), 116: Monnica 'plays no significant part in the discussions in the "philosophical dialogues" '.

[4] Noted by Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man, A.D. 386–391* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 229—but grudgingly: 'Here a liberal amount of fiction may well have entered into Augustine's account.' Why here more than elsewhere?

[5] As Augustine himself tells us in *retr.* 1.2 (*librum de beata uita non post libros de Academicis, sed inter illos ut scriberem contigit*).

[6] Literature taking its cue from Augustine himself: see e.g. *conf.* 3.11.19–12.21 (Augustine as the *filius istarum lacrimarum*); and the discussion of *conf.* 8.12.30 in Ch. 4.

his commentators have been eager to follow suit in this predictable scenario, whether they cast the dichotomy as an ignorant and overbearing mother controlling her devoted son, or as an over-intellectualizing male brought to true Christianity by female patience and prayer.[7] But in the works produced at Cassiciacum, Monnica's role is considerably more nuanced; and a corrective reading revolves not merely round issues of quantification, but round a reappraisal of her every contribution to the debate.

The second issue to which we are by chance alerted is broader than the treatment of Monnica alone, though still intimately linked with her portrayal. Questions which have a bearing on gender are significant throughout the Cassiciacum dialogues, as we shall see, not in *De Beata Vita* alone: issues such as the appropriateness of women participating at all in philosophical dialogue are bandied to and fro. Augustine, as so often, pre-empts his readers by pointing out the significance of this particular theme himself,[8] so it has, predictably, garnered some attention in the past. What has been entirely ignored, however, is the presence in all these early writings of gendered *themes*: issues raised, above all, by the embodied self and its characteristic activities.[9] The apparent erasure of Monnica is symptomatic of a far more general blindness to important aspects of the Cassiciacum dialogues.

The way in which gender both forms an undercurrent, and obtrudes explicitly into the dialogues, is illustrative (once again) of their liminal nature. Notwithstanding centuries of interpretation founded on binary constructs, the ideas in these works are extraordinarily resistant to organization in a dualist scheme. Experimentation with ideas of gender, of the inclusion of women, their activities, their affectivities, is a crucial part of this resistance. It is unlikely to have been a conscious strategy on Augustine's part, to use this technique to question his intellectual heritage, and to throw off easy 'then and now' or 'us and them' formulations; but it was, as we shall see, the logical concomitant of his reflection on the significance of the religious tradition embodied by his mother.

[7] The *locus classicus* for the image of the overbearing mother is surely Rebecca West, *St. Augustine* (New York, 1933)—herself not entirely blameless in this regard!—but she is echoed, in more modulated tones, by (e.g.) Brown, *Augustine*, ch. 2 (esp. 18) and 408. As for 'female patience and prayer', see Margaret More O'Ferrall, 'Monica, the mother of Augustine: a reconsideration', *RechAug* 10 (1974), 23–43; Holte, 'Monica, "the Philosopher" '.

[8] *ord.* 1.11.31; see discussion of this passage in the next chapter.

[9] See Rist, *Augustine*, esp. 94–110, on Augustine and the body; Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster*, ch. 6. The integration of the body into a Christian/philosophical worldview at Cassiciacum is *already* an issue for Augustine.

How literally, in fact, does Augustine's mother represent Christianity in these dialogues? McWilliam sees her identity as 'twofold: superficially she speaks as the historical mother presented so vividly in the Confessions, but, profoundly and more importantly, *she is the church*.'[10] As Mother Church, her every contribution is what one might expect the Church personified to say. McWilliam points, *inter alia*, to the fact that Monnica is not named in these dialogues as support for this reading: she is only ever referred to as mother, *mater*.

The interpretation is compelling; but it leaves out of account other possible symbolic facets of Monnica's presence. It also leaves unexplained many of the nuances around Monnica's inclusion in the dialogues *as a female being*. She is, remarkably, portrayed as a woman engaged in normal human relations—even had Augustine's immediate audience not already been aware of the fact, he makes it explicit that she is his mother, and that she joins not one, but two of her sons, *and* her grandson, in these discussions. Now women are allowed to 'do philosophy', but only under strictly controlled conditions: we may call it the 'Diotima effect'. Think of Diotima in the *Symposium* of Plato, a quasi-mythical figure who is detached from the main participants in that dialogue by a multitude of distancing devices—her speech is merely reported, and embedded in further indirect speech—and not least, ultimately, by the implicit dismissal of her words.[11] Think also of the two-dimensional cut-out of a wife that is Porphyry's Marcella; of the virgins of Methodius' *Symposium*, gathered, fortuitously, under a 'chaste-tree', who present an oddly defeminized account of virginity;[12] of the paragon that is Gregory of Nyssa's sister Macrina in his dialogue *De Anima et Resurrectione*.[13] Monnica is a far more rounded figure; she is

[10] McWilliam, 'Cassiciacum Autobiography', 29–30; my emphasis. Elsewhere, she says that Monnica 'stands for the church' (20).

[11] See Luce Irigaray, 'Sorcerer Love', in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (London, 1993); David M. Halperin, 'Why is Diotima a woman?', in Halperin *et al.* (eds.), *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (Princeton, 1990); a brief, but well-contextualized, reading in Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 141–2. See further my Note on Method.

[12] Meth. *Sym.* praef. 7–8; though we may note that Pl. *Phaedr.*, too, takes place under a 'chaste-tree': 230b3. See the excellent discussion by Maud Burnett McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins* (New York, 2003), 53–9.

[13] On Macrina, see Susanna Elm, '*Virgins of God*' (1994), esp. 100–2; Catharine P. Roth expressly casts Macrina as a Diotima figure: 'Platonic and Pauline Elements', *VChr* 46 (1992), 20–30, as does Georgia Frank, 'Macrina's Scar', *JECS* 8 (2000), 530. Umberto Mattioli makes a careful, if inconclusive, comparison of Macrina and Monnica: 'Macrina e Monica: Temi del *bíos* cristiano in due "vite" di donna del IV secolo', in *In Verbis Verum Amare* (Florence, 1980). Virginia Burrus has recently explored the theme: *The Sex Lives of Saints* (Philadelphia, 2004), ch. 2.

properly integrated into the lifelike, and lively, scenarios of these dialogues. She, and her contributions, cannot be simply hived off as 'symbolic'.

A certain reticence seems often to govern Augustine in mentioning members of his family.[14] (We have already mentioned the fact that he does not depict *himself* being called upon by name in the dialogues.[15]) His refusal to name his partner in the *Confessions* is notorious.[16] His son, Adeodatus, is named in the introduction to *De Beata Vita*; but when he makes his most significant contribution to the debate (*beata u.* 2.12), his words are attributed simply to *puer… ille minimus omnium*, 'that smallest boy of all [present]' (he would then have been about thirteen).[17] If the significance of not-naming is symbolic, what is being symbolized here—when the least of the participants makes (as he does) the most complex suggestion? A notion of *multum in parvo*? There could be a Biblical reference: 'for the least among you all, he is the greatest.'[18] But we may simply conclude that Augustine does not need to name someone to express approval or assent: periphrasis may do as well or better.

Monnica is, in fact, named only once in Augustine's entire œuvre—after her death. In a passage at the end of Book 9 of the *Confessiones*, Augustine prays that God should inspire all who read his account 'to remember at your altar Monnica, your maidservant, along with Patricius who was once her husband, through whose flesh you somehow brought me into this life' (*ut… meminerint ad altare tuum Monnicae, famulae tuae, cum Patricio, quondam eius coniuge, per quorum carnem introduxisti me in hanc uitam, quamadmodum nescio*: *conf.* 9.13.37.).[19] Augustine has passed through one of the most transformative experiences of his life with her—the transcendent moment at Ostia—and has never named her.

But is that really so odd? Even in these informal times, people usually refer to their mothers by words indicating their relationship—'mum' or 'my mother'—not by their names; of the literary evidence from the

[14] Note O'Donnell on naming, commentary to *conf.* 4.4.7.

[15] See above, p. 46 and n. 12.

[16] Wills, *Augustine*, sidesteps the problem by calling her 'Una' (justified, 16), which has the advantage of according her her own narrative space, but the disadvantage of masking Augustine's choice.

[17] Hoffmann, incidentally, ignores or overlooks this 'speech' as well.

[18] Luke 9: 48, *Nam qui minor est inter uos omnes, hic maior est*. Another possible reference is Matt. 25: 40, 'inasmuch as you have done this to one of the least (*minimis*) of my brothers, you have done it to me'.

[19] See further below on the significance of *nescio*. Compare also the intertext cited for this passage by O'Donnell, *conf.* 1.6.7: *quid enim est quod volo dicere, domine, nisi quia nescio unde venerim huc, in istam dico vitam mortalem an mortem vitalem? nescio.*

ancient world, Dickey observes, 'at all periods and in all genres the standard address from sons or daughters of any age to their parents is *pater* "father" to fathers, *mater* "mother" to mothers, and *parentes* "parents" to both parents.'[20] (Augustine's father Patricius is named only twice in Augustine's works; one instance is that in the passage above, the other is a little earlier in the same book of the *Confessiones*; both are in the course of the 'biography' of Monnica subsequent to her death.[21] He is generally referred to simply as *pater*.) The effect of naming by relationship is to invoke both the closeness and the respect inherent (ideally) in the interactions between parent and child. There is no doubt that Augustine too wishes to capture both of these sensations in his references to Monnica as *mater*: we shall see, indeed, that they are crucial to his project at Cassiciacum, and to his implicit plea for the validity of his mother's interpellations. Why would he wish to distance himself from this relationship by using her public name—the name by which anyone could call her?

That Monnica *is* named after her death is, however, entirely congruent with fourth-century practice. Tomb inscriptions for women, both the married and the unmarried, almost invariably give their names,[22] and the valediction to Monnica in the *Confessiones*—the injunction to readers to remember her at the altar—is tantamount to an epitaph. She has, after all, abandoned her earnest wish to be buried alongside Patricius (*conf.* 9.11.28), and has finally realized that 'nothing is far from God' (*nihil longe est deo*): she is buried in Italy, to which Augustine is never to return, and far from her husband's African grave.[23] How appropriate, then, that Augustine should inscribe her name, and that of Patricius, in the memories of his readers; that, instead of commemorating his parents at a particular tomb in a specific place, they may be

[20] Eleanor Dickey, *Latin Forms of Address* (Oxford, 2002), 270; with reference to the naming in *conf.*, note also 271, 'It… seems that parents were probably not addressed by name in conversational Latin, but that an absent parent could occasionally be addressed by name in speeches and literary works for clarity or dramatic effect.'

[21] *conf.* 9.9.19.

[22] Examples may readily be gleaned from *ICUR*: e.g. 251 (from 374–5), for a wife, Petronia; 205 (from 368), for a daughter, Victorina; 281 (from 379, and therefore almost precisely contemporaneous with this dialogue), for the 'pure and sweetest wife, Felicitas' (*sanctae ac dulcissimae coniugi Felicitati*). 210 (from 369) is unusual in leaving unnamed a *puella benigna* who has died at the age of 16; 211 (from the same year) is erected for her husband by a woman who names herself as Agrippina.

[23] If the inscription found at Ostia in 1945 is genuinely Monnica's epitaph, then she is not named there either: for the text, see Wolfgang Wischmeyer, 'Zum Epitaph der Monica', *RQA* 70 (1975), 34.

remembered at any Christian altar, at any time. Nothing is far from God.

At Cassiciacum, however, Monnica is still very much alive, and a significant player in the proceedings. Augustine's conscious revisionism in these dialogues is indisputable: the insistence on including attributions to *mater nostra*, 'my mother', both intensifies and personalizes those interventions. If Monnica is indeed a crucial part of Augustine's revisionism, we may ask: is it his audience which Augustine is gradually breaking in to this 'womanly influence'—or himself? Is that process made smoother if the *pietas* owed to his mother is brought into the foreground, rather than a more objectifying relationship denoted by the use of her given name?[24]

Food for the Mind

The party of discutants convenes for *De Beata Vita* on Augustine's birthday, in the baths (*beata u.* 1.6). The venue might be thought not to be suitable for mixed company—though they have gone 'to sit', and not to bathe—but no: first to be introduced is *nostra mater*, my mother.[25] Augustine says explicitly that he will not hesitate to make the participants known *by name* to the dedicatee, Theodorus—but, as we have seen, Monnica is not accorded her own. She is, however, given a brief description: 'to whom I believe that I owe my entire life'(*cuius merito credo esse omne, quod uiuo*: *beata u.* 1.6).[26] This could be merely the most mundane of statements: mothers give life to their children. But why make it explicit? The banal biological fact is understood when she is introduced as *nostra mater*. Her originary force is acknowledged—as well, surely, as the respect due to the most senior member of the party—when she is introduced 'first and foremost'. Note also Monnica's relevance to the *dies natalis* of Augustine: surely, she has a particular right to be present on such a day. (He was still emphasizing the significance of this dialogue taking place on his birthday forty years later, in

[24] Be that as it may, I shall continue to use her name in this account: to avoid it would seem very mannered in a twenty-first century context in English, however fitting it may have been in Latin in the fourth!

[25] Contrast *ep.* 211.13, the rule for the convent: at least three women must go together to the baths (*nec eant ad balneas . . . minus quam tres*).

[26] Green's *meriti* corrected to *merito*; the sense is still very difficult. Compare with the 'epitaph' from the *Confessions* quoted above, which (*a*) gives due credit to Patricius as well (*quorum*); (*b*) emphasizes the role of the flesh in generation—a theme Augustine sidesteps here.

his *Retractationes*.) The parenthesis then develops that idea, to lay claim not just to Monnica's status as mother, but to the peculiar relevance of her presence for a dialogue explicitly concerned with the *beata uita*, with how to live. It is due to her that Augustine is in a position to discuss the *beata uita* at all. And as the dialogue progresses, it will be seen that she is responsible in a far fuller sense for the fact that Augustine 'lives'.

The little aside insisting on his mother's progenitive role also hints at what will be the principal unifying metaphor of *De Beata Vita*, that of eating, feeding, and the preparation of dishes. Augustine has already specified that the party gathered after a lunch that was kept light, 'so that their acuity should in no way be impeded' (*ut . . . nihil ingeniorum impediretur*: *beata u.* 1.6). The idea of food—and the mundane necessity of eating—as an impediment to intellectual activity accompanies Monnica's first arrival in the Cassiciacum dialogues, when she urges the participants in for lunch, apparently so forcefully 'that there was no chance of talking' (*ut uerba faciendi locus non esset*: *c. Acad.* 2.5.13).[27] As with the statement about his mother giving him life, why would Augustine bother to insert it if it were not, in some way, significant to him at the time of writing? This ungracious image of a mother disrupting the important conversational space of the men is, as we shall see, radically transformed in the course of the dialogues, beginning with *De Beata Vita*.[28]

In general, as we noted in Part One, the participants in *De Beata Vita* are an extraordinarily ill-assorted group (*beata u.* 1.6). Added to the family members already mentioned (Augustine's brother, Navigius, and his own 'extremely promising' son, Adeodatus), there are his students, Trygetius and Licentius, and his cousins, Lartidianus and Rusticus—who have, we are told, no formal schooling at all, but whom Augustine wished to be present for the sake of their 'common sense' (*sensus communis*).[29] This 'common sense' represents an instinctive

[27] The verb describing Monnica's efforts here is a very forceful one, 'trudere'. At that lunch, too, the participants eat just enough to assuage their hunger, thereby demonstrating their *continentia* and establishing themselves as good philosophers in a traditional mode. See under *abstinentia–continentia* in *Aug-Lex*; also *enkrateia* in *RAC*, and cf. *sol.* 1.10.17 on bodily pleasures, including food and drink: *tantum ab ea peto, quantum in ualetudinis opem conferri potest*.

[28] Cf. John Henderson's reading of Plato's *Symposium*: 'The Life and Soul of the Party: Plato, *Symposium*', in Sharrock and Morales (eds.), *Intratextuality: Greek and Roman Textual Relations* (Oxford 2000), 287–324. He observes near the beginning (290), 'gentlemen and their club are seldom parted: what reticulations of power have *not* embraced the cultural poetics and politics of this postprandial sociality? (Ask Philosophy—and feel uncomfortable.)'

[29] Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 23, points out that introducing them in these terms 'without blush or reproach . . . signaled that one was stepping outside the culture of secular prestige.'

feel for human feelings and priorities—appropriate, once again, to a dialogue on the *beata uita*. But notice two things: first, these 'rustic' cousins contribute almost nothing to the dialogue; second, the properties attributed to them are precisely those generally attibuted to Monnica—uneducated, instinctive, down-to-earth. It seems that the 'womanly' attributes have been shifted from Augustine's mother to less significant figures. What is the effect of this rhetorical sleight of hand? By emphasizing the lack of education of *other* participants, not Monnica, Augustine seems already to be validating her presence in the dialogue, and her potential contributions to it. She, too, would not have 'endured the attentions of a *grammaticus*': but it is not, for the purpose of this conversation, the most important thing about her. Nor is the dumb 'common sense' evinced by the cousins. She is given a more positive role.

As the dialogue begins, the topic of nourishment immediately asserts itself. It is first established that food is necessary for the body; then the question is posed of whether there is a particular form of nourishment proper to the soul. Monnica is silent during the discussion of corporeal food—this is, notably, *not* appropriated as the particular sphere of the only female participant; but when Augustine poses his question about the food of the soul, she is the first to answer: 'I believe it's obvious that the soul is nourished on nothing other than the understanding and knowledge of things' (*plane, inquit mater, nulla re alia credo ali animam quam intellectu rerum atque scientia*: *beata u.* 2.8).[30] This authoritative intervention sets the tone for Monnica's participation in the dialogue more generally. Her first word is *plane*, 'obviously'; and repeatedly, as here, she is portrayed as cutting to the heart of the matter. Moreover, it is in the spiritual and cerebral realms, not the corporeal, that she claims her primary authority. The terms for 'mind' and 'soul' are not systematically distinguished in these dialogues: the primary distinction drawn is between material and metaphysical spheres of activity. So Monnica's authority automatically extends rather beyond the 'simple piety' which she is normally taken to represent: it will cover mental processes, as well as religious belief. When Trygetius presumes to doubt her response, Monnica points out that he himself demonstrated its truth at luncheon: 'Where was your *mind*, when it wasn't paying attention while you were eating? . . . The mind is fed on that sort of banquet, its own thoughts and

[30] On the associations of the 'food of the soul' metaphor, see Gillian Clark, 'Fattening the Soul: Christian Asceticism and Porphyry on Abstinence', *SP* 35 (2001), 41–51.

speculations—provided it can gather anything by those means' (*ubi igitur erat animus tuus, quo tempore illud te uescente non adtendebat? . . . et talibus epulis animus pascitur, id est theoriis et cogitationibus suis, si per eas aliquid percipere possit*: *beata u.* 2.8).

The proviso hints at an emphasis on 'its *own* thoughts' (*cogitationibus suis*)—and the limitations of one's own thoughts (and consequent need to look beyond them to God).[31] But Augustine, in the dialogical present, is not yet prepared to explore this sequence; instead, notwithstanding the objections of the others, he proceeds to develop the part of his mother's proviso which reflects on the receptivity of the mind: the minds of learned men are much 'fuller and greater' (*beata u.* 2.8).—He moves off at a slight tangent, to discuss the appropriate types of food for different types of mind, and the potential for exploring the notion of fullness (or receptivity) is, for the time being, shelved.

It turns out, in any case, that it is the notion of food and its preparation which Augustine wishes to develop.

> . . . I think that on my birthday—since we've agreed that a human being contains two parts, a body and a soul (*anima*)—I should produce a rather more sumptuous luncheon not only for our bodies but for our souls as well. If you're hungry, I shall lay out what this lunch might be. For if I try to feed you when you're bored and unwilling, my effort will be in vain, and I should rather pray that you should desire that [incorporeal] sort of feast instead of those for the body. This will happen, if your minds (*animi*) are healthy; for sick minds—just as we see in illnesses of the body—refuse and reject their own food.
>
> arbitror die natali meo, quoniam duo quaedam esse in homine conuenit inter nos, id est corpus et animam, non me prandium paulo lautius corporibus nostris solum sed animis etiam exhibere debere. quod autem hoc sit prandium, si esuritis, proferam. nam si uos inuitos et fastidientes alere conabor, frustra operam insumam magisque uota facienda sunt, ut tales epulas potius quam illas corporis desideretis. quod eueniet, si sani animi uestri fuerint; aegri enim, sicut in morbis ipsius corporis uidemus, cibos suos recusant et respuunt. (*beata u.* 2.9)

On the day commemorating Augustine's birth, and in his mother's presence, he appropriates her previous role: he is to summon them into lunch, providing food for the minds of his audience—if they're ready and willing to eat it.[32] It is hardly unknown for the principal participant in a philosophical dialogue to play a female role, in tacit

[31] Is there an echo of Rom. 1: 21, *sed euanuerunt in cogitationibus suis*?

[32] A much stronger reading than the claim of the *Aug-Lex* that the banquet metaphor creates 'une atmosphère d'allégorie'. Summoning guests to eat is generally the role of a (male) slave: see D'Arms, 'Slaves at Roman Convivia', and Rossiter, 'Convivium and Villa in Late Antiquity', both in William J. Slater (ed.), *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor, 1991), 171–83 and 199–214 respectively.

recognition of the association of women with nurturing and with the ultimate creativity of childbirth—one thinks of Socrates playing the midwife in *Theaetetus*, for example.[33] What is very unusual indeed, however, is that he should appropriate that role *in the presence of a female participant*—never mind his own mother. The stage is set for a double displacement of sorts. Augustine is embodying both the gentlemanly role of intellectual and the underclass role of provider (not necessarily female—but can one envisage a gentleman in the kitchen?). In that case, what role will be left for his mother to play? Even in her earliest interventions, we have seen that it is unlikely that she will appropriate any sort of traditional female role *tout simple*. If she is to be any sort of mentor, she is likely to do something rather different from representing mere womanly common sense.

After Augustine's exhortation, everyone promises to devour what he has prepared (how, at this stage, could they not?). And the first thing he serves up is a truism from Cicero's *Hortensius*: we all want to be happy, *beati*. Everyone agrees. When he moves on to the question of whether everyone who has what he wants is happy, Monnica, once again, takes the lead: 'If he should want, and possess, good things, then he is happy; but if he should want bad things, even though he may possess them, he is pitiable' (*si bona . . . uelit et habeat, beatus est, si autem mala uelit, quamuis habeat, miser est*: *beata u.* 2.10). Augustine praises her extravagantly: 'Mother, you have captured the actual citadel of Philosophy' (*mater, arcem philosophiae tenuisti*)—and he quotes a passage of *Hortensius* to prove it, of which the burden is, 'it's less pitiable not to get what you want, than to want to get what you shouldn't'.[34] But the praise is qualified: Monnica doesn't express herself like Cicero—'there's no doubt, you lacked the words' (*tibi procul dubio uerba defuerunt*: *beata u.* 2.10).[35] Look at the power relations here. With one hand, Augustine gives Monnica the endorsement of a comparison with Cicero; with the other, he takes away her power of appropriate expression, asserting by implication his

[33] Pl. *Tht.* 148e–151d: Socrates repeatedly refers to himself as *maîa*, a word which can also mean simply 'mother'. On man as midwife or mother to ideas, see Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 141–3; Virginia Burrus, *'Begotten, not Made': Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, 2000), esp. the section on Athanasius of Alexandria (36–78).

[34] *Nec enim tam miserum est non adipisci quod uelis, quam adipisci uelle quod non oporteat.* Could Paulinus of Nola be thinking of this passage when he writes, epigrammatically, that it's stronger *spernere quod habeas quam non habere quod spernas* (*Ep.* 23.4)?

[35] This could be read as a compliment to Monnica on being more concise than Cicero—but given Augustine's subsequent treatment of her *uerba*, it seems unlikely.

status as (former) rhetor at Milan and arbiter of such issues. While promoted from lunch-time messenger, she still possesses no true *uerba faciendi locus*. She may have Cicero's insights, but—in her son's opinion—she can't express them.

Yet she clearly can, and does; and we see Augustine's reappraisal of the place for such expression in the course of the dialogue. We may add that in his later work this passage remains particularly associated with female forms of expression: when he writes, in the early 410s, to the widowed Proba about prayer (*de orando deo*), he instructs her to pray for a *beata uita*, and uses exactly the same section of the *Hortensius* to elucidate what that might mean.[36] His praise to Monnica is not hollow: this is, for Augustine, the 'actual citadel of philosophy'.

Back at Cassiciacum, far from falling silent, Monnica protests: they have completely forgotten her sex, and think that some great man (*magnum aliquem uirum*) is sitting with them. There is a certain irony here. Monnica is protesting her right to be seen, not as a great man, but as a little woman—but definitely, assertively, a woman. With that assertion, she is dissociating herself utterly from Cicero's project: she is not a man, and she is not doing a man's type of philosophy.

Now Augustine picks up on the cue of *beata u.* 2.8, and the food of the mind: these are not Monnica's own thoughts, *cogitationes suae*, but those inspired by God. But his apparently arrogant claim that he knows what is going on, even if she doesn't, is qualified: 'meanwhile, I understood, as far as I was able (*quantum poteram*), from how divine a source they flowed' (*me interim quantum poteram intellegente ex quo illa et quam diuino fonte manarent*: *beata u.* 2.10). Augustine can perceive the divine inspiration of Monnica's thoughts—but he acknowledges that his comprehension of *how* that comes to be remains limited. The overall effect is to insist on the individuality of her 'little woman's' viewpoint, and point out quite clearly that her inspiration comes, not from Cicero, but from God. Licentius, meanwhile, doesn't get the message: he carries on exactly as if Monnica had not spoken, suggesting topics of debate to Augustine—who deflects him, reasserting the eating metaphor, with 'invite me to your birthday, then I'll gladly eat what *you* serve up' (*inuita me . . . natali tuo . . . quidquid apposueris libenter sumam*).

The party moves on to agree that the man who has every (worldly) possession he wants will still live in fear of losing them, and hence will

[36] See *Ep.* 130.10. He uses the passage once more, at *Trin.* 13.5, and subjoins the comment: *praeclarissime omnino et uerissime.*

not be *beatus*. Monnica intervenes again (*hoc loco autem mater*), pointing out that even if such a man is secure of not losing his possessions, he will still be pitiable (*miser*), because insatiable. Augustine says: won't he be happy if he establishes a measure to his desires (*modus cupiendi*)? Certainly he will, answers his mother; but he won't be happy because of his possessions, but because of his moderation—to be precise, the moderation *of his mind* (*animi sui moderatione*, *beata u.* 2.11). Once again, therefore, she shifts the focus from the material world (possessions, and the desire for them) to the metaphysical (the mental moderation of the happy man). It is she who is producing lunch for the soul. And she develops the idea of mental moderation which will, in fact, form the peroration to this dialogue.—Perhaps the key transposition here is not so much Augustine's appropriation of an ungentlemanly role, as Monnica's appropriation of the male role of metaphysical nurturer and provider.[37]

The passage leads on to Augustine's crucial question: which men possess God (*beata u.* 2.12)? For it is they who are happy. To this question, the answers *or silences* of the whole party are individually recorded (and in the case of Rusticus, actually solicited). Licentius says that 'he who lives well possesses God'; Trygetius, that it is 'he who does what God wants to be done'. Adeodatus, finally, 'that smallest boy of all' (*ille minimus omnium*), suggests that the man who does not have an unclean spirit possesses God.[38] Monnica endorses all three of the suggestions (thereby anticipating the conclusion at which the others will arrive in the next day's discussion), but especially that offered by her grandson. This, Augustine says, is the nub of the enquiry—to be made with absolute calm and sincerity (*serenissime ac sincerissime*: *beata u.* 2.13)—and he defers that 'feast' to the morrow, lest they all get mental indigestion. Nonetheless, he persists with his metaphor: 'I just want you to lick, with hearty appetites, at what it's just occurred to me (your butler) I should bring in, which is, if I'm not mistaken, . . . prepared and sweetened with honey, as it were, from the Schools' (*illud modo libenter ligurriatis uolo, quod subito mihi ministratori uestro in mentem suggestum est*

[37] Does she draw closer to Macrina here? See Rowan Williams, 'Macrina's Deathbed Revisited', in Lionel R. Wickham and Caroline P. Bammel (eds.), *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 1993); a more jaded view in Burrus, *'Begotten, Not Made'*, 112–22. The crucial difference remains, however, that Macrina is a *virgin*, not a mother.

[38] The passage runs as follows: *hic Licentius: deum habet, qui bene uiuit.—Trygetius: deum habet, inquit, qui facit quae deus uult fiere.—in cuius sententiam Lartidianus concessit. puer autem ille minimus omnium: is habet deum, ait, qui spiritum immundum non habet* (*beata u.* 2.12).

inferendum, et est, ni fallor . . . quasi scholastico melle confectum atque conditum: *beata u.* 2.13).[39] At this, everyone leans forward to the dish (*ferculum*) Augustine has produced, and he elaborates: it's been prepared with the help of the Academics. The three who understand such things sit bolt upright and seem to reach out their hands to the butler (Augustine's own image); the hands of the other four, also supposedly participants in the conversation, are metaphorically dashed away by the allusion to an intellectual framework of which they know nothing. Licentius, Trygetius, and, presumably, Adeodatus may eat of the *ferculum*; Lartidianus, Rusticus, Navigius, and Monnica are unworthy to do so.

At this stage, however, the focus is not on the uneducated group—whose response, as we shall see, is only recorded a couple of paragraphs later—but on Augustine's pupils. They engage in a jocular debate, with Licentius and Augustine bantering about whether the Academics may qualify as *beati* on any terms. At the end, Licentius is trapped in a logical impasse, and laughs irritably—*quasi stomachanter arridens*—as he is forced to conclude that the man is happy who *doesn't* have what he wants. (As we shall see, the description of Licentius reacting *stomachanter* will prove peculiarly appropriate.[40]) There's a moment's debate about whether or not that should go on the record (which only reinforces the clubbish atmosphere of in-jokes)—and when it does, Augustine notes: 'In this way, I kept the young man hovering uncomfortably between shame and consistency' (*ita adulescentem inter uerecundiam atque constantiam exagitatum tenebam*: *beata u.* 2.15).

Not just Licentius, but the inadequacies of Academic debate are being mocked here. Augustine underlines this fact by drawing attention to the paucity of the mental provender on offer: Licentius is invited 'to eat his minuscule portion' (*ad uescendam particulam suam*: *beata u.* 2.16). But it is at this point that a further, more serious, inadequacy appears: '. . . I noticed that the others—who were entirely ignorant of the matter, and wanted to know what the great joke was that we alone could get—were watching us without laughing' (*animaduerti ceteros rei totius ignaros et scire cupientes, quid inter nos solos tam iucunde ageretur, sine risu nos intueri*). Augustine likens them

[39] Philip Burton, *Sermo: Language in the Confessions of Augustine* (Oxford, forthcoming) identifies this passage as redolent of the language of comedy (e.g. 'scholastico').

[40] *stomachanter*: this appears to be a *hapax* in classical and Medieval Latin literature (*OLD*, L&S, Cetedoc). Adverbs in *–anter* are common; but the verb *stomachari* is unusually prominent in Augustine—a search for *stomacha** in Cetedoc's patristic sources reveals that, of 47 sententiae, 37 are in Augustine. For the significance of the *stomachus* at this stage of his life, see below, Ch. 4, p. 109.

to guests at a banquet 'among incredibly greedy, ill-mannered companions', holding back from a sense of dignity and restraint (*grauitas* and *pudor*)—and, like a good host(ess), the ill-assorted table disturbs him.[41] He has stepped so entirely inside his role as preparer of the intellectual feast that the metaphor has taken on a life of its own: it now concerns him that the conversation at his luncheon party (as it were) has turned to topics which exclude or embarrass some of the guests.

As so often when Augustine's metaphors run away with him, there is a wider significance to the situation.[42] A social concern for the *aequalitas mensae*—the balance of the guests—leads to a concern for inclusion which is hardly typical of the generic philosophical dialogue. All must feel they are taking part: the conversation must be accessible to all. Moreover, this concern is linked explicitly to Mallius Theodorus, the dedicatee of the dialogue, in a rare second-person address: '. . . because I had invited them, and you have taught (*docuisti*) that the inviter, even at this sort of banquet, should maintain the character of some great and . . . real man, the imbalance of our table disturbed me . . . ' (*quia ego inuitaueram et magni cuiusdam hominis personam atque . . . ueri hominis etiam in illis epulis inuitatorem sustinere docuisti, commouit me illa inaequalitas mensae nostrae*: *beata u.* 2.16).

The exclusionary dynamic begins to be resolved when Augustine turns to his mother. *Adrisi matri*: 'I smiled at my mother'. By welcoming her back into the conversation, he acknowledges her former exclusion and undertakes, as preparer and host of the 'meal', to correct it. But he is also tacitly acknowledging her earlier correction—the obligation to fulfil the role of 'some great man' (*beata u.* 2.10) falls to Augustine himself, and he has temporarily failed in that role. Should it, then, be possible to do without the sorts of *uerba* which he earlier claimed his mother lacked?

The gesture of inclusion would be meaningless without Monnica's response. 'She [answered] most generously, asking for what was running low to be produced, as it were, from her own pantry' (*atque illa liberrime, quod minus habebant quasi de suo cellario promendum imperans*: *beata u.* 2.16).[43] The key word here is *liberrime*, 'most generously': *liber*

[41] Contrast again Henderson, 'Life and Soul of the Party', on the homosocial atmosphere of Plato's *Symposium*.

[42] For a further example, see my discussion of the *peculium* metaphor (*ord.* 2.2.6–7) in the next chapter.

[43] After *habebant*, I have deleted a comma (which seems redundant if one is construing *quod* as a relative).

means 'not subject to any constraint', and in its opposition to slave status (it may comprehend both freeborn and freed, as Gaius' *Institutes* make clear[44]) denotes a certain class distinction. Such a distinction becomes especially apparent in specialized applications of its cognates, such as the designation of *artes liberales* which, while referring to the pursuits of the freeborn, come functionally to denote the 'gentlemanly' arts—it being, for the most part, gentle*men* who had access to such training.[45] The class connotations, and the gendered tendencies, of the word make *liberrime* an extremely interesting choice (never mind in its superlative form) to describe Monnica's actions.[46] It is she who performs the role of the *uerus homo*, the real man, which Mallius Theodorus had supposedly taught Augustine; it is she who is showing up Augustine's deficiencies in his gentlemanly duty as host; and it is from her *own* pantry (*de suo cellario*—perhaps an ironically mundane metaphor to contrast with the exalted *liberrime*) that she brings supplies to correct that deficiency.[47] Again, *mater* is portrayed as taking the initiative; again, she refuses to be corralled into traditional roles. Remember the anxiety which we traced in the prefatory addresses to Romanianus in *De Academicis*: Augustine is deeply concerned about how to act *liberrime* himself. It falls to his mother to remind Augustine both of how to preside over a meal—intellectual or otherwise—and how to be a gentleman.

The response which Monnica makes *liberrime* is simply to ask for the information which Augustine, truly to include his whole audience, should have supplied in the first place: who are the Academics, and what are they getting at? He gives a brief exposition, 'so that no one should go away ignorant' (*ut nemo illorum ignarus abscederet*: *beata u.* 2.16). (Note that this is one of the instances in which there is a gulf between Augustine's purported and actual practice. In contrast to his insistence shortly before that every word should be recorded—when he was

[44] Gaius *Inst.* 1.10–11: *liberorum hominum alii ingenui sunt, alii libertini. ingenui sunt qui liberi nati sunt; libertini qui ex iusta seruitute manumissi sunt.*

[45] *TLL* gives as the first sense of *liber* 'free', as opposed to 'enslaved': *negatur seruitus singulorum hominum* (s.v. 1280.55). *ciu.* 6.2 equates *liberalis* (with reference to *disciplina*) with *saecularis*; and the link with a gentlemanly education is often made in Augustine. See also *serm.* 37.3, *ep.* 101.2; and Conybeare, 'The Duty of a Teacher: Liminality and *Disciplina* in the *De ordine*', in K. Pollmann and M. Vessey (eds.), *Augustine and the Disciplines: Towards a Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford, 2005), 49–65. Gellius 18.10.8 is revealing: *existimaui . . . non medico soli, sed omnibus quoque hominibus liberis liberaliterque institutis turpe esse ne ea quidem cognoscere. . . .*

[46] Augustine does use it of women one other time—though negatively, to express how they *should* have acted: 'liberrimae' of the 'mulieres Hebreae': *c. mend.* 17.34.

[47] See O'Donnell's observations in 'Next Life', already noted above in Ch. 1, n. 15.

holding Licentius to account—the exposition is only alluded to, not reported. Evidently, while the audience *within* the dialogue needs the exposition, the audience *outside* it, the reading audience, is assumed not to. Will they, then, have read *De Academicis* too? Or does some knowledge of Cicero's philosophy run automatically alongside the ability to read?) To this, Monnica delivers the famous dismissal: 'those men are *caducarii*', epileptics. This may indeed reveal her vulgarity;[48] but it is, in fact, reminiscent of an observation of Augustine himself. In frustration at the inactive and ethically disengaged stance of the Academics, he characterizes their *sapiens* as 'always asleep, and abandoning all his duties' (*c. Acad.* 2.5.12).[49] Pliny, indeed, says that in epilepsy 'though the eyes are open, the mind is darkened, and they see nothing'[50]—a notion that Augustine was to address years later in such works as *De Videndo Deo*.

For the time being, Monnica's host(ess)ly behaviour and lightness of touch retrieve the situation: everyone laughs happily, and the dialogue finishes for the day.

The way in which this brief, but important, sequence of events is articulated around laughter deserves attention. We remarked in Part One the importance of such 'stage directions' for inviting the audience to pause over a moment in the dialogues. We have also seen the variety of emotions that may accompany them, and how they may indirectly convey a message. This episode forms an excellent example. We begin with Licentius' irritable laughter (*stomachanter arridens*) as he is caught out in his banter with Augustine: it epitomizes the exclusionary dynamic in play during that exchange. Then, of course, Augustine notices the excluded audience watching without laughing (*sine risu*). He attempts an inclusive gesture with a smile at his mother (*adrisi matri*: the same verb as was used for Licentius' very different laughter before). And when she has responded—*liberrime*, nobly—*everyone* laughs: the gesture of inclusion is complete. And that moment of universal laughter marks Augustine's commitment, in this dialogue at any rate, to a greater

[48] Brown, *Augustine*, 111: 'She can dismiss a whole philosophical school in a single vulgar word.'

[49] The link is closer than may at first appear. It is not only with the idea of sleeping, but the idea of abandoning other activities—for epilepsy was known as the *comitialis morbus* because meetings of the *comitia* would be adjourned on the occurrence of the ill-omened disease. Augustine reminds us of the link here: 'we generally (*uulgo*) call by that name those who are overcome by the *comitialis morbus*' (*beata u.* 2.16).

[50] *Animo caligante [oculi] aperti nihil cernunt*: Pliny *Nat.* 11.146.

epistemological inclusivity which his mother has first shown as a necessity and then helped to make possible.

'Not Without God'

On the next day, the dialogue is resumed, still in a vein of levity. Augustine notes that they have convened rather later for their intellectual *conuiuium*, presumably because they're convinced of the slim range of dishes on offer: it doesn't seem worth coming early, when they know they'll eat up everything quickly! And, he admits, perhaps rightly—for 'I have as little idea as you what might be prepared for you' (*quid uobis praeparatum sit, ego quoque uobiscum nescio*: *beata u.* 3.17). For, Augustine explains, there is someone else who constantly prepares for us feasts of every sort, especially like these—but we hold back from eating, being weak or bloated or too involved in our work.

Nescio: 'I don't know'. This type of insistence on his lack of privileged access to knowledge becomes a hallmark of Augustine's later thought. It seems to sum up his reluctance—self-staged though it be—to take the lead within these dialogues, and become the *dux* which Alypius wants him to be. Here, the move which Augustine makes parallels Monnica's earlier in the dialogue, when he compliments her for storming philosophy's citadel, and she protests that the words don't belong to her, but to a divine wellspring (*beata u.* 2.10). Later at Cassiciacum, Licentius—the most intractable of the interlocutors—will mark his conversion experience with an ecstatic *nescio*.[51] But now, Augustine is slowly beginning to abrogate his confident claim to knowledge, *scientia*, and to assign knowledge instead to God. It is not, I think, coincidental that this shift comes in the continued context of the metaphor of preparing food: God, it seems, is both chef and host, and not Augustine after all.

Thus, in the course of the dialogue so far, the authority to prepare (mental) food has shifted from Monnica, to Augustine, to God. This is apparently a hierarchical, upward-mounting progression; but it is Monnica who initially developed the governing metaphor (*beata u.* 2.8).

To launch the second day's discussion, the three definitions of the *beatus* (suggested in *beata u.* 2.12) are repeated; but, Augustine says, 'perhaps you all detected one and the same meaning in different words' (*sed fortasse omnes diuersis uerbis unum idemque sensistis*: *beata u.*

[51] *Credite, si uultis; nam quomodo id explicem, nescio*: *ord.* 1.6.16.

3.18). This, of course, echoes Monnica's observation of the previous day; but more broadly, it begins to show Augustine fighting his way out of an exclusionary professional discourse—under the tuition of his mother. Technicalities must take second place to 'one and the same meaning' (*unum idemque*) that underlies the definitions. And as if to emphasize that, Augustine questions his young son about what he had meant when talking about an 'unclean spirit': an external demon, which needs to be exorcised (the popular meaning); or a soul tainted with vice? Adeodatus opts for the latter, and develops the idea by saying that the person who does not have an unclean spirit 'is focused on God and binds himself to Him alone' (*deum adtendit et ad ipsum solum se tenet*: *beata u.* 3.18).

More pungent is the moment when Monnica breaks in as the company laughs at the idea that anyone might be said to have God 'all of a sudden' (*continuo*): she demands that Augustine explain properly what he has said *intorte*—which might be rendered 'twisted in on itself', 'perversely', or 'in jargon' (*beata u.* 3.19)![52] As a response to this explanation, she introduces an important modification, which begins to solve the Sceptical problem of the epistemological status of *seeking*. Monnica suggests that everyone 'has' God, but in different ways: sometimes God favours the person, sometimes not. This captures how someone can have (an idea of) God, and yet not be *beatus*; it also begins to shift the subjectivities in the debate. The focus, in Monnica's formulation, is less on the human seeker and more on the deity.

Navigius objects that in that case the Academic seeker may have God's favour, and be called *beatus*—and everyone laughs, 'even mother'. Trygetius calls for *aliquid medium*—a third, intermediary term—in the debate; Augustine reiterates the need; and it is Monnica, in the face of the others' silence, who is able to supply it. 'While he was hesitating: "It is one thing", said my mother, "to have God, another thing not to be without God (*non esse sine deo*)" ' (*beata u.* 3.21). A simple, and apparently exclusive, opposition—does a person have, or not have, God?—is deconstructed with a double negative. It doesn't quite perform the role of 'aliquid medium', for which Trygetius calls: it is not an intermediary concept, but a new one, which shows the apparently exclusive dichotomy of having or not having God to be a false one. When

[52] L&S: 'intorte' is used in Augustine, *De Natura et Gratia* 57 (49) of Pelagius: *intorte hoc dixit, et ideo subobscure*. *TLL* cites only *beata u.* and *nat. et gr.* for this sense (s.v. 33.66–70)—*fere i. q. contorte, perplexe*.

questioned by her son as to whether it's better to possess God (*habere deum*) or not to be without God, Monnica gives her opinion, but says it is limited by her understanding:

> he who lives well possesses God—well-disposed; he who lives badly possesses God—in opposition; but he who is still seeking [God] and has not yet found [him] possesses him neither well-disposed nor in opposition—but he is not without God.
>
> qui bene uiuit, habet deum, sed propitium, qui male, habet deum, sed aduersum, qui autem adhuc quaerit nondumque inuenit, neque propitium neque aduersum, sed non est sine deo. (*beata u.* 3.21)

So 'not being without God', *non esse sine deo*, is all-embracing. Augustine begins to explore this idea, and attempts—by a logic which fails to take on the significance of Monnica's move—once again to show that the man who is seeking God will be *beatus*, because he has God's favour (*deus propitius*)—or else, that not everyone who has God's favour is *beatus*. Her response is simply, 'If logic (*ratio*) compels this, I can't say no to it' (*si hoc cogit ratio, non possum negare*: *beata u.* 3.21).

Remember, however, that when Monnica suggested her tripartite scheme, she once again signalled the limitations of her understanding (*quantum possum . . . intellegere*). It is tempting to conclude that it is not only *her* understanding which she is portraying as limited in the present circumstances—and to recall Augustine's awareness of his own limited understanding in the *Hortensius* episode ('I understood, *as far as I was able*, from what source it flowed': *beata u.* 2.10). In that case, the force of her apparent concession ('If logic compels this, I can't say no to it') becomes rather different: not the humble acknowledgement of defeat in debate, but a challenge to the assumptions on which the debate has been conducted. In the economy of the debate, she certainly cannot make a denial; but she asks implicitly whether the compulsion of *ratio*, logic, ought really to be the binding force in the argument? or whether a conclusion reached with the help of *ratio* may in fact not be rational? In view of Augustine's subsequent interrogation of *ratio* (which we shall investigate in Part Three), we may propose that the question is indeed a fitting one. And Augustine puts the doubtful conditional into the mouth of Monnica—the interlocutor who is increasingly characterized as both the most destabilizing and the most creative influence in the dialogue.

Anyway, Monnica's double negative, the idea that one can be 'not without God', has shown that we need not think in terms of divine favour or disfavour, merely in terms of the more general involvement of

the divine. And, immediately after her disclaimer about *ratio,* Augustine restructures his schema—without crediting her—to take tacit account of this:

> So that will be the ordering principle (*distributio*), that everyone who has already found God will both possess a well-disposed God and be *beatus*; everyone who is seeking God will have a well-disposed God but not yet be *beatus*; but anyone who is distancing himself from God with vicious sins, he will not only not be *beatus* but not even live with a well-disposed God.
>
> ista igitur, inquam, distributio erit, ut omnis, qui iam deum inuenit, et propitium deum habeat et beatus sit, omnis autem, qui deum quaerit, propitium deum habeat sed nondum sit beatus, iam uero quisquis uitiis atque peccatis a deo se alienat, non modo beatus non sit sed ne deo quidem uiuat propitio. (*beata u.* 3.21)

But note that the way is still open for the person in the last category to be *non sine deo.* Augustine, 'prompted' by Monnica, has succeeded in interjecting a tripartite schema into the traditional dualities of 'logical' disputation; but he—or she—has also signalled, once again, a broadening and inclusionary intellectual move. *Everyone*, after all, may be said to be 'not without God'.

From Need to Prayer

The relationship of *miseria* to *egestas*—of impoverishment[53] to need—is the subject of debate which opens the third day. It is indeed rather a change of dialogic tack, which is perhaps represented by the beautifully sunny afternoon which sees the company gathering in a nearby meadow instead of in the baths. Augustine marks another change with a surprising reiteration of control over the course of the conversation—surprising especially in the light of his claim the previous day not to know (*nescio*) what was being cooked up for the participants. 'I have firm possession', he says, 'of almost everything which I wanted you to concede to my questioning' (*omnia paene . . . quae interroganti mihi concedi a uobis uolui, habeo ac teneo*: *beata u.* 4.23). And yet, once again, he takes his starting point from Monnica (*a matre*), reminding the company that yesterday she had said that *miseria* and *egestas*, impoverishment and need, were the same thing. So: is the *beatus* a person 'who lacks need'?

[53] With this translation, I try to capture the span of meaning for *miseria*, which ranges from material poverty to spiritual and emotional impoverishment: clearly, the former meaning maps better onto the notion of *egestas*, while the latter forms a better contrast with the *beatus*.

The gentlemen of the company pursue this line of argument while Monnica remains silent. They propose a rather shaky analogy with the categories 'living' and 'dead', to show that 'it doesn't follow that, if everyone who is lacking is impoverished (*miser*), then everyone who is not lacking should be *beatus*'[54] (*beata u.* 4.24). The point is that, even when two terms are apparently mutually exclusive, there are still conditions under which the negation of one does not entail the assertion of the other. There is, strictly speaking, no *medium* (Augustine states this explicitly); and yet the two terms are not fully expressive of the range of possibilities either. Not-*x* does not necessarily mean *y*: and so we see Augustine again tentatively feeling his way away from materialist dichotomies (and hence from a Manichaean world-view). This is, we may note, a *preliminary* to the insight of Monnica's about being *non sine deo*, which we have just discussed.

Again, the conversation tips toward exclusionary levity; and it is signalled by allusions to Terence and to Cicero, clear generic markers for the philosophical dialogue (as we saw in Part One). The example is taken from *Hortensius* of Orata, who is said to have lacked absolutely nothing: how then could he feel need (*beata u.* 4.26)? When Licentius suggests that he realizes he might lose everything at any time, Augustine laughingly congratulates him on identifying a man kept from the *beata uita* 'by the excellence of his abilities' (*ingenii bonitate*)—and all the others laugh too.

Except, as we go on to learn, Monnica. It is not made explicit that she does not participate in the levity: but her next speech, after a period of silence, shows that she is puzzled by the young men's failure to understand the foundations of the discussion. The 'Augustine' within the dialogue, significantly, introduces his mother's intervention in terms which make it clear that he does not realize that the discussion has, yet again, moved towards the futile bandying of words. Despite general approval of the statement that *miseria* and *egestas* are *not*, after all, equivalent to each other, 'she, *whose opinion I was defending*, was still rather doubtful' (*beata u.* 4.27).

Of course, 'Augustine' is not defending his mother's opinion—he has just stated exactly the opposite. And if he is referring to her earlier insight concerning *moderatio*, then the reference is flippant.[55] Her sub-

[54] The equivalent phrase, using the proposed terms 'living' and 'dead', would be, 'it doesn't follow that, if everyone who is buried is dead, therefore everyone who is not buried is alive.'

[55] *animi sui moderatio*: *beata u.* 2.11 (discussed above).

sequent intervention should be read not as a genuine avowal of stupidity, but as a tactful reminder and reiteration of her earlier position:

> I don't really know [*nescio* again!], and I don't yet fully understand, how impoverishment could be separated from need or need from impoverishment [note the pointed repetition]. Take that person who was extremely rich and—so you say—didn't want anything more: nevertheless, because he was afraid of losing it, he lacked wisdom. So should we call the person who lacks silver and money needy, but not the person who lacks wisdom?
>
> nescio . . . tamen et nondum plane intellego, quomodo ab egestate possit miseria aut egestas a miseria separari. nam et iste, qui diues et locuples erat et nihil, ut dicitis, amplius desiderabat, tamen, quia metuebat ne amitteret, egebat sapientia. ergone hunc egentem diceremus, si egeret argentuo et pecunia, cum egeret sapientia, non dicemus? (*beata u.* 4.27)

The enthusiasm which greets this *aperçu* borders on the overstated. Everyone cries out in wonder; Augustine, not least, is 'eager and delighted', and draws the others' attention to the difference between 'multifarious bits of erudition' (*multas uariasque doctrinas*) and 'a mind totally focused on God' (*animum adtentissimum in deum*). (That phrase should sound familiar. Remember that it was Augustine's son who introduced the concept of *adtendere in deum* in the discussion of the unclean spirit: *beata u.* 3.18.) Licentius, this time, has got the message: he is particularly fulsome in his praise.

And yet, it is true that Monnica has once again (been) chosen to refocus the debate and remind her interlocutors of their priorities. Attaining the *beata uita* has—both traditionally, and in this dialogue—been conceived as being intimately bound up with having the right kind of *sapientia*. The others, in their amusement over the Orata story, have lost sight of that: it is Monnica who reminds them of the core terms of the discussion.

At this point, Augustine recaptures control of the argument, observing that 'neediness of mind' (*animi egestas*) is the same thing as stupidity—and therefore relates to wisdom (*sapientia*) as an opposition without any intermediary (*sine aliquo medio*). He then comments on the oddity of the figure of speech, whereby the phrases 's/he has need' or 'has stupidity' (*habet egestatem/stultitiam*) actually denote *lack*, elaborating with an example later used in *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos* (a place which lacks light is said to have darkness).[56] Thus *egestas . . . uerbum est non habendi*: *egestas* is a word that denotes lack, or not-having. There is, then, something ontologically suspect about the concept of *egestas* (and,

[56] *. . . ac si locum aliquem, qui lumine careat, dicamus habere tenebras . . .*: *beata u.* 4.29. Compare *Gn. adu. Man* 1.4.7.

by extension, about stupidity)—and this is important, because Augustine proceeds to create a sort of ethical ontology round the antithesis of fullness and lack (*plenitudo* and *egestas*). These two categories—which again, one suspects, Augustine wishes to represent as 'without any intermediary'—are linked, first with being and not-being (or existence and non-existence: *esse* and *non esse*), then, more problematically, with the temperance and wickedness, or good and bad morality (profitability and unprofitability? in any case, *frugalitas* and *nequitia*), explored earlier in the dialogue (*beata u.* 2.8).

This—the equation of fullness with *frugalitas*—seems an odd move; but Augustine needs a notion, like *frugalitas*, that encompasses both solid moral worth and self-restraint. (Remember the *frugi homo* of his parable in *De Academicis*, and the virtue of *enkráteia* being invoked.[57]) It may even reflect the solidity of the related noun *fructus*, 'fruit', in contrast with the nothingness of *nequitia*. The 'ethical ontology' is an important part of his anti-Manichaean project: he needs to establish that evil does not 'really' exist.[58] This leads him into the oddity; for while he wishes to create his value system as dichotomous, a set of antitheses for each of which only one element truly exists, he also wishes to preserve the notion of the ethical superiority of the mean, or moderation. And this, yet again, returns us to Monnica, and to her depicted contribution to the thought of this dialogue; for we may remember that it was she who first introduced the notion of *moderatio*—at *beata u.* 2.11, when she insisted that the person who had everything he wanted *and* did not fear losing it was *beatus* 'because of his well-moderated mind' (*animi sui moderatio*).

Clearly, Augustine is, at this stage, having some difficulty in incorporating the idea of the mean into his largely binary intellectual system: the emphasis on *modus* seems to be a way of introducing an intermediary notion, while still working with dichotomies. *Modus*, he goes on to say, is *sapientia*, wisdom; and 'what should be given the name of wisdom except the wisdom which is of God?' (*quae est autem dicenda sapientia nisi quae dei sapientia est*?: *beata u.* 4.34). Note the ambiguity of *dei sapientia*: is this God's own wisdom? Or the wisdom given *by* God? Or even, wisdom

[57] See also the way in which the eating metaphor is set up at *beata u.* 2.8, discussed above. The contrast, especially taking into account the *c. Acad.* passage (3.15.34), may recall the *frugi* and *nequam* servants of Luke 19: 17–22.

[58] On Augustine's formulation of evil as *priuatio boni*, see (e.g.) Rowan Williams, 'Insubstantial Evil', in Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (eds.), *Augustine and his Critics* (London/New York, 2000), 105–23.

about God?—In fact, Augustine's first move is to emphasize none of these, but to identify the *dei sapientia* with the son of God (not, notably, called Christ here), and to link it/him also with truth (*ueritas*).[59]

It is, of course, Monnica who has originally linked *modus* with *sapientia*; and appropriately enough, it is at this point in the dialogue, where Augustine depicts himself as having fully taken on her insight, that the shift is made from deduced to revealed truth.[60] Suddenly, as the epistemological foundations of the conversation change, so too does its tone. 'We have learnt from divine authority that the Son of God is nothing other than the Wisdom of God, and the Son of God is certainly God' (*accepimus autem etiam auctoritate diuina dei filium nihil esse aliud quam dei sapientiam, et est dei filius profecto deus*: *beata u.* 4.34). This is the first appeal to such 'divine authority' which we have heard from *Augustine's* lips in the course of *De Beata Vita*—though his mother has made more than one. It seems that—consciously or not—it is the eternal Son of God about which Augustine is speaking, not the incarnate Christ. For he suddenly moves to connect the Son of God—wisdom and truth—with the *summus modus*, a Plotinian concept (and an extraordinary one).[61] The term seems to epitomize the connection of Son with Father, *modus* having been linked successively both with plenitude (the Father, or the Plotinian One) and with wisdom (the Son, or the first Hypostasis).[62] Augustine concludes that 'whoever reaches the highest mean (*summum modum*) through truth, is *beatus*'.—So the Son (truth) is simultaneously the way of reaching the Father (*summus modus*), and participating in the Father.—'For minds, this is "possessing God", that is, enjoying God' (*quisquis . . . ad summum modum per ueritatem uenerit, beatus est. hoc est animis deum habere, id est deo perfrui*: *beata u.* 4.34).

[59] The link is made at 1 Cor. 1: 24; see also 1 Cor. 1: 30.

[60] Is this still partly a gloss on 1 Corinthians? See 1 Cor. 2: 4, *et sermo meus, et praedicatio mea non in persuabilibus humanae sapientiae uerbis, sed in ostensione spiritus et uirtutis.*

[61] This seems to be the paradoxical concept from *Enn.* 1.2.2 *Perì Aretôn* in which virtues receive their measure (*métron*, of which *modus* is the direct translation) from their proximity to the divine (despite the fact that the divine is limitless)—literally, they possess 'the footprint of the best there (*ekeî*)'. General observations on Christianity embracing paradox may well be relevant here too: see Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, ch. 5; Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster*, 105–8 and 125–7.

[62] There is an invaluable explanation of this nexus of ideas in Luigi F. Pizzolato, 'Il *modus* nel primo Agostino', in *La langue latine: Langue de la philosophie* (Rome, 1992). He points out that *modus* is 'l'operazione produttiva'; on this reading, it anticipates the notion of 'potentiality' which I discuss in the Epilogue.

Here, for the first time, is the notion of *deo perfrui* which is to become so important in Augustine's mature theology (its most notable exposition being in the first book of *De Doctrina Christiana* [63]). But it is as if he simply cannot let go of his hyper-intellectualized inheritance and trust divine authority, *auctoritas diuina*—the way to which he is portraying his mother as showing him. So the simple enjoyment of God is all mixed up with the confused and confusing introduction of the notion of the *summus modus*. It does reflect the status of *frugalitas*, though they are not explicitly linked here; and, as with *frugalitas*, it does represent a cautious preliminary stage in Augustine feeling his way beyond dichotomous thinking. After all, if the 'mean' is also 'highest' (or 'most extreme'), what space is left for antithesis? Its contrary must either be hopelessly semantically fragmented—or be simply non-existent. Our Epilogue shows where Augustine goes with this insight at last.

Note too that this is the obvious place for the down-to-earth metaphor of food preparation to resurface (especially if the logical connection with *frugalitas* were to be made)—and it does not. Augustine has retreated so firmly back onto the metaphysical plane that he has lost sight of the importance of the integration of the spiritual with the embodied—towards which *mater* has been nudging him throughout the dialogue. He can't, it seems, use a corporeally grounded metaphor alongside the Plotinian *summus modus* (and it seems pretty likely that this is far from the *modus* that Monnica would have had in mind). He can't conceive of the so-called 'son of God' incarnate: he speaks only of his equivalence to wisdom and truth. He moves ridiculously fast, in fact, through a set of equivalences which if we are not to trust *auctoritas diuina* alone are made with no attempt at explication or justification. And so one draws towards the close of this dialogue, which in many ways has been so conceptually daring, with a slight sense of an opportunity lost.

Is this partly to do with the dialogue's dedicatee? Mallius Theodorus was a prominent Neoplatonist: is there some sense here that Augustine is dragging the conversation back on track for the sake of his sensibilities? There's certainly some amusing irony in the fact that what we have seen to be so truly 'Monnica's dialogue' was dedicated to Theodorus. Was it, perhaps, ill-received by him? Were the intellectually subversive elements, despite Augustine's ambivalent position, too obvious? This

[63] Notably, *doct. chr.* 1.27; on the *fruitio Dei*, see Karla Pollmann, *Doctrina Christiana: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustinus*, De Doctrina Christiana (Freiburg, 1996), 128–35.

would help to explain Augustine's negative comment about him in *Retractationes*: 'I don't like the fact that I attributed more than I should there to Mallius Theodorus' (*displicet autem illic quod Mallio Theodoro . . . plus tribui quam deberem*: *retr.* 1.2).[64] And we may note, too, that in his *Retractationes* Augustine firmly reneges on his confidence in the possibility of a temporal knowledge of God [*cognitio dei*], while emphasizing the role of the post-resurrection body in achieving that knowledge: both future trajectories barely hinted at here, and those hints put into the mouth—of Monnica.

Augustine works himself up towards a rousing conclusion:

this is the complete fulness of minds, that is, the blessed life (*beata uita*), to know piously and fully by whom you may be led to truth, what truth you may enjoy, through what thing you may be connected to the highest mean (*summo modo*). These three things show the one God to those who understand God . . .

illa est igitur plena satietas animorum, hoc est *beata uita*, pie perfecteque cognoscere, a quo inducaris in ueritatem, qua ueritate perfruaris, per quid conectaris *summo modo*. quae tria unum deum deum intellegentibus unamque substantiam . . . ostendunt. (*beata u.* 4.35)[65]

But Monnica picks up on the reference (remote and periphrastic though it is) to the Trinity, and trumps him, joyously (*laeta*), with the verse of 'our priest': *foue precantes, trinitas*—'nurture those praying, Trinity' (the last line of Ambrose, *Hymn* 2).

This is the truly resonant conclusion. It is the only explicit reference to the works of Ambrose in the Cassiciacum dialogues, and has particular point for a Milanese addressee.[66] It is also the first quotation from an explicitly Christian work in the dialogues (*De Beata Vita* otherwise favours almost uniquely Cicero and Terence). It has particular poignancy in the midst of the anti-Manichaean resonances here, for the hymn begins with an invocation to 'God the creator of all things', *deus creator omnium*.[67] Monnica bursts out with it 'as if waking to her faith', *quasi euigilans in fidem suam*, though of course it is she of all the

[64] See O'Donnell on *conf.* 7.9.13 *quendam hominem* for an account of the ambiguities and impossibilities of Augustine's relationship with Theodorus.

[65] The rather artificial connection into the schema of the *summus modus* idea may be indicated by the use of 'per quid' instead of 'per quam': the *summus modus* does not, it seems, relate directly or simply back to *ueritas*.

[66] Ambrose himself seems to be mentioned one other time—again, not by name—at *beata u.* 1.4. Might Theodorus in fact know Ambrose?

[67] There are other aspects of this hymn which are relevant to an anti-Manichaean context: consider, for example, *fides tenebras nesciat,* | *et nox fide reluceat* (*PL* 16:1473). See further the discussion of *Gn. adu. Man.* in the Epilogue below.

participants who is confirmed in her faith.[68] Is this prompted by the freshness of her exclamation? Or, perhaps, by its disjunction from the rest of the proceedings? This is not, after all, a conclusion to the dialogue which we have been reading. It is not even really the conclusion to Monnica's own depicted contributions to it. The emphasis on a trinitarian theology, on prayer, and on divine nurturing of the faithful—as opposed to an anthropocentric focus on the attempts of the faithful to participate in the divine—is one to which Augustine has barely alluded in the course of the discussion.

The gulf between Monnica's finale and Augustine's is only accentuated by her explanatory coda to *foue precantes*:

> this is without a doubt the *blessed life*, which is the perfect life, to which one should trust that we can hasten to be led, with firm faith, eager hope, and blazing love.
>
> haec est nullo ambigente *beata uita*, quae uita perfecta est, ad quam nos festinantes posse perduci solida fide alacri spe flagranti caritate praesumendum est. (*beata u.* 4.35)

Contrast the certainty of this with the tentative tone of Augustine's 'complete fulness of minds'—though Augustine's intervention does look back to the very beginnings of the discussion, and the insight (Monnica's) about the receptivity of minds. As with Augustine's 'this is . . . the *beata uita*', so in Monnica's version of the finale, there is the notion of being led; again there is a tripartite structure for that progress; but those are the only points of contact between the two formulations. The real sense of progress—in its simplest sense, of moving forward towards a goal—is reserved for Monnica's; it is she, too, who talks of 'hastening' and conveys a sense of urgency in that progress. Augustine's conclusion is articulated round the verb *cognoscere*, to know, in a typical privileging of mental activity. Monnica, on the other hand, privileges the activity of instinct, in her rather laboured periphrastic construction, 'one should trust' (*praesumendum est*); and its meaning reaches out beyond the individual to the being or idea in which one should place one's trust, as opposed to Augustine's self-reflexive formulation. Both speakers use the notion of the *perfectum*, the thing complete or perfect; but Augustine applies the idea to human knowing, Monnica to the *beata uita* itself. Augustine's emphasis, moreover, is still on working things out in structured argumentative stages—hence the sequence of three indirect questions; Monnica's on the trust inspired (presumably) by the *auctoritas*

[68] Note Augustine's use of this verb again to describe his own awakening to God: *et euigilaui in te*, *conf.* 7.14.20.

diuina, supported simply by St Paul's trio of faith, hope, and charity (1 Cor. 13).

Thus, the two 'conclusions' to the dialogue *De Beata Vita* play out the tension between deduced and revealed truth that haunts Augustine at Cassiciacum. Monnica's first intervention in the dialogue ('I believe it's obvious that the soul is nourished on nothing other than the understanding and knowledge of things': *beata u.* 2.8) alluded to that tension, while placing her epistemological framework firmly in belief; Augustine himself, in his peroration, finally refers to *auctoritas diuina*—and then instantly complicates it with the *summus modus* idea. There is no adjudication between the two in the last paragraph of the dialogue—merely a return to the 'feeding' metaphor, in which Augustine observes courteously (and perhaps more truly than he knows) to the company that they have contributed so much to the intellectual repast that he feels he has been sated by his own guests. To be precise, he says 'I could not deny (*negare non possim*) that I have been sated by my guests' (*me negare non possim ab inuitatis meis esse satiatum*: *beata u.* 4.36), which may well be a joking corollary to the end of *De Academicis*, where the possibility of finding truth is affirmed, in parodically 'sceptical' style, with a double negative;[69] but it also recalls Monnica's *non possum negare* (*beata u.* 3.21). Trygetius, ignoring the disclaimer, says he wishes that Augustine could feed them like that every day; but Augustine reiterates (reverting to Neoplatonism) that moderation is the key to our *return* to God.[70]

Why does Augustine not attempt to harmonize the two conclusions? Why does he even go so far as to invoke, almost simultaneously, the claims of satiety and of moderation? The lack of resolution gives the sense of an incomplete dialogue. Perhaps he simply didn't realize—or wish publicly to acknowledge—how radically different, in fact, the two positions are. But maybe the sense of incompleteness is precisely the point. By refusing to harmonize the two conclusions, Augustine once again manages to give the sense of a conversation truly in progress: a tension between two points of view—or rather (and more significantly), between two epistemological systems—which has yet to be reconciled, or even fully explored. He is exploiting precisely the potential for open-endedness in the dialogue form to which we pointed in Part One.

[69] 'If this is false, I don't care: it's enough for me now *not* to think that it's *not* possible for truth to be discovered by man' (*quod si falsum est, nihil ad me, cui satis est iam non arbitrari, non posse ab homine inueniri ueritatem*): *c. Acad.* 3.20.43.

[70] Cf. Plot. *Enn.* 5.1.1, 1.6.8.

In a way, the message of the dialogue is very simple indeed: you don't need wisdom or erudition to attain the *beata uita*, merely a mind wholly dedicated to God. It comes, then, as no surprise that Augustine—as he crafts the dialogue—chooses the youngest interlocutor to put part of his message: but the question still remains—why is Monnica the principal articulating force? She's not the least educated; she's not the one who is introduced as having common sense. It must be to do with her status as woman and mother—but as we have already seen, that association is not played out in any simplistic way.

Yet 'Monnica's dialogue', although she is portrayed as doing so much to shape it, isn't Monnica's at all—because it isn't anybody's. Certainly not Theodorus', although he is the dedicatee: there's far too much subversive interrogation of philosophical *data*. Not really Augustine's either: its turns of theme are so out of kilter with his general philosophical programme that he has clearly been obliged to excerpt the material wholesale from the putative conversations that form *De Academicis*.[71] However, it is Monnica—supported by the not inconsiderable authorities of Ambrose and Paul—who is given the last words in the formal debate; and given the way in which she is to be portrayed in *De Ordine*, this, as we shall see, is important.

[71] Remember *retr.* 1.2: *librum de beata uita non post libros de Academicis, sed inter illos ut scriberem contigit.*

4

A Really Liberal Education

In *De Academicis*, Monnica temporarily deprived the men of their chance to talk by forcing them (*sic*!) to come in for lunch.[1] *De Academicis* evinces an almost obsessive concern with seeking out rural settings, so that the interlocutors may be physically separated from *domestica negotia*.[2] But let us not forget that dialogues have preoccupied themselves with *domestica negotia* in a wide range of manifestations at least since Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*. So what on earth does Augustine mean by the phrase here? The letter-writing and reading of Virgil with which the company occupies themselves when at home—or the 'women's work' which Monnica and others are presumably to be envisaged as doing inside the house? One is tempted, by the hostility towards the mundane necessity of eating, to favour the latter interpretation.

This eagerness to avoid the sphere connected with women is seen also in the early attempts to establish what a blessed state might be. Licentius thinks they are already blessed:

> for we've been living in great serenity of mind, freeing the spirit from every stain of the body (*ab omni corporis labe animum uindicantes*) and far removed from the flames of desire, concentrating our attention—as far as a human being may do so—on reason (*rationi*); that is, living according to the divine part of the mind, which we agreed yesterday was the blessed life (*beatam uitam*).
>
> uiximus enim magna mentis tranquillitate ab omni corporis labe animum uindicantes et a cupiditatum facibus longissime remoti, dantes, quantum homini licet, operam rationi, hoc est secundum diuinam illam partem animi uiuentes, quam beatam esse uitam hesterna inter nos definitione conuenit. (*c. Acad.* 1.4.11)

[1] . . . *mater nostra . . . ita nos trudere in prandium coepit, ut uerba faciendi locus non esset*: *c. Acad.* 2.5.13; see above Ch. 3.

[2] See e.g. *c. Acad.* 2.11.25.

Later, he reiterates his point, talking of the wise man 'extricating his mind, as far as he can, from the swaddling of the body' (*ab omnibus inuolucris corporis mentem quantum potest euoluit*: *c. Acad.* 1.8.23)—and Augustine makes the pregnant observation that there will be no lack of counter-arguments to this.[3] Arguably, the whole trajectory of the Cassiciacum dialogues is designed to complicate Licentius' complacent view.[4] Certainly, the simplistic assumption that a person is wise insofar as he has managed to detach himself from the body is increasingly interrogated; as we shall see, the desirability of *ratio* as a primary focus is also questioned. One of the simplest symbolic ways in which the dialogues accomplish this progressive interrogation is by the pointed inclusion of Monnica in the proceedings.

As we have seen, in *De Beata Vita* the depiction of Monnica has already shifted significantly: far from depriving the men of their chance to talk, she has played a crucial role in creating new intellectual spaces for their conversation and suggesting new themes. Equally importantly, her inclusion—as woman, as mother, as one concerned with *domestica negotia* and having only a rudimentary education, and (not least) as long-standing pious Christian—marks a move away from intellectual exclusivity in the dialogues: not merely in terms of who may or may not participate, or the level of education required, but in terms of what are demarcated as appropriate subjects for discussion, and what are considered apt techniques of debate. This is found not least in Monnica's intervention in the traditional scenario of all-*male* educational bonding: we have seen glimpses of this structure in the description of her acting *liberrime*, with gentlemanly magnanimity, when the primary didactic context (*docuisti*) is that between Augustine and Theodorus.[5] Augustine is, as we have observed, moving away from an elitist 'them and us' configuration in his dialogues: he is already on his way towards being the committed preacher of the 390s and beyond. And this inclusive thematic is richly continued in the passages of *De Ordine* to which Monnica contributes.

[3] Augustine's response: *Non puto, . . . Licenti, etiam huic argumenta defutura, si eum otiose quaerere permittamus*: *c. Acad.* 1.9.24.

[4] See Cary, 'What Licentius Learned', for the 'story' of the dialogues told from Licentius' point of view.

[5] *beata u.* 2.16; see discussion in previous chapter. 'Traditional scenario of all-male educational bonding': see Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, ch. 1, esp. 27–8.

From Darkness to Conversion

The preface to *De Ordine* speaks, in an entirely conventional manner, of the need of the soul (*animus*) that wishes to become known to itself to avoid 'the crowd'—'and I don't mean the crowd of men, but of everything which relates to the senses' (*multitudinem autem non hominum dico sed omnium, quae sensus attingit*: *ord.* 1.2.3). Yet this pious conventionality is immediately subverted—or at least, revised—by the opening scenario of the dialogue.

It is night. I was lying awake, says Augustine, when *ecce!*—'listen!'—I heard the sound of water flowing past behind the baths. He uses the 'ecce'—normally an exclamation used to draw attention to something *seen*[6]—to hold that aural image in place for an instant, before moving on to wonder aloud (as it were) why the flow of water should be so irregular. It turns out that Licentius and Trygetius are awake too—it is so dark that Augustine doesn't realize this, until Licentius disturbs a mouse, and Trygetius speaks—and they ponder the problem together. In the darkness, there can be no pen or secretary to record the words as they are uttered: the conversation takes place in the liminal space of the half-real, half-imaginary. Far from removing themselves from the world of sense-perception, their conversation takes its beginning from that world, if in the most pared-down form possible: it is pitch dark, no other stimuli are at hand; only the sense of hearing is in play. The implication is that even if one wishes to move beyond sense-perception, one needs precisely to make a start with *sensibilia*.

The three discern the ordering principles of the universe in the explanation of the water's flow; and the dialogue moves on to stage the conversion of Licentius, once he has become convinced of the divinely-organized 'order of things' (*ordo rerum*), from poetry to *philosophia Christiana* (called here simply *philosophia*: *ord.* 1.3.9). At the height of this extravagant and publicly-witnessed conversion experience, as Augustine marvels at the transformation in his pupil, Licentius bursts out:

> If I could just say what I wish! Words—wherever you are—please come to help! Both good and evil things are ordered (*in ordine*). Believe, if you like; for I don't know (*nescio*) how to explain it.

[6] *TLL* s.v.: *pro particula demonstratiua animi attentionem dirigit ad apparentiam aut praesentiam siue hominis siue rei.*

o si possem dicere quod uolo! rogo, ubiubi estis, uerba, succurrite. et bona et mala in ordine sunt. credite, si uultis; nam quomodo id explicem nescio. (*ord.* 1.6.16)

Licentius the glib, the writer of poetry, has never been lost for words before. The *nescio* which sums up his outburst seems to recall that of Augustine in *De Beata Vita*, when he acknowledges that he doesn't know what might be in store at his intellectual feast (*beata u.* 3.17). There, it was an acknowledgement of a higher power, of a divine origin for the discussion; and it took its cue from Monnica's displacement onto the divine of her own claims to knowledge. Here, Licentius' *nescio* comes in the wake of his explicit bow to the cogency of divine order; and, significantly for this garrulous young man, it comes linked to a comment on the failure of language. (There is, of course, the appeal to the *uerba* to come to his aid; but they are already failing him. Presumably the sentence *et bona et mala in ordine sunt* is deliberately banal. The words, apparently, have not come.) Once again—and if anything, more pronouncedly—this is not a *nescio* which brings the dialogue to an aporetic halt. It does not indicate the impossibility of knowledge, but merely the limitations of *human* knowledge. It serves, above all, to invite wonder and belief.

Lest we are tempted to make too much of this, Augustine—as writer/compositor—immediately anticipates a sceptical reaction: Trygetius thinks that Licentius' insight is 'idiotic, and obviously foreign to the truth' (*absurdum et plane alienum a ueritate*: *ord.* 1.7.17). Later, however, even Trygetius is struck into silence by Licentius' observation that the origin of divine justice is apportionment (*distributio*: *ord.* 1.7.19).

At the moment of Licentius' conversion, day breaks.[7] The young men get up; and Augustine says many tearful prayers, hearing Licentius sing a psalm *laete atque garrule*—in a sort of joyful but repetitive chant. This introduces the unforgettable story (supposed to have happened the previous day) in which *mater nostra* reproves him for singing the passage—repeatedly, and insupportably loudly—in the lavatory. Monnica, 'an extremely pious woman, as you know' (*religiosissima, ut scis, femina*[8]), considers the place utterly inappropriate for such a song.

[7] *ord.* 1.8.22. It is hard to resist a symbolic reading of this timing: see McWilliam, 'Cassiciacum Autobiography', 37: 'day replace[s] night as the intellectual as well as the practical defeat of evil is completed.' She also remarks on the cocks, whose fight the interlocutors witness on their way to the baths, as 'the classical symbol of light and hope and therefore, for Christians, of Christ.'

[8] The 'you' referred to must be Zenobius, the dedicatee of the dialogue.

Licentius answers with a cheeky joke: so is God not going to hear his voice if an enemy locks him in? And the cavilling female is apparently dismissed.

The story, however, offsets an anxious tête-à-tête with Augustine—back on the morning of Licentius' enlightenment. What does Augustine think of this, asks Licentius? And Augustine reassures him: 'you feel, you believe, you understand' (*sentis credis intellegis*: *ord.* 1.8.23). This foreshadows Augustine's later espousal of the line from Isaiah, *nisi credideritis, non intellegetis* ('unless you believe, you will not understand'), but explicitly includes sense-perception as the first stage of the process.[9] Licentius exults that Monnica's superstitious anxiety, her *scrupulus superstitionis*, was directed against him in vain: 'Isn't this a true turning towards God?'(*Nonne hoc est uere in deum conuerti?*).[10]

The line of the psalm in question was: 'God of powers, turn us around (*conuerte nos*) and show us your face, and we shall be saved.'[11] What is the implication, then, of Licentius' satisfaction that he went on singing? Whose *scrupulus superstitionis* are we really talking about? Is the psalm portrayed as serving as some sort of incantation? Certainly, Augustine emphasizes the repetitiveness of Licentius' rendition; and he explains that he had just learnt the tune and (apparently) had it on the brain![12] At the end of *De Beata Vita*, it was Monnica's line from Ambrose which symbolized the banishment of *superstitio* in the face of the acknowledgement of the Trinity (*exclusis uanitatibus uariae superstitionis*: *beata u.* 4.35). Altogether, it seems unlikely that we're talking about a simple opposition between superstition and religious enlightenment. And Augustine turns aside Licentius' importunate question—'isn't this a true turning towards God?'—with a comment on the symbolic suitability of the place 'of bodily filth and darkness' as a place from which one might appeal for deliverance.

But Augustine's implicit answer to Licentius' question—'isn't this a true turning towards God?'—seems to be 'No'. Like the excellent teacher that he is, he doesn't give his 'No' as an outright response and discourage his pupil (and, perhaps, alienate his readers); he gently

[9] Isaiah 7: 9. 'Later espousal': see e.g. *mag.* 11.37. Discussed by Rist, *Augustine*, 56–63.

[10] On *superstitio* in Augustine, see O'Donnell at *conf.* 3.6.10 *incidi.*

[11] Augustine reflects again on this psalm (80: 7) at *conf.* 4.10.15. Note the dynamics here: God is the *agent* of change (one doesn't change one's own mind); conversion is deipetal, and conceived as a *return to* God. Burton explores this notion in *Sermo: Language in the Confessions*, 'Talking Books' (Oxford, forthcoming).

[12] *ord.* 1.8.22: *nihil aliud dicebat, quoniam ipsum cantilenae modum nuper hauserat et amabat, ut fit, melos inusitatum.*

suggests how the pupil might move on from here. The way on, it seems, is through the liberal disciplines to a true knowledge of the *beata uita*. Go, Augustine exhorts him (picking up an image from the obsessions of his pupil), to *those* Muses—a phrase he later regretted writing, even in jest (*retr.* 1.3.2). To rely on an incantation and a sudden conversion experience, this passage implies, is intellectually and theologically suspect: one must ground one's conversion in hard work and an ongoing effort of will.[13]

It is impossible, of course, not to think of another sudden conversion experience juxtaposed with an incantation: that of Augustine himself.[14] If the account in the *Confessiones* is even remotely historical, the 'tolle, lege' episode had only just happened to him (*conf.* 8.12.29)—the moment in the garden at Milan, when he heard a child chanting 'pick it up and read, pick it up and read', and decided that this must be an exhortation to seek a message from the Bible. In that case, the treatment of Licentius' 'conversion' here serves as a reminder to Augustine and to his audience that such experiences should not come in a vacuum: the 'tolle, lege' episode, set in its context, was simply another stage on a long and winding road of enquiry and exploration, leading him slowly towards God. (The verb which Augustine puts in Licentius' mouth to describe his singing of the psalm in the lavatory, *cantitare*, is the same as that used for the chanting of children's games at this point in the *Confessiones*.)

The possibility is open, however, for quite another interpretation: that Augustine used the 'tolle, lege' sequence, ten years later, to epitomize precisely the type of conversion that he is interrogating in *De Ordine*.[15] By the time he writes the *Confessiones*, perhaps he has come to see the utility of a short, neatly defined episode such as this as a pedagogic technique for leading others to God: he leads them to expect a clear marker of the moment of conversion, a distinct command from God. The form the conversion takes in the *Confessiones* reflects suspiciously closely Augustine's obsession with reading and the textual,

[13] The historical Licentius is a particularly apt figure on which to hang this insight: look at the letter of Paulinus of Nola, written at Augustine's request a decade later, and *still* trying to persuade Licentius to forswear poetry in favour of *philosophia Christiana*! (Paulinus, *ep.* 8).

[14] Noted also by Cary, 'What Licentius Learned', though he 'reads' this conversion differently, comparing *conf.* 7.10.16, not *conf.* 8.12.29.

[15] A different reading of the two conversions, but still emphasizing the contrast between them, is Paula Fredriksen, 'Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self', *JThS* NS 37 (1986), 3–34.

and so suggests a high degree of conscious framing and rearrangement:[16] Augustine carefully rejects (an over-intellectualization?) the connection of 'tolle, lege' with children's games; he stages the event in intertext, not only with the Bible, but with that great Urtext of conversion, the *Vita Antonii*. He concludes the account in terms which recall the suspiciously happy timing of the dawn in *De Ordine*: 'The instant I reached the end of this sentence, my heart was flooded with the light—as it were—of certainty, and all the darkness of doubt was put to flight' (*statim quippe cum fine huiusce sententiae quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo, omnes dubitationis tenebrae diffugerunt*: *conf.* 8.12.29). In that case, we see Augustine being far more cautious and experimental in *De Ordine*, daring to undercut swift and easy symbolisms, than he was to be in the *Confessiones*.

One element may supplement this picture, and provide a clue to Augustine's reworking of his life: the depiction of Monnica in the two episodes. In the *Confessiones*, Augustine and Alypius rush straight in to report their experiences to her:

> Thereupon, we go in to mother; we tell her about it; she rejoices. We narrate how it happened; she revels and exults in it; and she blessed You . . . because she saw for herself that You had granted to me so much more than she had been asking with her pitiable, tearful groans.
>
> inde ad matrem ingredimur, indicamus: gaudet. narramus quemadmodum gestum sit: exultat et triumphat et benedicebat tibi . . . quia tanto amplius sibi a te concessum de me uidebat quam petere solebat miserabilibus flebilibusque gemitibus. (*conf.* 8.12.30)

Here, Monnica has been reduced to the two-dimensional image familiar from the literature: her only role is to pray for Augustine's conversion, and to rejoice when it happens. (Note the swift succession of verbs in asyndeton which introduces this passage: *ingredimur; indicamus; gaudet.*) It is not surprising that, from the works produced in her lifetime, a far more complex figure emerges. Her role in Licentius' 'conversion' is ambivalent, and ambivalently signalled. She is still 'incredibly pious', *religiosissima*, in her son's words; yet he depicts Licentius accusing her of superstitious anxiety. She is not simply present as a receptor of male experience; she attempts to intervene, and elicits both respect and irritation. In the narrative of *De Ordine*, the possibility is left open that her *superstitio* represents deeper feeling than Licentius' shallow conversion. The 'staging' of Monnica in the dialogues is extremely nuanced

[16] Hardly an original observation; see Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, ch.3, 'Reading and Conversion'.

compared with her presentation in the *Confessiones*; her persona is used as a tool for interrogation, not a simple amplifier or catalyst.

We shall turn later to Monnica's relationship, in the *De Ordine*, to the course of improvement that Augustine proposes for Licentius. She is, however, shortly to appear in the dialogue *in propria persona*; and her appearance makes a resounding finale for the first book.

Squabbling like Men

In the context of the discussion of order, Licentius and Trygetius begin arguing about whether or not Christ and God both count as God. (This is one of the very few points at which Christ is mentioned *as Christ* in the dialogues;[17] and it is of considerable significance that this is the point at which Augustine makes clear his final divorce from the status of secular *magister*—the true *magister*, of course, being Christ.) Trygetius is doubtful: 'When we say the name of God', he says, 'it's not as if Christ himself comes to mind, but his father' (*Deum enim quando nominamus, non quasi mentibus ipse Christus occurrit, sed pater*: *ord.* 1.10.29).[18] Challenged by Licentius, he reasserts his position: the father is properly (*proprie*) called God. Augustine, however, cuts him off short: 'Restrain yourself! It's not improper that the Son is called God'—whereupon, the young men begin to squabble about whether or not this exchange should be on the record. Augustine the compositor describes them as squabbling 'like boys—or rather, more's the pity, like almost all men, as if we were debating the matter just for the sake of claiming the glory, *gloriandi causa* (*puerorum scilicet more uel potius hominum—pro nefas! paene omnium, quasi uero gloriandi causa inter nos illud ageretur*: *ord.* 1.10.29).[19] Trygetius laughs at seeing Licentius flushed with shame—which prompts the Augustine

[17] There is a prominent mention of Christ at *c. Acad.* 3.20.43, an appeal to Christ's *auctoritas*—against *ratio* (on which, see Part Three); Christ is also named at *ord.* 1.11.32, discussed below. According to Augustine ten years later, if Alypius had had his way, there would have been even fewer! See *conf.* 9.4.7; but consider also Augustine's motivation to emphasize the battle he would (or might) have had to insert the name of Christ, given that by this time he was embarrassed at the way in which these dialogues 'breath[ed] all the pride of the schools'.

[18] There is no possessive adjective before *pater*, but the sense seems to lean towards 'his' rather than simply 'the' father.

[19] My translation of *gloriandi* is based on the definition in *TLL*, 'gloriam uindicare'; the usual sense of 'boasting' does not quite fit here. For Augustine's later interrogation of the notion of *gloria*, see Conybeare, '*terrarum orbi documentum*: Augustine, Camillus, and Learning from History', *AugStud* 30 (1999), 59–74.

within the dialogue to break into an impassioned speech. Can they not see—even 'with eyes as bleary as mine' (*tam lippientibus oculis quam ego*)—the terrible danger of heresy they are running? *Boni estote*, Augustine finally implores: 'be good'? or 'be gentlemen'?

That this episode is heavily charged with the rhetoric of gender should not, by this time, escape our notice. The disdain for 'almost all men' (and, presumably, all boys), who conduct their affairs only for the sake of worldly *gloria*, is palpable. Are women then exempt from these pitfalls? There is little clue, until one decodes the reference of the *oculi lippientes*. *Lippio*, while common in late classical texts, seems in early Christian writers to be used primarily with reference to a particular Old Testament episode. Augustine chooses, astonishingly, to cast himself as Leah in his reproaches; for it is she who was famously bleary-eyed, while her younger sister Rachel was beautiful.[20] The two sisters had become types for *synagoga* and *ecclesia*, for the law of the Old Testament and the revelation of the New—as explained by Ambrose: Leah 'due to her bleary eyes took on the figure of the synagogue, because it could not see the grace of Christ with the blunted gaze of its feeble mind.'[21] Augustine is presumably referring to his unbaptized state, his position as merely a catechumen in the Christian faith, by casting himself as Leah. But he is also casting himself as a woman, an outsider to the masculine traditions and behaviour which he has been criticizing in his pupils. We should notice that he finishes this speech with a reframing of his own role as *magister* to the young men—in terms, not of his effect on their formal education, but of his love for them and his concern for their characters. It is in that context that he implores them, *boni estote*. This, remember, is the concern he has claimed for himself in *De Academicis*: it is both the grounds of his identification with Cicero, and of his dissociation from him (*c. Acad.* 1.2.8).

At this point, tears stop Augustine briefly; but when Licentius, understandably taken aback, asks what they have done, Augustine continues to inveigh against the futility of conventional education. He reminds Licentius of how angry and upset he used to get

[20] *Sed Lia lippis erat oculis, Rahel decora facie et uenusto aspectu*: Gen. 29:17. The other possibility is that Augustine is simply referring jokingly to his advanced age, relative to the boys; but this seems unlikely, given the earnestness of his address here.

[21] *. . . quae lippientibus oculis synagogae figuram accepit, quia Christi gratiam uidere non potuit hebetato debilis mentis obtutu*: Ambr. *Psal.* 118.19.24. See also (e.g.) Hier. *Os.* 3.12, *ep.* 123.12: *Lia lippientibus oculis et Rachel, quam Iacob amat plurimum, synagogam ecclesiamque testantur.*

(*grauiter . . . stomachari*[22]) in 'that school', the school of rhetoric, that the boys were motivated not by the beauty of the applied liberal disciplines, but by the love of praise.[23] Now Licentius and Trygetius are introducing rivalry and boasting into this life of philosophical pursuit; and if he prevents them, will they then become more sluggish in the study of doctrine (*ad studia doctrinae*)? Licentius is properly contrite, and suggests that the whole episode be deleted from the tablets on which it's being noted. No, says Trygetius, 'let our punishment stand, so that the very reputation (*fama*) which entices us may deter us from her love with her own goad' (*maneat nostra poena, ut ea ipsa quae nos inlicit fama flagello proprio a suo amore deterreat*: *ord.* 1.10.30)—that is to say, their mutual concern for 'the record' should become an incentive to show up well in it. The mutability of the record, on which we have already remarked, is put to good ethical use.

Augustine is here stepping outside the educational system in which he has himself excelled to criticize the obsession with *fama* which it instils in the (male) young—to the exclusion of considerations of honesty or of genuine accomplishment. This involves, also, moving beyond his own role and priorities as a secular *magister*; and to accomplish this, he invokes the persona of Leah, an outsider and a woman.

At this point—right on cue, one might say—his mother enters. 'She asked us what progress we had made; for the subject of our enquiry was known to her as well' (*quaesiuit . . . a nobis quid promouissemus; nam et ei quaestio nota erat*: *ord.* 1.11.31). It is interesting that this time, even having been absent, she is presented as mistress of the full context of the discussion. When Augustine orders that her entrance and query be recorded, she demurs: 'what are you doing (*quid agitis*)?'. In the immediate context of the dialogue, this becomes far more than stereotypical female (or maternal) modesty: juxtaposed with Augustine's outburst against *fama*, Monnica is representing those who are *not* motivated by a crass concern for reputation as an end in itself. Augustine portrays her as resisting the idea that her words should be put on record, either as a negative or positive inducement: it is simply irrelevant.

In this context, the grounds of her objection have additional interest. 'Surely I've never heard of women being brought into this type of debate in those books you read?' (*numquidnam in illis quos legitis libris*

[22] Remember Licentius laughing *stomachanter* when outflanked in argument at *beata u.* 2.15; and see the further material on *stomachus* at p. 109 below.

[23] On the contrast between *schola illa* and *schola nostra*, see Steppat, *Die Schola von Cassiciacum*: *Augustins* De Ordine (Bad Honnef, 1980), and Holt, ' "Tolle Scribe" '.

etiam feminas umquam audiui in hoc genus disputationis inductas? ord. 1.11.31). Look at the way in which the tension between textual tradition and staged 'reality' is being exploited. On one level, as we would expect, the line illuminates her reluctance to participate in the rules of *fama*: that, it seems, is something which men do in books, not women in real life (or rather, 'real life'!). But its tone also recalls her intervention in *De Beata Vita*, when she protests that Augustine has forgotten her sex in claiming that she has captured philosophy's citadel (*beata u.* 2.10). There, it will be remembered, she asserts her right to be called a 'little woman'—and Augustine draws attention to her access to the wellspring of knowledge. Here, a similar move is being made: Monnica is both asserting her presence as a woman, and insisting on her exclusion from the male literary tradition. Though the next move is not explicitly made here, it may be imported from the other dialogue: we (women? Christians?) have other techniques of enquiry, and other sources of knowledge. To insist on such literary exclusion is to draw attention to it—to the exclusion, not only of Monnica herself, but of all other possible female participants; and Augustine, by recording or inventing this exchange, places upon himself the obligation to respond.—He has represented Monnica as proud both to claim and to disclaim the 'female' space in the male literary tradition; that space Augustine himself will now have to fill.[24]

Augustine, therefore, launches into his justification of Monnica's presence—but in ambivalent and shifting terms. It is as if he cannot decide on what grounds she is objecting to appearing in the record—or why he should feel impelled to justify her inclusion.

He begins by addressing the issue of genre: is it appropriate for women to be included in philosophical dialogues? Some men, he says, apply the same rules to reading books and greeting people: how well are they dressed? The actual ideas at stake are not important to them. (Is this an allusion to his previous statement—subsequently undermined—that Monnica had grasped the Ciceronian sentiment but 'lacked the words' for it?) But that is not true of everyone: there have been more discriminating readers, who have moved through the lavishly decorated doorways of great literature to the inner sanctum of philosophy. Augustine specifies that such literature is known to Monnica through his own

[24] Note also the discussion of this passage in Laurie Douglass (now Laura Holt), 'Voice Re-Cast: Augustine's Use of Conversation in *De ordine* and the *Confessions*', *AugStud* 27 (1996), 39–54.

reading of it (aloud, of course: it is only recently before the withdrawal to Cassiciacum that Augustine has been surprised by the silent reading of Ambrose).[25] He thus quietly endorses Monnica's claim to knowledge of the literary tradition which they are both invoking.

Augustine goes on to say that, 'to pass over others', Theodorus has made sure that no one can complain about contemporary literature. Why, we may ask, is such praise lavished on Theodorus here? He is not, after all, the dedicatee of this dialogue. Are we revisiting the vexed contraposition of Theodorus and Monnica in *De Beata Vita*? In that case, the point must be precisely to draw the two together: to show that the apparently disparate traditions which they represent are in fact complexly interdependent. Augustine continues:

> For that matter, if my books should come into the hands of these [readers], and when they've read my name they haven't said 'Who on earth is this?' and chucked away the manuscript, but have proceeded (either from curiosity or addiction to learning) to enter, in spite of the inferior threshold (*limen*)—these people wouldn't be annoyed that I was doing philosophy with you; I don't think they would despise any of those whose speech is intermingled with my writing.
>
> mei autem si quorum forte manus tetigerint lectoque meo nomine non dixerint: 'iste quis est?' codicemque proiecerint, sed uel curiosi uel nimium studiosi contempta uilitate liminis intrare perrexerint, me tecum philosophantem non moleste ferent nec quemquam istorum, quorum meis litteris sermo miscetur, fortasse contemnent. (*ord.* 1.11.31)

The reasons for this Augustine divulges with astonishing candour. They (the readers) are gentlemen, *liberi*—'which is sufficient for *any liberal* [or gentlemanly?] *discipline*, not least philosophy' (*quod cuiuis disciplinae liberali, nedum philosophiae satis est*: *ord.* 1.11.31)—and also born to the highest estate. Yet plenty of writings show people of the lowest classes in society shining with philosophical genius. And there are some readers who will be more pleased by seeing Monnica's participation in the philosophical discussion (*quia mecum philosopharis*) than by anything else, however charming or serious.

So what exactly are the implications of this? Is Monnica's presence intellectual gimmickry? Is Augustine expecting that there will be women among his audience? In general, Augustine's readers (envisaged? actual? certainly his dedicatees) are conventionally-educated, upper class males. But, he points out, the generic conventions of the philosophical dialogue

[25] Augustine speaks of the *libros tibi nobis legentibus notos*: *ord.* 1.11.31. His astonishment at Ambrose's powers of silent reading: *conf.* 6.3.3.

embrace cobblers and 'even those of much lower class' doing philosophy.[26] Philosophers need not be gentlemen—so long as they are safely corralled within the *codices* of literary tradition, for the edification of their gentlemanly readers. And there is a type of man—presumably, considering the justification that follows, a sub-set of the previous group—who will not object even to Monnica doing philosophy with Augustine. 'For women did philosophy too among our forebears—and your philosophy is very appealing to me' (*et feminae sunt apud ueteres philosophatae et philosophia tua mihi plurimum placet*: still *ord.* 1.11.31). Again the grounds of justification are based on genre and precedent; again, it is fine for those who are not gentlemen (neither upper-class nor male) to do philosophy—so long as they remain within the confines of the literary tradition. And that means, staying within the confines of the text as well.

But of course, Augustine's messages here are incredibly—crucially—mixed. After all, who *apud ueteres* could he be thinking of? Who are these women who 'do philosophy'? We have already spoken, in our discussion of *De Beata Vita*, of the 'Diotima effect', the way in which 'women doing philosophy' are distanced from the main action by narrative encircling and reported speech or simply by extremes of stereotyping. Monnica is no Diotima, the 'woman from Mantinea' with a name and origin that bring her suspiciously close to a sibyl. On the contrary: as we observed, she is a living, flesh-and-blood figure, with her family relationships—especially to her son, the compositor of the dialogues—very firmly in place. Her interventions in those dialogues have been spasmodic and unpredictable. As a result, even without the qualifier *apud ueteres*, it seems unlikely that Augustine is thinking of his near-contemporary Hypatia, who was teaching a select circle of upper-class young men in Alexandria at the time.[27] Could the reference be to the more homespun philosophy of a figure such as Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi?[28] Or could it be more baldly to *philosophia Christiana*, and to

[26] Compare Alcibiades on Socrates, Pl. *Smp.* 221e: 'he talks about donkeys and pack-asses, about blacksmiths, cobblers, and tanners . . .'.

[27] See Maria Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria* (Cambridge Mass., 1995). Hypatia, unlike Monnica, seems to have claimed the transcendence of mere gender which was conventional for intellectual women: 'Hypatia, as a teacher of philosophy and an ethical master [*sic*], transformed the concept of womanhood. Her moral mission, which found fulfillment in private activities as well as in spectacular public gestures, raised her high above her sex' (p. 60).

[28] On whose 'teaching' see Joseph Farrell, *Latin Language and Latin Culture* (Cambridge, 2001), 60–65; Judith P. Hallett, 'Women Writing in Rome' in *Women Writing Latin* (New York/London, 2002), i. 13–24. The slender list of 'real' women philosophers is discussed by Barbara Levick, 'Women, Power, and Philosophy at Rome and Beyond', in Clark and Rajak (eds.), *Philosophy and Power in the Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford, 2002), 133–55.

women 'doing (Christian) philosophy' in the Bible?—to Martha and Mary, perhaps?[29] Women recognizably situated in everyday life?

As we have already seen, whether or not these dialogues are actually edited transcriptions, all the textual indications point to a reality outside the text. No sooner, then, does Augustine invoke a reassuring division between his humble text and his gentlemanly readers, than he implicitly undermines it. The text also contains readers—including those, like Monnica, who would not conventionally count as such, but who (as Augustine has made clear) have gained indirect but perfectly valid knowledge of the textual tradition to which he appeals.[30] Such readers complicate the relationship of gentlemanly distance between reader and text, for they may at any minute step outside the text and engage the gentlemanly addressee. Remember that Licentius is the son of one of the dedicatees; remember the way in which Augustine seems to have failed his 'gentlemanly addressee' in Book 1 of *De Academicis*, and possibly in *De Beata Vita* as well.

Suddenly, disconcertingly, the text shifts its place in the hierarchy of control: no longer simply the passive recipient of generic convention and the attentions of the reader, it becomes a call to action. Part of that call to action involves accepting that women—real women—may in some sense do philosophy too (though the dangers of transgressing that 'in some sense' are all too clearly shown by the fate of the aforementioned philosopher Hypatia, who was stoned to death in 415). They may act *liberrime*—as Monnica did at that crucial juncture in *De Beata Vita* (*beata u.* 2.16). And so the boundaries of the world of the *liberi* become a little confused; and once again, an inclusive message is subtly delivered. Perhaps the social inclusivity *apud ueteres* in literature should be extended into life. Perhaps the definition of a gentlemanly education (*disciplina liberalis*) should be reconsidered. Obviously, Augustine needed to exploit the ambiguity of his plea to his pupils: 'boni estote'. Under the guise of humility about the *limen* of his writing, Augustine—outsider (*iste quis est?*) but educated—gets across the *limen* of his gentlemanly readers. It is a point of no return; but it is accomplished so quietly, so subtly, that

[29] Luke 10: 38–42; Augustine in *conf.* chooses language for Monnica (e.g. *satagere*) that echoes the language used of Martha in this episode. Note also the prominent women converted by Paul in Acts 17: 4 and 17: 12—and the fact that these texts were, it seems, particularly susceptible to corruptions which diminished that prominence: see Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters* (New York, 2000), 116, with further references there.

[30] I was originally alerted to such ideas of 'indirect reading' by Brian Stock and his notion of 'textual communities': see *Listening for the Text* (Baltimore, 1990), ch. 7.

the readers outside the text (who have, after all, been flattered as 'content-not-style' readers) will be drawn along rather than alienated.

The line of justification to Monnica, at the end of the apparent digression of the paragraph on readers, is in fact the discursive fulcrum. 'For women did philosophy too among our forebears (*apud ueteres*)—and your philosophy is very appealing to me.' First, we have looked back at the generic precedent for women doing philosophy, and thereby reassured the external readers; now, we look to the present, to the nature not of traditional philosophy, but of *philosophia tua*, Monnica's own way of doing philosophy. And the process of destabilization is continued.

Monnica Does Philosophy

Augustine begins by focusing on a definition of philosophy in general—not, immediately, *philosophia tua*. 'In case you're unaware of it, mother, this Greek word, from which philosophy takes its name, means in Latin "love of wisdom" ' (*ne quid, mater, ignores, hoc Graecum uerbum, quo philosophia nominatur, Latine amor sapientiae dicitur*: *ord.* 1.11.32). This is again a gesture towards reassurance and *re*-stabilization: his audience will feel themselves on the safe ground of a familiar etymology; and Monnica is abruptly reduced to the status of a mere teaching tool. We hear that the Holy Scriptures, 'which you embrace so earnestly' (*quas uehementer amplecteris*), teach that not all philosophers, but the philosophers of this world—presumably another allusion to the *sapientia huius mundi*—should be avoided and ridiculed. After all, 'whoever thinks that *all* philosophy should be avoided wants nothing other than that we should not love wisdom'. So far, so good: a project of reclamation, which claims that only the right sort of philosophy is valid, will again be familiar to Augustine's gentlemanly readers.[31] And the subsequent assertion that Christ will act as guarantor of this philosophy (*ord.* 1.11.32) will seem, to those following Augustine's attempts to devise a *philosophia Christiana*, perfectly appropriate.

[31] The structure of Cic. *Fin.* plays out this dynamic: speeches from the Epicurean and the Stoic points of view respectively are laid out and then derided in successive books; only the Academic position, in book 5, remains unassailed. For raillery among friends on philosophical topics, see Miriam T. Griffin, 'Philosophical Badinage in Cicero's Letters to his Friends', in J. G. F. Powell (ed.), *Cicero the Philosopher* (Oxford, 1995), 325–46.

But yet again, the token woman—with the ideas she represents—threatens to take on a life of her own. Augustine says he would include her in his writings if she loved wisdom even a little bit (astonishing in itself: since when was the love of wisdom a guarantee of intellectual inclusion *for a woman*?)—but as it is,

> since you love wisdom more than you love me [not, 'more than I do'!]—and I know how much you love me—and since you have progressed so far in wisdom that you are no longer appalled by the fear of any type of sudden misfortune nor (which is incredibly difficult for the most learned of men) of death itself, which everyone agrees is the highest summit of philosophy, shall I not give myself gladly to you as a pupil?
>
> . . . cum [sapientiam] multo plus quam me ipsum diligas et nouerim, quantum me diligas, cumque in ea tantum profeceris, ut iam nec cuiusuis incommodi fortuiti nec ipsius mortis, quod uiris doctissimis difficillimum est, horrore terrearis, quam summam philosophiae arcem omnes esse confitentur, egone me non libenter tibi etiam discipulum dabo? (*ord.* 1.11.32)

Despite the build-up, the last words of the passage—which is also the end of Augustine's answer to his mother's objection at being included in the dialogue—come as a shock.[32] We have been prepared for a redefinition of philosophy as the love of heavenly, rather than mundane and earthly, wisdom by Augustine's gloss on Christ's words (John 18: 36), 'My kingdom is not of *this* world' (Christ does not, Augustine observes, say, 'My kingdom is not of *the* world').[33] We have been prepared by Augustine's outburst against secular teaching for his renunciation of his role as secular *magister*. We have been prepared, in this passage, by an elaborate crescendo for the idea that Monnica is a leading example of the love of wisdom 'not of this world'. But that Augustine's new status, vis-à-vis this new type of philosophy, should involve renouncing his magisterial position completely and submitting himself as a pupil to his own mother—that is simply astonishing.[34]

Note, now, the way in which this inflammatory suggestion is defused. Monnica is portrayed as totally unconvinced: 'she said—kindly and piously—that I had never been so deluded.' They have been 'pouring forth' so many words that the secretaries can't keep up—and anyway, there is no space left on the tablets on which the conversation is being

[32] Though see the reflection on *amor sapientiae* in the Note on Method below.

[33] *Christus . . . non dicit: 'regnum meum non est de mundo', sed: 'regnum meum non est de hoc mundo'*: *ord.* 1.11.32. See *retr*; and the discussion of *duos mundos* below.

[34] Hoffmann, *Dialog*, 151, remarks on Monnica's 'besondere Stellung', and on Augustine becoming her pupil, but passes on without further comment.

recorded. Finally, Augustine pleads that the enquiry be deferred 'to spare my *stomachus*'.

The role of Augustine's *stomachus* bears remark. It is, of course, a *dolor stomachi* (or *pectoris*) which has caused him to lay aside his teaching duties in Milan. But it seems that the *stomachus*—perhaps, for English analogy, best translated 'spleen'—also comes to represent for him the irritation and discomfiture of teaching in secular schools of learning. Hence the fact that, when he gets so angry with Licentius and Trygetius for acting 'for the sake of claiming the glory', *causa gloriandi*, it is in his *stomachus* that he feels it; and hence, surely, the apparent coinage of *stomachanter* for Licentius' unpleasant laughter when he is outflanked in argument in *De Beata Vita*—immediately before Monnica intervenes *liberrime*.

The aposiopesis seems, to say the least, over-determined. Augustine turns aside from the truly revolutionary opportunity, which for a moment, within the logic of the dialogue, has seemed inevitable. What would have happened if his mother's voice had been portrayed as taking over?—if she had, as *magistra*, begun to direct the course of the dialogue and the parameters of discussion for her *discipuli*, instead of (in reported speech!) rejecting the possibility?

Arguably, Augustine would then have lost his audience completely. It is equally probable that he himself was not yet ready to collate the hints which he portrays his mother as giving him into a thoroughgoing Christian worldview—a systematic theology, one might say. And yet, in some sense he did indeed become a *discipulus* of his mother. Look at the litany of regrets concerning this part of the *De Ordine* which he rehearses in the *Retractationes*:

> In this work, it bothers me that I inserted the name of 'fortune' so often. And that I didn't add, 'corporeal', when I mentioned the corporeal senses. And that I attributed a great deal to the liberal disciplines, of which many saints know very little—while some, who do have knowledge of them, are not saints. And that I called the Muses 'goddesses' of a sort, even though I was joking. . . . And that I said that philosophers not endowed with true religious feeling glowed with the light of virtue.
>
> . . . in his libris displicet mihi saepe interpositum fortunae uocabulum; et quod non addebam corporis, quando sensus corporis nominaui; et quod multum tribui liberalibus disciplinis, quas multi sancti multum nesciunt, quidam etiam qui sciunt eas sancti non sunt; et quod Musas quasi aliquas deas quamuis iocando commemoraui . . . et quod philosophos non uera pietate praeditos dixi uirtutis luce fulsisse. (*retr.* 1.3.2)[35]

[35] The clause which I have omitted reads simply, 'And that I called a sense of wonder a vice' (*Et quod admirationem uitium nuncupau*)—the wonder (in context) being occasioned by observing

Augustine was his mother's pupil after all. For, in our discussion of the Cassiciacum works so far, we have seen Monnica portrayed as leading him towards each of these positions. And, in the second book of *De Ordine*, we see a further development in the discussion of the gentlemanly education, the 'liberal disciplines'.

The dialogue continues, in Book 2, after a few days and the return of Alypius. The interlocutors gather in the meadow—where the only one who is favoured with an introduction is *mater nostra*:

> My mother was with us too: I had earlier noted her talents, and her mind roused to heavenly things, through long intimacy and careful observation—and then, in a certain not unimportant debate, which I held on my birthday with friends and put into a little book [i.e. *De Beata Vita*], her mental capacity was so clear to me that nothing seemed better suited to true philosophy (*uerae philosophiae*). And so I had decided (since she was very much at leisure) to make sure that she was not absent from our conversation. This you realized in the first book of this work too.
>
> nobiscum erat etiam mater nostra, cuius ingenium atque in res diuinas inflammatum animum cum antea conuictu diuturno et diligenti consideratione perspexeram tum uero in quadam disputatione non paruae rei, quam die natali meo cum conuiuis habui atque in libellum contuli, tanta mihi mens eius apparuerat, ut nihil aptius uerae philosophiae uideretur. itaque institueram, cum abundaret otio, agere, ut conloquio nostro non deesset. quod in primo etiam huius operis libro abs te cognitum est. (*ord.* 2.1.1)

Given the part which Monnica has played in the peroration of the first book of *De Ordine*, this introduction seems somewhat belated—though certainly, she wasn't included in the cast of characters at the beginning of this dialogue (*ord.* 1.2.5). Had Zenobius, the dedicatee, already seen the first book and—as anticipated by Augustine—remarked on the oddity of a woman 'doing philosophy' with the others? That would seem to be the point of the last sentence here: Zenobius has indeed noticed the presence of Monnica—and objected to it. Perhaps he has also reacted against the challenge to his education and training which she—and Augustine's re-reading of philosophy through her—represents. If so, Augustine is unrepentant. His only concession to any unease which Zenobius or his wider audience might be feeling might be seen in his occasional ingratiating use of litotes, the double negatives of rhetorical understatement (*non paruae rei* and *non deesset*). Otherwise, his defence of Monnica's right to be included is forceful. He traces

things which were apparently *praeter ordinem*. This is not directly illuminated by the present discussion, but will be seen to have a bearing on Part Three; and again, it could be said that Monnica is portrayed as leading her son to value a 'sense of wonder'.

exactly the progression which we have seen enacted in *De Beata Vita* and *De Ordine*: from the admiration engendered by eating and living in the company of his mother (*conuictus diuturnus*[36]) to his recognition of her pre-eminence in the new kind of philosophical disputation which he is essaying. Indeed, the dramatic transformation of Monnica's role is epitomized a little later in the dialogue, when a slave—'to whom we had given that job [*negotium*]'—runs out of the house and summons the company in to lunch. Her *negotium* now belongs to this domestic; what her new *negotium* is to be, we discover at the end of the dialogue, but no longer is it Monnica's role to break in on the men's conversation and deny them their *uerba faciendi locus*.[37] Augustine does not repeat his claim that he is Monnica's pupil; indeed, he firmly reasserts control over the course and content of the dialogues, including his responsibility for choosing the participants. But he does bear emphatic witness to the power of her mind: 'her mental capacity was so clear to me that nothing seemed better suited to true philosophy.'

The 'mental capacity' of Monnica is immediately, if implicitly, contrasted with the capacity of the younger, male, participants, for Augustine opens the sequel by reminding the company that the conversation had been postponed because he was so angry with the boys for dealing childishly, *pueriliter,* with important matters. The choice of adverb here is striking. In its immediate context, it obviously refers back to the accusation that Licentius and Trygetius were debating merely *gloriandi causa*—'like all boys and most men'.[38] But it also recalls the *superstitio quaedam puerilis* at the beginning of *De Beata Vita* (and Augustine himself has just reminded his readers of this dialogue).[39] This was the superstition above which Augustine had to rise (*factus erectior*) in order to continue his enquiry into the precepts of the *Hortensius*.[40] O'Donnell interprets the phrase simply as a reference to 'the religion of his

[36] Note that the primary meaning of *uictus* (which derives from *uiuere*) is 'that upon which one lives', and hence, 'sustenance, nourishment' (see L&S s.v.): hence my translation of '*conuictus*' here as referring importantly to *eating* together.

[37] *. . . puer de domo*, *cui dederamus id negotii*, *cucurrit ad nos et horam prandii esse nuntiauit*: *ord.* 2.6.18; *uerba faciendi locus*: *c. Acad.* 2.5.13. In the light of the discussion of the *superstitio . . . puerilis* below, we may note that the word for 'slave' also is *puer*.

[38] *ord.* 1.10.29 (and discussion above).

[39] *superstitio quaedam puerilis*: *beata u.* 1.4.

[40] See Robert J. O'Connell, 'On Augustine's "First Conversion": factus erectior (*de beata vita* 4)', *AugStud* 17 (1986), 15–29.

[Augustine's] mother'.[41] But there is no need to interpret this tantalizingly indeterminate phrase in this manner, no further textual pointers to require it; and it will be remembered that at the end of *De Beata Vita*, it is Monnica's quotation from Ambrose which symbolizes the expulsion of *superstitio* (*beata u.* 4.35). Could we not, then, argue that the emphasis in the phrase is on the state of puerility, with the *superstitio* merely its corollary: in other words, that the concern of both dialogues (indeed, all the Cassiciacum dialogues) is to move beyond *pueritia*, both educational and spiritual, and on towards—what? Not, it would seem, 'manhood' as traditionally conceived, but a more inclusive spiritual state, one which embraces Monnica and her experience as well as Augustine and his. The dialogues, in fact, both chart and enable the process of becoming *erectior*—for, as we see repeatedly, it is when *erectus* or *erecta* that spiritual truth may be generated or received.[42]

Licentius had taken it upon himself to define 'order', and Augustine reminds him of this to relaunch the discussion; but his first contribution of any substance in fact echoes an insight of Monnica's from *De Beata Vita*. 'It seems to me', says Licentius, 'that nothing exists without God' (*sine deo mihi nihil uidetur esse*: *ord.* 2.1.3): compare this with Monnica's statement, 'It seems to me that no one does not have God' (*mihi . . . uidetur deum nemo non habere*: *beata u.* 3.19).[43] The observation has been extended from the personal to the general; but the close parallelism enacts and exemplifies Monnica's superior spiritual status: without the benefit of a structured education, she has—as it were—left *pueritia* behind her, and reached the important conclusion before Licentius.

The dialogue pursues other strands of the argument for a while, but then returns to the idea of what it might mean to be 'not without God'. Indeed—as if to underline the impossibility of divorcing God from involvement with His creation—Augustine stages yet again a version of the *non sine deo* discussion. Augustine invites Licentius to agree that

[41] O'Donnell, 'Next Life', 225.

[42] Note that at *beata u.* 1.4, the description *factus erectior*—of moving beyond the *superstitio . . . puerilis*—is not really congruent with the rest of the simile (which is of darkness): this suggests that the *erectus* image is more powerful than a mere simile, deeply embedded in the way Augustine thinks about intellectual and spiritual progression. There are brief notes on this verb by O'Donnell at *conf.* 9.10.24; the most telling parallel seems to me that from *De Trinitate*, *est item aliud hominum genus, eorum qui universam quidem creaturam, quae profecto mutabilis est, nituntur transcendere ut ad incommutabilem substantiam quae deus est erigant intentionem* (*trin.* 1.1.1).

[43] This leads on to the passage at *beata u.* 3.21, discussed at some length above, in which Monnica concludes precisely that no one is *sine deo*; what varies is God's disposition towards a person.

'those who are not with God, exist without God' (*qui cum deo non sunt, esse sine deo*: *ord* 2.7.20). But Licentius—asking Augustine most politely to bear with his *infantia*—contradicts him: 'For those people seem to me not to be with God—and yet to be held (*haberi*) by God; so I cannot say that those whom God holds are without God' (*nam isti nec cum deo mihi uidentur esse et a deo tamen haberi, itaque non possum eos sine deo esse dicere, quos deus habet*). He then invokes explicitly the discussion of *De Beata Vita*, which had equated holding/having God (*deum habere*) with enjoying God (*deo perfrui*: *beata u.* 4.34)—concluding, 'but I confess, I fear that those are opposites, and that someone might be neither without God nor with Him' (*sed fateor me formidare ista contraria, quomodo quisque nec sine deo sit nec cum deo*). Through the persona of Licentius, Augustine seems to be expressing discomfiture with what was indeed a contradictory peroration to the earlier dialogue, with its unresolved tension between the apparently Neoplatonic *summus modus* and the notions of 'having' or 'enjoying' God. And in his own persona, he here endeavours to dismiss the problem as beside the point: 'Don't let that bother you. For where the thing (*res*) fits, who would not despise the words (*uerba*)?' (*nam ubi res conuenit, quis non uerba contemnat? ord.* 2.7.21).[44] One might think that this is a problematic stance for a philosophical dialogue—but it is one which, as we shall see, is reflected in the final thrust of his argument.

One of the 'other strands' of the argument which I have just passed over, however, is of immense importance in Augustine's attempts to complicate the (broadly) Neoplatonic assumptions of philosophy: who should participate in its pursuit, and how. Again, it is explored in dialogue with Licentius; again, it reflects a concern for the issues around embodiment which are elsewhere mediated through Monnica.

A Disembodied Teacher?

Licentius is suggesting to Augustine a view of the location and qualities of memory, *memoria*, in the wise (*ord.* 2.2.6).[45] Initially, he associates memory uncomplicatedly with the transient. We use it to remember fluctuating things; and it is itself unreliable. (We have already discussed the exclamation at the beginning of the *Soliloquia*: 'well, then, there must

[44] Note that this also looks *forward* to the contradictory ending of this dialogue!

[45] This passage has been much discussed: see esp. Klaus Winkler, 'La théorie augustinienne de la mémoire à son point de départ', in *Augustinus Magister* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954), i. 511–19.

be writing': *ergo scribendum est.*) It belongs in a part of the soul, but an 'extremely inferior part' (*uilissima pars)*—the part, precisely, that deals with the transient. Only permanent and immobile things, however, can be with God: only the *other* part of the soul, not tainted by sense-perception, can be called wise.

This is an utterly conventional view of the role and place of memory, which goes back at least to Plotinus (memory is of 'things that have happened and passed away'[46]). Behind Licentius' interjections throughout this passage lies a figure very like Plotinus' upward-looking, solitary sage: 'What . . . if one does not depart at all from one's contemplation of [the eternal] but stays in its company, wondering at its nature, and able to do so by a natural power [*phúsis*] that never fails? Surely one would be . . . oneself on the move towards eternity and never falling away from it at all, *that one might be like it and eternal*, contemplating eternity and the eternal by the eternal in oneself'.[47] To be wise is to associate oneself with the eternal and immutable; memory must be base, for it deals with ephemera.

And yet, Augustine had praised Licentius, after his conversion experience, with 'you feel, you believe, you understand' (*sentis credis intellegis*). He has repeatedly endorsed his mother's complication of a Neoplatonic ideal of rejection of the body in rapt contemplation of the One. Is the memory really to be consigned only to an 'extremely inferior part' of the soul, with which the wise man will have nothing to do? No: as we might expect, Augustine begins to stage an interrogation of Licentius' polarizing of the eternal and the mutable.

Characteristically, the first moves in the interrogation are inserted into the speech of Licentius himself. The referent of the adjective *sapiens*, 'wise', suddenly slips back to being the (whole) wise man, not just the part of the soul of which wisdom can be predicated. 'After all,'

[46] *Enn.* 4.4.6: 'tôn gàr gegeneménon kaì pareleluthóton'. Winkler, 'Théorie de la mémoire', traces closely the relationship between Plotinus' thought and Augustine's in this precise passage of *ord.*

[47] *Enn.* 3.7.5; translation of A. H. Armstrong. The exact nature and degree of Augustine's knowledge of Plotinus—or, for that matter, Porphyry—is not a question which I wish to address here: it is clear to me that he knew, by some route, the general tenets which I am discussing, and had engaged with them deeply. The interested reader may note the aporetic comments of Pierre Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Paris, 1971), 206–10; for the conviction that Augustine had read the *Enneads*, see (e.g.) Aimé Solignac, 'Réminiscences plotiniennes et porphyriennes dans le début du *de ordine* de saint Augustin', *Archives de philosophie*, 20 (1957), 446–65. Other than those *Enneads* mentioned here, I allude to *Enn.* 1.6 and 4.3–4; a 'minimum' list of *Enneads* which could have been known to Augustine (which includes all these) is offered by Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London, 1970), 44–5.

says Licentius, 'that wise man [*ille sapiens*, not *illa*, which would refer to the feminine *anima*]embraces and revels in God, who is everlasting' (*ille igitur sapiens amplectitur deum eoque perfruitur, qui semper manet*: *ord.* 2.2.6). What are the implications of this? To parody Augustine's own *ars disputandi*, is the wise man then to be identified only with the wise part of his soul? Or does he in some way contain the whole soul—the parts which deal with impermanence as well as the immobile parts? and in that case, how can he still be called wise? Plotinus dismisses this potential problem in his treatise on blessedness (*Perì Eudaimonías*), insisting that the true sage is completely detached from the inferior parts of his soul: only the parts which pertain to blessedness are truly his.[48] However, Augustine, as we have seen, is increasingly exploring his dissatisfaction with such a separation. He sees very clearly that what sounds plausible on the metaphysical level—that the spheres of attention of the mind should be divided—begins to unravel when confronted with embodiment.

The next move in this potential unravelling is also placed in Licentius' mouth, as he develops the image of the wise man using his memory like a slave: 'Immovable and self-contained, he oversees the slave's purse, as it were, such that the memory, like a frugal and punctilious servant, might use it well and keep it carefully.' *Peculium*, the term translated as 'purse', refers expressly to money or property disbursed by the head of a household (here *dominus*) to one of his children or slaves, to use as their own; but the privilege of controlling that property may be revoked by the *dominus* at any time. The image seems apt when Licentius introduces it, not least because it formalizes his separation of the spheres of attention: the wise man remains fixed on the immutable; his slave, memory, dispenses individual memories from his own purse, which the wise man need not have anything to do with. But in fact, this metaphor will fatally complicate Licentius' simplistic vision. Who, after all, was responsible for establishing the purse in the first place?

At this point, Augustine—the speaker within the dialogue—intervenes:

> While I was pondering this opinion admiringly, I remembered that on another occasion, in his hearing, I had said a short version of that very thing. I laughed at him and said, 'Thank that slave of yours, Licentius: if he hadn't served you up something from his private purse, you might not have had anything to supply.'

[48] *Enn.* 1.4.4; see Winkler, 'Théorie de la mémoire', 513–14.

Quam sententiam eius cum admiratione considerans recordatus sum id ipsum aliquando me breuiter illo audiente dixisse. Tum arridens: Gratias age, inquam, Licenti, huic seruo tuo, qui tibi nisi aliquid de peculio suo ministraret, nunc fortasse quod promeres non haberes. (*ord.* 2.2.7)

Augustine's gentle mockery of Licentius both punctuates and highlights the exchange. It is marked, indeed, not only by his laughter, but by a temporary, joking, change of vocabulary.[49] He then makes it clear that he wishes to pursue the discussion of memory, but that it is a digression from the main subject in hand. Augustine thus, within the internal logic of the dialogue, stages a debate in which he is effectively arguing with himself and his 'Plotinian' opinions on the subject—given fictive utterance by Licentius. It is not surprising that the ensuing debate forms the site of a crucial theoretical revision.[50]

The Augustine within the dialogue counters Licentius' polarities with a remarkable move: the claim that the wise man needs memory 'for honourable and necessary sorts of teaching' (*propter honestas ac necessarias disciplinas*). The association of memory and teaching had already been placed in Alypius' mouth in *De Academicis*: 'If I don't forget to mention anything, I shall rejoice in my memory as well as your teaching' (*si enim nihil me fugerit, gratabor cum doctrinae tuae tum etiam memoriae meae*: *c. Acad.* 2.6.14). But here Augustine engages far more closely with the combination, and explores its implications, not for the pupil's, but for the teacher's memory. The abstract division of the soul with which Licentius opened has been replaced by the figure of an actual wise man who, we expect, will act in accordance with the dictates of wisdom—and it will be part of being wise to attempt to communicate his wisdom to others.

It is the concept of *disciplina* which prises open the liminal space in Licentius' dichotomous construction, and shows how unrealistic that construction is.[51] If the wise man has to teach, and needs memory to do so, how can we neatly divide off memory as dealing only with the transient? This is where Augustine parts company decisively with Neoplatonic thought.[52] The wise man, instead of occupying a solipsistic

[49] Where Licentius has consistently been using *seruus*, *sapiens*, and *anima*, Augustine uses *famula* ('serving-wench'), *bona*, and *mens*.

[50] This debate also anticipates the *Soliloquia*, not least in the argument between a position disengaged from the body and another situated firmly within it.

[51] For a fuller account of the role which *disciplina* plays in this passage, and the exact sense of the word here, see Conybeare, 'The Duty of a Teacher'.

[52] See Winkler, 'Théorie de la mémoire', 517: 'Plotin, dans sa vie personnelle, prenait au sérieux sa tâche comme maître et ses devoirs envers ceux qui avaient été recommandés à ses

contemplative space, is suddenly defined crucially by his relationship with his pupils, with whom he learns through teaching. His obligation to teach negotiates the divide between the metaphysical realm and engagement with the corporeal world.[53]

Licentius counters by reasserting his original position: he continues to try to dissociate memory from the immutable—to divorce it firmly from its liminal status and put it back in the world of fugitive things, *res fugientes*. Why does the wise man need memory, he asks, when he keeps 'all his own things at hand', *omnes suas res praesentes*? Or should we translate, 'his entire reality'—the divine things which he contemplates and which are the only things that count? Either way, Augustine calls into question the idea that this should, or could, be the wise man's only concern—because of his obligation to teach, to relate to his fellow human beings.

At this point, Augustine inserts a further complicating move when he observes that the wise man's preparations for disputation 'are *necessarily* lost unless he commits them to memory'.[54] 'Necessarily' signals a remarkable leap in the argument. Hitherto in the dialogues, memory has been related to the perceived problem of impermanence which is 'solved' by writing. But here, the role which *memoria* plays is precisely the opposite: it guarantees that the elements of disputation—or, for that matter, of teaching more generally—will *not* be lost; and hence it participates in the permanence of the divine. The use of *necesse* to compel agreement masks the fact that this represents a vast philosophical development, and a risky one in the light of the tradition which has formed Augustine's thought.[55]

soins, mais *dans son système le rôle des vertus sociales est loin d'être important'* (my emphasis). Gillian Clark has traced the (actual) relationships of Neoplatonists with their students: see 'Philosophic Lives and the Philosophic Life: Porphyry and Iamblichus', in Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2000), 29–51, esp. 38–41.

[53] Marrou (1934) makes a very similar observation of a slightly later passage in *De Ordine*: 'Le passage du sens païen au sens chrétien [du mot *disciplina*] est bien marqué dans un texte de saint Augustin [*ord.* 2.8.25] qui date d'une période où sa pensée était encore tout imprégnée d'une atmosphère philosophique: *disciplina*, *c'est la sagesse envisagée non seulement sous son aspect théorique, mais encore dans ses conséquences pratiques*; elle implique une règle de vie': 18; my emphasis. This passage describes the 'geminus ordo' of *ratio* and *auctoritas*, to be explored further in Part Three.

[54] *. . . quod nisi memoriae commendauerit, pereat necesse est.* Note the indicative mood: there is no question of claiming (with the subjunctive) that the preparations might be lost; they will, necessarily, be so.

[55] Moreover, one which Augustine resists in the slightly later, and unfinished, *imm. an.*

Now, as if to underline that move, we revert to the vexed question of who has established, and who controls, the purse of Licentius' simile. Augustine asks:

> Does [the wise man] perhaps entrust some necessary part of his own possessions to himself, for that servant [memory] to keep safe, not on his own account, indeed, but on that of his associates, such that [the memory-slave], as a sensible person and a product of his master's excellent teaching, would certainly not hang on to it if [his master] hadn't ordered [the memory] to keep it in order to lead the foolish to wisdom? [56]
>
> an fortasse aliquid suarum rerum non propter se quidem sed propter suos, sibi tamen necessarium commendat seruandum illi famulo, ut ille tamquam sobrius et ex optima domini disciplina non quidem custodiat, nisi quod propter stultos ad sapientiam perducendos sed quod ei tamen ille custodiendum imperarit? (*ord.* 2.2.7)

Again, the adjective 'necessary' is crucial: the contents of the purse are indeed necessary to the wise man, 'not on his own account but on that of his associates': here is the telltale responsibility of the wise man to those around him which both Plotinus and Licentius wish to elide. The memory-slave is fully a part of the wise man, his master: the wise man controls, uses, and engages with his memory. How is the relationship between the two—master and slave, metaphysical and corporeal, eternal and transient—configured? As *ex optima domini disciplina*: as the product, or by the example, of the excellent teaching of the master. It is *disciplina*, once again, which both complicates and bridges the liminal space between dichotomies: the process of teaching calls into question the simplistic dissociation of the embodied from the divine.[57] Licentius tries to salvage his own metaphor, explaining hastily that the memory-slave 'does not act using reason (*ratiocinando*), as it were, but under the organization of that highest law and order' (*hoc facit non quasi ratiocinando sed summa illa lege summoque ordine praescribente*: *ord.* 2.2.7). Augustine—within the dialogue—makes it clear that he is far from convinced: 'I make no opposition to your reasoning (*rationibus*) for now' (*nihil... nunc resisto rationibus tuis*). However, he defers further discussion; and they return to the main path of the conversation, 'what it is to be with God'.

[56] Most of the subjects in this passage are expressed simply with pronouns, which I have expanded with the words in square brackets. Though the Latin is a little convoluted, the referents of the individual pronouns are not, I think, ambiguous.

[57] This also, we may note, lays the groundwork for a paradigm in which *Christ*'s teaching is instrumental in negotiating the divide between human and divine—and human teaching, as part of the *imitatio Christi*, likewise; but Augustine does not make this move here.

It is both amusing and prophetic that Licentius trips up on the notion of the memory-slave 'using reason'. Reason is the property that pushes the personification of the memory-slave over into the realm of what is obviously impossible. Augustine reminds his audience of the impossibility with the *rationibus tuis*: it is Licentius' own power of reasoning that has got him into difficulties; the use of *rationes* is no guarantee of a satisfactory logical outcome. We shall see in Part Three the many different ways in which Augustine is to question *ratio*.

Perhaps the association of memory with teaching picks up on the desire which Augustine expressed earlier in the dialogue (*ord.* 1.3.6) that the boys should move 'beyond books', *praeter codices*, and 'remain self-contained', *apud sese*[58] *habitare*. This, as we saw earlier, seems to be linked with the setting in darkness, and is followed in the first instance by Licentius' extravagant conversion experience, but we may see another, more convincing, application for that desire in this passage. Augustine's attempt to link memory with the divine is the most significant statement of dissatisfaction with the philosophical tradition so far in his work: it is arguably the most cogent and explicit attack in the Cassiciacum dialogues. Yet it is buried here between discussions on a quite different tack; and the pursuit of the 'memory' theme, though clearly important, is deferred to some indefinite future. This is not surprising: it is intellectually inflammatory material, and Augustine may well, once again, have felt the danger of losing his audience entirely. The dialogue form serves to mask, to excuse, to divert from the really subversive force of his message. For if wisdom, once attained, entails an obligation to teach, then not only is the wise man's physical engagement with the world assigned positive value, but an evangelizing mission is endorsed. Despite the fact that the message plays on an incoherence in the nature of the philosophical dialogues themselves—for what do they do, if not teach?—it seems probable indeed that Augustine's powerful but conventional associates would not be ready to hear it.

So, having first given us a reprise of both the formulations and the inconclusiveness of *De Beata Vita*, and then played with an affirmation of the status of memory for the wise man, Augustine wrenches the debate back to the definition of *ordo*—having clearly shown how deeply implicated it is in the explorations of the earlier dialogue. *Ordo* is not something which can be relegated to a realm of abstract perfection, but

[58] Or *secum*: see Jean Doignon, 'Problèmes textuels et modèles littéraires dans le livre I du *De Ordine* de saint Augustin', *REAug* 24 (1978), 71–86.

must on some level engage with the everyday world of *sensibilia*. This was made subtly apparent through Licentius' contorted attempts to explain the workings of memory within his metaphor of administering the master's purse—the memory which works 'not, as it were, using reason, but under the organization of that highest law and order'. How, then, does that *ordo* function? How can it relate to 'having'—or 'enjoying'—God? What about the *summus modus*? And where does humanity come in?

Order and Evil

After the discussion of what it might mean to be 'not without God', Augustine reminds Licentius that the problem to be addressed is how things can happen contrary to order, *praeter ordinem*, if God really is the principal agent in everything. Licentius shrugs, shakes his head, claims confusion. Augustine (the compositor) observes, 'As it happens, mother had anticipated this stage of the enquiry' (*et huic forte quaestioni mater superuenerat*: *ord.* 2.7.21). He refuses to recapitulate the argument for Licentius' benefit, and suggests tartly, 'I suggest you should make sure you at least read what was said earlier, if you couldn't listen to it' (*quare moneo potius, ut ea, quae supra dicta sunt, uel legere cures, si audire nequiuisti*).

We remarked in Part One on this extraordinary passage. Augustine seems deliberately to be playing with the tensions between 'real-life' transcription and a 'staging' of the dialogues: he is, in effect, telling Licentius to read the script. The idea that people *within* a written dialogue—which purports to be delivered in real time—could check up on what they had missed by reading the transcription of what had happened earlier makes the boundaries between 'literature' and 'life' in these works more than usually permeable and ill-defined. Are we 'hearing' this intervention, or are we reading it? Either way, we have here—in this almost-real-life narrative—both a reminder and an endorsement of Monnica's role in the discussion, and the fact that she has anticipated Licentius' contribution (even advanced beyond his state of *pueritia*, perhaps?). Augustine signals that her contribution is indeed valid, and that the conversation can continue from there rather than troubling itself with a résumé under the authenticating name of a male speaker or a traditional *magister*. Particularly if Zenobius had indeed objected to Monnica's presence in the dialogues, this is an interesting moment of quiet militancy.

'Now,' says Augustine, 'I am inquiring into that issue which we have not yet attempted to discuss with careful reasoning (*diligenti ratione*)' (*nunc illud quaero, quod nondum discutere diligenti ratione temptauimus*: *ord.* 2.7.22). This is the nature of the link between order, divine justice, and evil. If divine justice produces order in the universe, does that not necessitate the presence of evil—so that there is something to separate from the good? It is Monnica who first essays a response—interestingly, given the call for 'careful reasoning'.

Certainly, said my mother, I don't see anything else which might follow. For there was no divine judgement when there was no evil, nor can He appear to have been just if He did not at some juncture give the good and bad their due.

prorsus, inquit mater, nihil aliud uideo, quod sequatur. non enim iudicium dei fuit ullum, quando malum non fuit, nec, si aliquando bonis et malis sua cuique non tribuit, potest uideri iustus fuisse. (*ord.* 2.7.22).

The statement has very much the same ring as that which introduced Monnica in *De Beata Vita*: an assertion of the nub of the question, accompanied by the implication that the issue is quite straightforward. (Her statement is introduced by *plane* in *De Beata Vita,* by *prorsus* here; in each case, she appears to be saying that her answer is the only available option.[59]) It is all too clear how Monnica got her reputation as the simplistic, common-sense contributor to the dialogues; but again, by using his mother to make a statement which is *prima facie* obvious, Augustine discovers a basis from which to open up the argument—and again, Monnica will play a more interesting role as the discussion develops.

In the immediate instance, Licentius presses Monnica further: 'So do you think we should say that evil has always existed?', and she answers simply, 'I do not dare to say that' (*non audeo hoc dicere*: *ord.* 2.7.22). This is, of course, one of the touchstones for the Augustine outside the dialogues, as he seeks to prove that he has truly moved beyond the Manichaeism which had involved him for so long—for the Manichees preached a defensive God, constantly fighting a rearguard action against the forces of darkness.[60] Monnica baulks—and, in Christian terms, quite rightly—at the idea that God might in any way develop properties

[59] The relevant passage is *beata u.* 2.8, discussed above at Ch. 3, p. 71: *plane . . . nulla re alia credo ali animam quam intellectu rerum atque scientia.*

[60] There is a most useful résumé of sources for Manichaeism and account of the Manichaean system in John Kevin Coyle, *Augustine's 'De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae'* (Fribourg, 1978), 9–50.

in response to evil. But Augustine assigns to Trygetius a possible resolution of the problem, pointedly inviting him to speak. 'Certainly', says Trygetius, 'God was just. For he could separate good and evil, if it had existed, and from the very fact that he could, he was just' (*prorsus, inquit, erat deus iustus. poterat enim bonum malumque secernere, si extitisset, et ex eo ipso, quo poterat, iustus erat*: *ord.* 2.7.22). Virtue, he says, should be assessed on its own (*per se*), not in its operation; and he uses the example of Cicero acting against Catiline (even if he hadn't been called on to act in a certain set of ways, he would always have had the capacity to do so).

This brilliant solution in terms of potentiality we shall return to later, in the discussion of *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*. The dialogue does not deal with it immediately either, but reverts to the—as it were—post-Manichaean issue of the possible priority of evil. Licentius is astonished and irritated that a 'good case' has slipped so suddenly from his hands, as Augustine presents to him his logical dilemma: either something (i.e. evil) can arise *praeter ordinem*; or—sacrilege!—we must assume that evil *is* part of God's order. He falls obstinately silent ('either not understanding, or pretending he hadn't understood'[61]), and it is left to Monnica to try to sum things up.

> Then my mother said: I don't think that *nothing* could have come into being outside the divine order, because evil itself, which was born, was in no way born in the divine order, but that justice did not allow it to be outside order [*inordinatum*], and it reduced and compelled [evil] to the order due to itself.
>
> tum mater: ego, inquit, non puto nihil potuisse praeter dei ordinem fieri, quia ipsum malum, quod natum est, nullo modo dei ordine natum est, sed illa iustitia id inordinatum esse non siuit et in sibi meritum ordinem redegit et conpulit. (*ord.* 2.7.23)

So, Monnica proposes that evil was incorporated into the order of things by God after creation—which, of course, raises the whole question of human responsibility for evil, which has been conspicuously absent from the dialogue. (Does the ambiguous *nihil* set up a pun, in anticipation of Augustine's definition of evil as the *priuatio boni*? It is the notion of nothingness that makes it possible to incorporate evil into God's order.[62]) The obvious questions here seem to go back to the

[61] The whole passage: *. . . cum siue non intellegenti siue dissimulanti se intellexisse uersarem saepius . . .*: *ord.* 2.7.24. Compare the address to the audience at *ciu.* 1.32: *scitote, qui ista nescitis et qui uos scire dissimulatis . . . .*

[62] See Epilogue, pp. 182–4; Émilie Zum Brunn, *Le dilemme de l'être et du néant chez saint Augustin* (Paris, 1969), esp. 27.

interpretation of the account of creation in Genesis: how was evil born 'outside the divine order'? How was it subjugated? And how do we know? Once again, Monnica speaks, by implication, for the human angle, pointing the discussion away from abstract speculation about divine ordering and towards its lived instantiations; away from an epistemology based on reasoning through hypotheses and towards one related to divine authority.

And once again, Augustine—within the dialogue—shies away from the implied challenge. He comments that he saw them all 'most zealously seeking God, each according to his own capacities' (*studiosissime ac pro suis quemque uiribus deum quaerere*: *ord.* 2.7.24)—but failing to grasp the *ordo* at stake. He begs the company not to be *praeposteri* and *inordinati*—ahead of themselves and out of due order—and likens the situation to a schoolmaster trying to teach a child syllables when he hasn't yet even learnt his letters.

> A profound learning (*disciplina*), far removed from any notion of the multitude, promises that it will reveal to minds that are eager in this way, and that love only God and souls, that all those things which we say are evil are not outside the divine order, so that we may be as sure about this as about the sums of numbers.
>
> . . . ista omnia, quae fatemur esse peruersa, non esse praeter diuinum ordinem alta quaedam et a multitudinis uel suspicione remotissima disciplina se ita studiosis et deum atque animas tantum amantibus animis manifestaturam esse promittit, ut non nobis summae numerorum possint esse certiores. (*ord.* 2.7.24)

Note here the conjunction with Augustine's peremptory request to his own *Ratio* at the beginning of the *Soliloquia*: ' I want to know God and the soul.' But is not Augustine himself being *praeposterus* and *inordinatus*? We know that he later regretted his confidence, in these early works, that all would be explained and revealed in this life: he came to feel that this had been youthful arrogance.[63] We have noted, in these dialogues, his vacillation between exclusionary and inclusionary stances—between the sort of disdain for 'the multitude' which we see here, and the commitment to a wider promulgation of Christian truth, which he increasingly espoused (and which we shall trace in some detail in so early a work as the *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*). Augustine's confidence,

[63] Note the touching apologia in *retr.* prol.2: *'Si quis in uerbo non offendit, hic perfectus est uir'. ego mihi hanc perfectionem nec nunc arrogo, cum iam sim senex, quanto minus cum iuuenis coepi scribere uel apud populos dicere.* He describes the Cassiciacum writings at *conf.* 9.4.7 as *'adhuc superbiae scholam tamquam in pausatione anhelant[es]'.*

here, in the efficacity of *studia* and *disciplina*—such that knowledge of the divine could be epistemologically equivalent to knowledge of arithmetic, and subject to equal certainty!—we have already seen being eroded a little in the *disciplina* section. Altogether here, Augustine is over-confident and *praeposterus*, superimposing a schoolmaster's order on the theological complexities which he has himself opened up. (The analogy with the 'sums of numbers', however, does make a great entrée to the discussion of the liberal disciplines—based, as they are in Augustine's account, in number, proportion, and harmony.[64])

Is this Augustine or 'Augustine', his own creation, who is so over-confident? The fact that the historical Augustine distanced himself later from such epistemological certainties should not blind us to his interrogation of them here as well. For most of the rest of the dialogue, it is the *praeposterus* Augustine who speaks—more or less monopolizing the conversation with his description of the progression through the liberal disciplines which can train the mind for the sort of questions that the company is approaching. This passage has garnered a great deal of attention;[65] but for our purposes, one of the most important things about it is that this is where the dialogic form breaks down. Augustine has promised that the *alta disciplina* will reveal all, and has resumed a monopolizing leadership in the conversation to expound it. Suddenly, he takes on a role as quasi-divine mouthpiece—and the opportunities for exchange, nuance, many-sidedness and irresolution, which the dialogues have (if intermittently) afforded, are closed down. This sort of controlling move is exactly what he has—as compositor—resisted earlier in *De Ordine*, in favour of a more spacious and suggestive exposition: an exposition which leaves room for other voices, including those—like his mother, like Lartidianus and Rusticus—which might not normally be listened to. That this symbolic move to control comes at the beginning of Augustine's description of a liberal education—which became one of the founding texts for centuries of (male) education—is an irony perhaps best left unexplored.

And yet, while Augustine's exposition of the liberal disciplines is indeed masterly, his conclusions are more ambivalent. As we might expect from his stance earlier in the dialogues, his educa-

[64] See O'Donnell's excursus on the *liberales disciplinae* at *conf.* 4.16.31; note especially his observation that 'few seem to have considered that what seems to us flat numerical rationalism can be exalted by a Plotinian metaphysic into a high mystical practice.'

[65] Ilsetraut Hadot, *Arts libéraux*; Danuta Shanzer, 'Augustine's disciplines: *silent diutius Musae Varronis*?', in *Augustine and the Disciplines*, 69–112.

tional programme is not quite the monolithic structure which at first appears.

The Less Gentlemanly Disciplines

The first offbeat note is struck at the end of a list of topics for enquiry. Up to this point, Augustine's exposition has been internally consistent, culminating in the claim that whoever can discern the simple truth at the heart of the disciplines is seeking the divine in a purposive manner (*non temere*, 'not at random'), 'not only for belief, but also for contemplation, understanding, and keeping' (*non iam credenda solum uerum etiam contemplanda intellegenda atque retinenda*: *ord.* 2.16.44). Then comes the list of topics—in a negative context, with reference to people who do *not* know what nothing is, or formless matter, or something formed but lifeless, and so on:

> anyone, in fact, who does not know these things and who wishes to enquire and dispute—I don't mean about the highest God, who is known better by not knowing [*nesciendo*], but about his own soul—will go as far wrong as it is possible to do.
>
> quisquis ergo ista nesciens, non dico de summo illo deo, qui scitur melius nesciendo, sed de anima ipsa sua quaerere ac disputare uoluerit, tantum errabit, quantum errari plurimum potest. (*ord.* 2.16.44)

Augustine's list of topics, we may note, effectively forms a programme for a commentary on Genesis—and so represents Augustine picking up the implied point about when evil came into the world, as well as anticipating his project in *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, in which he precisely sets out to explain these things to the 'uneducated'. We should also remember that the claim to lack of knowledge—*nescio*—is something of a motif in these dialogues; it has tended to denote precisely the limitations of human knowledge in the face of the divine. But Augustine's aside—God 'is known better by not knowing'—nevertheless comes as a surprise at the culmination of his project to systematize *scientia*. So has this project been directed only to illuminating the soul of the enquirer, and not towards 'knowing God' at all? Is the *alta disciplina* one which leads only to a more polished process of introspection, not to a fuller experience or knowledge of an external divinity? Augustine goes on:

Although all those liberal arts may be learnt partly for use in life, and partly for understanding and pondering things, understanding their use is extremely difficult for anyone unless he is extremely talented, and has given them his most constant and focused attention from boyhood [*ab ipsa pueritia*].

cum enim artes illae omnes liberales partim ad usum uitae partim ad cognitionem rerum contemplationemque discantur, usum earum assequi difficillimum est nisi ei, qui ab ipsa pueritia ingeniosissimus instantissime atque constantissime operam dederit. (*ord.* 2.16.44)

For whom then has the disciplinary programme been set out? The potential audience seems to be becoming ever thinner: they have to have been formally educated from childhood—or rather, boyhood—and among those, only the most able and applied will qualify. (We have just seen Augustine emphasizing how radically at fault those who use their learning incompetently will be.) But by extension, as the number of those who can use the liberal disciplines properly decreases, so the category of those who may be admitted to know God 'by not knowing' will gain in importance. And it is precisely this category—dependent on the distinction, which Augustine has just slipped in, between knowing one's own soul and knowing God—which leaves room for Monnica and her kind: for all who do not have access to a liberal education *ab ipsa pueritia* (or to a *pueritia* at all!).[66]

Now Augustine turns to address his mother directly—and, given the implications of the preceding argument, it comes as an entirely logical step. She is, after all, the figure who throughout the dialogues has represented a challenge (if at times a challenge tentatively made or entirely ignored) to the conventional, established processes of education.

Please, mother, don't let the fact that we need things from those [liberal arts] for our search frighten you off, as if it were some enormous forest of topics (*rerum*). You know, some things can be picked out from the whole which are very few but very effective, hard for many people to understand—but for you, whose talent is freshly apparent to me every day and whose mind, utterly remote (whether from age or your admirable restraint) from all trivialities and rising above the great stain of the body, has I know ascended far into itself; for you, these things will be as easy as they are difficult for those who are sluggish and live wretchedly.

quod uero ex illis ad id, quod quaerimus, opus est, ne te quaeso, mater, haec uelut rerum inmensa quaedam silua deterreat. etenim quaedam de omnibus eligentur

[66] The double path has, of course, been repeatedly observed by those who comment on these dialogues; but the link to the significant motif of 'not knowing', and its theological consequences, has (to my knowledge) not been remarked on.

numero paucissima, ui potentissima, cognitione autem multis quidem ardua, tibi tamen, cuius ingenium cotidie mihi nouum est et cuius animum uel aetate uel admirabili temperantia remotissimum ab omnibus nugis et a magna labe corporis emergentem in se multum surrexisse cognosco, tam erunt facilia quam difficilia tardissimis miserrimeque uiuentibus. (*ord.* 2.17.45)

The implication is that some people, at any rate, can do without education; that they can select the most crucial objects of enquiry and concentrate on those, helped by a life of carnal restraint and spiritual effort. (Note too that restraint, by Augustine's own description, is exactly what he had previously lacked.) The body continues to be a 'stain' in the formulation here, something to be transcended rather than integrated into spiritual endeavour; it is not until later that Augustine properly develops this interpretation.[67] But Augustine is addressing someone whose body is—as we discussed with reference to the beginning of *De Beata Vita*—crucial to her relationship with him: his mother.

Is he, in that case, claiming that it is *only* his mother who can do without a formal education?—elevating her alone to a status of precocious spirituality (which arguably *is* what happens ten years later in the *Confessiones*)? I think not—because of the nature of the dialogues. If they are entirely fictional, then Augustine made the choice of including a portrayal of Monnica—a choice which, as we have observed, can counter to generic tradition and which may have been criticized by his patrons. If they are based on fact, Augustine, once again, chose to invite Monnica to join them, and to encourage and praise her contributions; he need not have done so. Either way, Augustine's pointed inclusion of Monnica is extremely significant. There is no other female figure whom he could, as an unmarried man, so suitably have included. (Readers of the *Confessiones* will recall that Verecundus' plan to join the party at Cassiciacum—his own estate—had foundered on his conjugal obligations: *conf.* 9.3.5.) As we have seen, Monnica does not speak for 'women' or 'the uneducated' or any other group in the dialogues; she does, however, provide a strategy of consistently questioning and needling—of exploiting the chinks in the genre. And this is, of course, legitimated (if not actually invented) by Augustine's framing hand. So here too, we may assume, Augustine's concessions to Monnica are concessions more generally to alternative approaches to God. If not, why include them? Why, at the end of his exposition of the liberal disciplines, would he record and circulate an approach with a quite different emphasis?

[67] See Rist, *Augustine*, 108–12.

It seems that we have in play at least two notions of attaining knowledge of the divine. One—which Augustine has just spent an extended section of *De Ordine* expounding—is the systematic study of the liberal disciplines which, rightly used, enables one to know one's own soul and hence to gain an understanding of divine order. The other is, as it were, the direct route. One may simply know God *nesciendo*—'by not knowing', or 'in ignorance': the formulation is ambiguous.[68] Given this ignorant knowledge, the lack of systematic training becomes insignificant.

Augustine develops his point through analogy with solecisms of language. 'If I were to say that you would easily reach a level of language which lacks faults of pronunciation and dialect (*locutionis et linguae*), I would certainly be lying', he informs his mother kindly (*si enim dicam te facile ad eum sermonem peruenturam, qui locutionis et linguae uitio careat, profecto mentiar*: *ord.* 2.17.45).[69] He goes on to talk of his own mispronunciations, according to the Italians—and theirs, according to him. Solecisms and barbarisms, he observes, are found in the most canonical of Roman authors—Cicero, for example. And this recalls something which Augustine said somewhat earlier in *De Ordine*:

> The poets are deeply enamoured of what people call solecisms and barbarisms . . . Take those away from their poems, and we miss their sweetest savours. Lump a lot of them into one place, I will be disgusted at the whole bitter stinking rotten thing[!]. Carry them over into free public oratory (*liberam forensemque dictionem*): everyone will tell it to get out of here and into the theatre.
>
> soloecismos et barbarismos quos uocant, poetae adamauerant . . . detrahe tamen ista carminibus, suauissima condimenta desiderabimus. congere multa in unum locum, totum acre putidum rancidum fastidibo. transfer in liberam forensemque dictionem, quis non eam fugere atque in theatra se condere iubebit? (*ord.* 2.4.13)[70]

Only, he argues at that point, when you see the whole, and see it in its context, do you appreciate its order. So, among those seeking to know God, is Monnica—and those others who know God 'by not knowing'—being cast as a poet, while the others, approaching the issue systematically through the liberal disciplines, play the role of the (pro-

[68] Partly because, at this period, the sense of the gerund is shifting (especially in sub-elite registers) from its true use to a use equivalent to the present participle (Hofmann–Szantyr 373 (under 202.C.b.δ); Väänänen para. 327).

[69] 'Pronunciation and dialect' render *locutio* and *lingua*.

[70] Farrell provides a useful brief history of the notions 'solecism' and 'barbarism': *Latin Language and Latin Culture*, 36–8. The term for correct usage is *latinitas*; hence, we see Augustine say *ut latine loquar* for 'to speak plainly . . . '.

fessional) orators? This somewhat frivolous supposition is lent weight by the presence, once again, of that elusive word *liber* to describe the oratory; and we should remember that the practice of forensic oratory was the end at which a gentleman's education traditionally aimed. So it seems that we have the orators' and the poets' approaches to God counterposed. And in his direct address to Monnica, back in the peroration of *De Ordine*, Augustine seems to be recalling that duality:

> You despised those things [the conventions of grammar], whether as boys' affairs (*puerilibus rebus*) or as things not relevant to you, yet you know the near-divine force and nature of grammar so well, that you seem to have grasped its soul, while leaving its body to the eloquent (*disertis*).
>
> Sed tu contemptis istis uel puerilibus rebus uel ad te non pertinentibus ita grammaticae paene diuinam uim naturamque cognosces, ut eius animam tenuisse, corpus disertis reliquisse uidearis. (*ord.* 2.17.45)

This is a remarkable claim. Once again, it is Monnica who has moved beyond the limitations of the *pueri* and their education, to 'grasp the soul' of grammar: to cut to the heart of the divine order of things, for which grammar is clearly taken in synecdoche here. Who are the *diserti*, who must be content with only the outward forms, if not, again, the educated—the orators?[71] The details of language—or the 'grammar' of divine organization—don't matter: what matters is simply knowing God. We shall review and extend the implications of this passage in Part Three.

So of the two approaches to God—the learned, and the one *nesciendo*—Augustine is actually implying here that the latter is superior, despite the space and effort he has given to expounding the former (and is yet to give, in the *De Musica* and his false starts on *De Grammatica* and *De Dialectica*.) Could he have abandoned his comprehensive project to expound the liberal arts—so richly anticipated here in *De Ordine*—precisely because he gradually realized that it ran counter to the theological priorities and processes which he is beginning to explore here? We have no clear indication one way or the other in the *Retractationes*; Augustine simply says, 'I tried to write books of the Disciplines, questioning those who were with me'—in other words, again using dialogue form (. . . *disciplinarum libros conatus sum scribere, interrogans eos qui*

[71] Cf. Cic. *or.* 1.10.44, quoted with approval by Augustine in *dial.* 9.16: '*denique ut sapientibus diserte, stultis etiam uere uidearis dicere.*' Note that Augustine reads *sapientibus* for Cicero's *prudentibus.*

mecum erant: *retr.* 1.6). The unfinished works, he says, were lost. Later, of course, Augustine elegantly married the two processes, the learned and the unwitting approaches to God—but radical and systematic introspection, in this subsequent harmonization, is still subordinate to the aim of striving for a direct knowledge of God (while the two are no longer configured as a *corpus/anima* dichotomy).

Here, however, it is still Monnica who is privileged to 'grasp the soul', while others remain merely on the physical, literal level of apprehension. (Remember that, although she was suitably shocked by the idea of her son submitting himself to her as her pupil [*ord.* 1.11.32], Augustine had already made more or less this claim for her early in *De Beata Vita* [2.10].) Augustine concludes his address to his mother with the exhortation that, even if she despises all the other arts as well:

> . . . I urge you—as far as I dare,[72] as your son, and as far as you permit me—to guard your faith (which you have comprehended through revered mysteries) with constancy and care, so that you may remain steadfast and vigilant in your present life and character.
>
> . . . admoneo te, quantum filius audeo quantumque permittis, ut fidem istam tuam, quam uenerandis mysteriis percepisti, firme cauteque custodias, deinde ut in hac uita atque moribus constanter uigilanterque permaneas. (*ord.* 2.17.46)

And from there he launches into another set of questions 'about things most obscure, and yet divine', to which he wishes, with the help of the liberal arts, to find the answer.[73]

As an apparent conclusion to Augustine's dealings with his mother in this dialogue—and, indeed, in any work composed while she was still alive—this strikes an ambivalent note. On the one hand, she is praised for her direct grasp of the 'soul' of divine order. On the other, Augustine seems to be expressing frustration that her faith is something lived, not something carefully constructed from educational tools. The questions with which he bombards his audience are, by implication, those which Monnica will never be able to address, or even to frame; and in that context, his immediately preceding exhortation to her simply to carry on living in faith, as she is at present, seems a restricting, even demeaning, move after his praise. The controlling nature of the move is

[72] Note the use of *audeo*, 'I dare', here; and compare with the peroration of *ord.*, on who will 'dare' to see God, and Monnica's *non audeo hoc dicere* at *ord.* 2.7.22.

[73] Again, this reads almost like a programme for Augustine's enquiries into Genesis, which shows that he had already thought deeply about these problems with reference to the story of creation. The paraphrase 'with the help of the liberal arts' renders *ordine illo eruditionis*, 'with that ordering of education': this must refer to the systematic programme which Augustine is developing here.

especially clear because, as we have seen, Monnica *has* been portrayed as framing important questions and launching significant topics in these dialogues. Are we now simply to return to the image of the 'little woman' *tout court*—rather than that of the little woman who is proud to be so (*beata u.* 2.10), and whose insight has driven many of the theological developments here?

Surely not—or not entirely. The concession that Monnica's approach to God—that of the poets, or of the uneducated, as it is characterized at different stages of the dialogue—may be as valid as those of the 'learned orators' is a huge departure from the philosophical tradition within which Augustine is ostensibly working. Augustine himself has pointed out that there are plenty of generic precedents for the simple rustic, delivering homespun philosophy, and stumbling by accident on the answers offered by the truly educated (the 'philosophical cobblers', *sutores philosophati*, of *ord.* 1.11.31); but this is not how Monnica herself has been portrayed. If anything, as we have seen, it is Lartidianus and Rusticus who are set up to meet these generic expectations—and hopelessly two-dimensional characters they have proved to be. But Monnica is a fully realized participant in the dialogues, despite the initial attempts to patronize her as a mere *sutrix philosophata*—'Mother, you have captured the actual citadel of Philosophy!' (*beata u.* 2.10). She is portrayed as repeatedly developing or complicating the philosophical conclusions towards which (the figure of) Augustine wishes to lead the company. Monnica's approach to God—her theology, if it can be called such—is not something merely stumbled on, but something deliberately pursued in a spiritually focused manner; and something which, juxtaposed with Augustine's attempts to develop a *philosophia Christiana*, will repeatedly call parts of that *philosophia* into question.

This is, of course, a reading of *De Ordine* which runs against the obvious grain. The second book of that work is, as I have said, overwhelmingly preoccupied with sketching a structured educational programme to show how the erudite might approach God through the liberal disciplines. However, we have seen several indications that there are counter-currents too: the justification of women doing philosophy; the embodiment of *memoria*; Augustine playing with the idea of becoming his mother's pupil. We should also, I think, take seriously Augustine's description in the *Retractationes* of the trajectory of this dialogue: he wanted to talk about providence and the divine ordering of good and evil, but it was too challenging for his interlocutors, and so 'I preferred

to talk about the order of learning (*de ordine studendi*), so that we could progress from corporeal to incorporeal things' (*de ordine studendi loqui malui, quo a corporalibus ad incorporalia potest proficì*: *retr.* 1.3). By this account, the celebrated discussion of the liberal disciplines is merely a second-best analogy.[74]

As the work closes, there are a few further hints to justify a reading of *De Ordine* against the grain. Augustine argues that the knowledge *both* of numbers *and* of dialectic is essential to his programme of Christian philosophy—'for the inquiry is in two parts, one about the soul, the other about God' (*cuius duplex quaestio est, una de anima, altera de deo*: *ord.* 2.18.47). After saying a little more about this division, he continues:

> This is the system for the study of wisdom, through which each person becomes capable of understanding the order of things, that is, of distinguishing between the two worlds and the actual father of the universe, of whom there is no knowledge in the soul *except to know how one might not know Him.*
>
> hic est ordo studiorum sapientiae, per quem fit quisque idoneus ad intellegendum ordinem rerum, id est ad dinoscendos duos mundos et ipsum parentem universitatis, cuius nulla scientia est in anima *nisi scire, quomodo eum nesciat.* (*ord.* 2.18.47)

A conceptual twist occurs in the course of the sentence. We start with a 'system for the study of wisdom' (*ordo studiorum sapientiae*)—and all that is promised at the end is ignorance. This seems to be one of those occasions where other concerns of Augustine intrude upon the systematization which he is attempting. Promising that the student will eventually 'know how not to know God' seems to be the ultimate answer to his two groups of tacit interlocutors in this dialogue—the Academics and (more deeply concealed, but hinted at in the preoccupation with questions about creation) the Manichaeans. In a later work against the Manichaeans, *De Utilitate Credendi*, Augustine castigates them for their misguided promise of reason and truth; and 'who would not be seduced by these promises, especially the mind of a young man eager for truth?'[75] (The 'two worlds' sounds Manichaean, but more probably anticipates the distinction between the *mundus sensibilis* and the *mundus intellegibilis* to be invoked at *ord.* 2.19.51.) As for the Academics, to claim that one should actually *aim* to 'know how not to know' seems a delightfully insolent answer to the philosophical school which agonized

[74] Note too the observation above that this is where the dialogue form breaks down!

[75] *Quis non his pollicitationibus illiceretur, praesertim adolescentis animus cupidus ueri?*: *util. cred.* 2.

about the potential for epistemological certainty. To both his intellectual opponents, therefore, Augustine responds with a resounding *nescio*.[76]

From where does he portray himself as arriving at this lack of knowledge, *nescientia*? We think of Licentius' *nescio* at the culmination of his conversion experience—the *nescio* which invites wonder and belief.[77] And there was Augustine's own epistemological uncertainty about the intellectual menu he had prepared in *De Beata Vita*—an uncertainty later cancelled out as he reclaimed his leading role in the dialogue (*beata u.* 3.17). But most recently it is Monnica's *nescientia* which has been resoundingly valorized—hers, and that of all like her, who do not have a liberal education 'from their boyhood' (*sic*) but who know God 'by not knowing', *nesciendo* (*ord.* 2.16.44).[78] It is Monnica who has repeatedly insisted on the limitations of her knowledge in *De Beata Vita*. Is it she, then, who has led her son not only to acknowledge the limitations of his own *scientia*, but to consider that acknowledgement as an important step in the approach to God?[79]

In the peroration of *De Ordine*, Augustine addresses the question of who, at last, will 'dare' (another significant use of *audeo*) to see God (*ord.* 2.19.51). He recoils from the possibility of describing God: 'everyday words come to mind, and they are all soiled with worthless things' (*cotidiana uerba occurrunt et sordidata sunt omnia uilissimis rebus*). But, he assures his audience, the person *qui bene uiuit, bene orat, bene studet* (for which I shall shortly propose a translation) will without a doubt see God. He goes on to observe that a part which seems discordant in the world of the senses, *mundus sensibilis*, will be shown as a harmonious part of the divine order in the world of the understanding, *mundus intellegibilis*.[80]

[76] A most Socratic solution; and note that Socrates is invoked as a model in the early work, *uera rel.* 2.2 (though the context is not Socratic aporia but Socrates' implied demonstration that the worship of idols was fallacious by taking oaths on any dog or stone that came to hand).

[77] *Credite, si uultis; nam quomodo id explicem, nescio*—to which Augustine describes his response: *ego mirabar et tacebam* (*ord.* 1.6.16).

[78] Is *c. Acad.* 2.2.5 relevant here, too? Augustine is addressing Romanianus: he writes of 'the religion which was instilled in us as boys . . . but snatched us to herself unwittingly, *nescientem*.' Unless the reading is at fault, it is the *religio*, not the boys, who is *nesciens*.

[79] On Augustine's subsequent use of *nescio* in *lib. arb.*, 'creat[ing] a sense of vertigo', see Simon Harrison, 'Do We Have a Will?', in Gareth Matthews (ed.), *The Augustinian Tradition*, 195–205 (quote from 202).

[80] Augustine glosses this notion of the *mundus intellegibilis* at *retr.* 1.3g: this world is that 'in which will be a new heaven and a new earth, when our prayer "Thy kingdom come" is fulfilled'. He also links the idea explicitly to Plato.

Such things may be explained more fully, if your studies (*studia*) have begun to adhere either to the pattern (*ordo*) related by me or to another one, perhaps shorter and more convenient—but in any case, a correct one, so I urgently hope—and continue to adhere to it with absolute diligence. So that this may be possible for us, we should give our utmost attention to the most moral behaviour; otherwise, our God will not be able to hear us, while if we live well he will easily hear us.

dicentur ista latius, si uestra studia siue memoratum istum a nobis siue alium fortasse breuiorem atque commodiorem, rectum tamen ordinem, ut hortor ac spero, tenere instituerint atque omnino gnauiter constanterque tenuerint. quod ut nobis liceat, summa opera danda est optimis moribus; deus enim noster aliter nos exaudire non poterit, bene autem uiuentes facillime exaudiet. (*ord.* 2.19.51–20.52)

Within the schemata set up by the dialogue, this passage gives extraordinarily mixed messages. The first sentence, especially leading on from the privileging of the *mundus intellegibilis*, seems to refer uniquely to the *studia* of Augustine's audience—in the sense of their intellectual pursuits—and their need to set them within an *ordo* along the lines laid out in the dialogue. That ordering principle they must adhere to 'diligently and continuously', *gnauiter constanterque*. But then (and the editions all put a significant paragraph break here; however, I have intentionally treated the passage as continuous) the focus shifts to 'our most moral behaviour' and the need to *live* virtuously. The point here seems to be that an intellectual approach to God is completely worthless without a virtuous life—for otherwise, God will not 'hear' us, his petitioners. (Later, Augustine is discomfited by this: 'it sounds as if God does not listen to sinners', *retr.* 1.3h. But the concern for embodied existence within this world remains.) Despite Augustine's intellectual bias, we see again that the mind is not sufficient for an approach to God; it is not even the most important aspect of such an approach. The mind is again firmly set—by implication—within a body; and it is how that body behaves in the *mundus sensibilis* that is in fact most important.

What, in that case, is the sense of *studia* here? Does it refer *only* to intellectual pursuits—or does it embrace a fuller sense, of enthusiastic application in general? (Both senses are well attested; and indeed the less specific one is considered primary.[81]) The reference to the pattern (*ordo*) which Augustine has laid out leads one at first to assume that studies within the liberal disciplines are intended; but perhaps we should take

[81] The uniquely intellectual sense tends to be delayed to the end of dictionary listings: see s.v. L&S IIB, *OLD* 7, Forcellini III. Ernout–Meillet writes: 'la racine de *studeo* doit être la même que celle de lat. *tundo*'; it is also related to the Greek *speúdo*.

seriously his concession that there may be others, 'shorter and more convenient'. In that case, could not one of these be the pattern of disciplined and virtuous *life* which Monnica has set? And *studia* should then be interpreted in its more general sense—referring to any committed and focused endeavour.

This also speaks to the passage which I left untranslated above, describing who will, eventually, be able to see God: *qui bene uiuit, bene orat, bene studet*, someone who lives well, prays well, and—what? If 'studet' refers only to intellectual work, Monnica and her like will be conspicuously excluded. But if it simply refers to zeal or application, then the tricolon will fit her especially well. It will reflect the pressure towards inclusivity which we have seen her embodying in *De Beata Vita* and *De Ordine*, and the insistence on embodied experience which, despite its counter-generic content, keeps resurfacing in the dialogues. Above all, it will explain the introduction of 'praying well' as a prerequisite for seeing God. Once again, prayer has been noticeably absent from *De Ordine*, so that its inclusion as a crucial category in this tricolon comes as rather a surprise. Augustine seems to wish to make good his omission, for the passage quoted above continues, 'So we should pray . . . that the things which make us virtuous and blessed may be forthcoming' (*oremus ergo . . . ut ea proueniant, quae nos bonos faciant ac beatos*: *ord.* 2.20.52). Particularly in conjunction with the prayer to become *beati*, this sudden change of direction recalls the one at the end of *De Beata Vita*, when the exhortation 'foue precantes, Trinitas' is abruptly introduced—by Monnica.

My ellipsis in the passage just quoted, however, shows what a fine line Augustine was aware that he was treading. What we are *not* to pray for is 'wealth or status or things of this sort, which are fluid, tottering, and ephemeral (whoever tries to stop them being so)' (. . . *diuitiae uel honores uel huius modi res fluxae atque nutantes et quouis resistente transeuntes*: *ord.* 2.20.52). But of course, it is precisely life in this *mundus sensibilis* which is typically characterized as 'fluid, tottering, ephemeral'. Augustine is once again covertly attempting to introduce a third concept to embrace—even supersede?—a traditional dichotomy, to conspire against the simple opposition of *mundus intellegibilis* (permanent, complete, perfect) to *mundus sensibilis* (transient, partial, imperfect).[82]

[82] Remember, for example, *beata u.* 2.8 as an illustration of these potential difficulties: *nihil est enim omne, quod fluit, quod soluitur, quod liquescit et quasi semper perit*—'for everything which flows, is dissolved, melts, and (as it were) is always dying, is *nothing*' (counterposed here with *uirtus*, which 'is something').

Instead, he—with the help, within the dialogues, of Monnica—shows us a way in which the concerns of the senses' world may not be wholly alienated from the divine. Embodied experience may, if well used, have value; so may social involvement and obligations. Both 'the most moral behaviour' and prayer are intimately linked with these, and yet are crucial in the approach to God. What we see here is emphatically not the acknowledgement of the body in the context of its radical negation, which we see in extreme ascetic texts of the period; it is, by contrast, a sturdy refusal to deny that life in this present world is irrelevant to spiritual progress. More than that: leading the present life properly is the most important element of spiritual progress—more important, even, than the intellectual programme which Augustine has energetically laid out in *De Ordine* (and will continue to work towards for a couple of years thereafter).

At this point—having belatedly asserted the importance of prayer, alongside a virtuous life and eager application—Augustine turns, for the last time, to Monnica.

> These prayers [to become good and blessed] must be most faithfully carried out: this task (*negotium*) we impose principally on you, mother, for I believe and affirm without hesitation that through your prayers God gave me the disposition of mind to consider absolutely nothing more important than discovering the truth, to wish for, think of, love nothing else; and I have not stopped believing that we shall attain this immense good, which we have desired through your merit, so long as you seek the same thing.
>
> quae uota ut deuotissime inpleantur, tibi maxime hoc negotium, mater, iniungimus, cuius precibus indubitanter credo atque confirmo mihi istam mentem deum dedisse, ut inueniendae ueritati nihil omnino praeponam, nihil aliud uelim, nihil cogitem, nihil amem, nec desino credere nos hoc tantum bonum, quod te promerente concupiuimus, eadem te petente adepturos. (*ord.* 2.20.52)

This is wholly paradoxical. The *mental* discovery of the truth is most important; but it is through the prayers of Monnica that it is above all to be achieved. Evidently, though the nature of her *negotium* has been redefined, she is not to be permitted to be 'very much at leisure' (*abundare . . . otio*: *ord.* 2.1.1) for long. And clearly Augustine has not yet fully absorbed her perception of the impossibility of discovering divine truth in this life; but we know that he will.[83]

So it seems to this reader, at any rate, that exclusionary readings of the doctrine tested in this dialogue (which are, in fact, the way in which

[83] *retr.* 1.2c: Augustine objects to the fact *quod tempore uitae huius in solo animo sapientis dixi habitare beatam uitam, quomodolibet se habeat corpus eius, cum perfectam cognitionem dei . . . in futura uita speret apostolus, quae sola beata uita dicenda est.*

the priorities of the dialogue are generally read) simply can't be right. Augustine has been at pains—surprising pains, given generic conventions and his intellectual formation—to show that the *disciplinae liberales* constitute only one of at least two routes to God. Moreover, if he is judging between these routes, he seems to veer towards favouring the alternative—that of prayer and *mores optimi*—which is exemplified by his mother. But is he in fact judging? Is he simply illustrating? Or is his primary project the exposition of the *disciplinae* as a foundation for Christian philosophy—while the other concerns emerge only accidentally as he tries to think through their implications amid the responses (imagined or actual) of his interlocutors?

Certainly, this last is the implication of the various tensions we have traced in this dialogue—the instability of concepts; the ambivalent struggle to cede or regain control of the conversation; not least the phenomenon of metaphors taking on a life of their own and uncomfortably complicating neat schemata.

In the penultimate paragraph of the dialogue, Alypius gives extravagant praise to Augustine—whose response should, perhaps, be read in this context. Augustine has 'unlocked the discipline of Pythagoras almost before our very eyes'; and 'although we might suspect and believe you that there are yet more recondite things, yet we should consider ourselves quite impudent if we think that anything more could be demanded' (*ord.* 2.20.53).

Augustine charmingly acknowledges the praise: 'it's not your words, which are not true, so much as the true feeling (*animus*) in the words which delights and stimulates me' (*neque enim me tam uerba tua, quae uera non sunt, quam uerus in uerbis animus delectat atque excitat*: *ord.* 2.20.54). But perhaps this is more than false modesty. The terms of his thanks recall his resistance to an apparent impasse earlier in the dialogue: 'where the thing fits, who would not despise the words?' (*ubi res conuenit, quis non uerba contemnat*: *ord.* 2.7.21). That impasse related to the lack of resolution at the ending of *De Beata Vita*. And here again, Augustine seems to be reaching the end of a dialogue struggling against closure. Alypius has *not* summed up their enquiries; and Augustine has not remotely been claiming the completeness which Alypius ascribes to him. (In fact, he has denied it a few lines earlier in his acknowledgement that he needs Monnica's prayers in his continuing search for truth.) Important soundings have been taken, but nothing has been resolved or decided; Augustine portrays himself as distinctly less confident of arriving at 'the truth' than he was at the end of *De Academicis*.

With what do philosophical dialogues concern themselves, if not with words? But here again, Augustine clearly signals the inadequacy of words. The *res* or *animus* is more important: if that is right, words give way. Is this not again to hold *mores* and *disciplinae* in uncomfortable suspension—and to hint that the former may be more significant than the latter?

Once again, the dialogue form favours Augustine in his resolute refusal to impose closure. There is no clear ending to the discussion in *De Ordine*: the night-light, *nocturnum lumen*, is brought in, and that is as good as we get for a *finis disputationis*. And it is immediately preceded by a magnificently off-beam quotation from Virgil about the immobility and obduracy of the wise man. Like Monnica's phrase from Ambrose at the end of *De Beata Vita*, this is hardly a conclusion to the dialogue we have been reading. However, whereas Monnica's finale drew attention to a significant but ignored strand of the dialogue (later to be developed), the Virgilian line comes as a last attempt to recapture a set of assumptions which have been repeatedly interrogated or undermined. It is not even, strictly speaking, about the 'wise man', which would relate it more satisfactorily to the concerns of the Cassiciacum dialogues as a whole: the notion of the *sapiens* is imported by Augustine. The line reads simply: 'he stands firm, like an immovable rock in the sea' (and, we may recall, describes King Latinus, surrounded by his people agitating for an ill-fated war).[84] Yet it is this very notion of fixity—the immovability of wisdom, of the divine, of the things that last—and the wise man's less than simple relationship to it which Augustine has been questioning in *De Ordine*. Once again, perhaps, a metaphorical expression reveals Augustine's intellectual struggles more vividly than it illuminates the point at hand. After all his explorations in the dialogues, after all his earnest attempts to transform his old philosophy into a *philosophia Christiana*, he must, at some level, jettison the notion of the wise man as a *rupes immota*.[85] The Virgilian tag reveals Augustine—the author, not the persona in the dialogue—looking wistfully back over his shoulder for a simplicity and a certainty which, after so much writing and talking, now seems even further away.

[84] *ille uelut pelagi rupes immota resistit*: V. *Aen.* 7.586. (OCT gives 'pelago'.)

[85] This is not, of course, to say that he jettisons Virgil, which is demonstrably untrue. But he has to find new ways of reading him. For the beginnings of an approach to this, see Sabine MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1998), with my review in *Church History*, 68 (1999); for Virgil used in an anti-Manichaean context, see Richard Lim, 'Augustine, the Grammarians and the Cultural Authority of Vergil', in Roger Rees (ed.), *Romane Memento: Vergil in the Fourth Century* (London, 2004), 112–27.

Part Three

The Irrational Augustine

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5

The Interrogation of Reason

Augustine's interrogation of reason starts with women as well—or, to be precise, with one woman. The *Soliloquia*, written, it seems, alongside and in between the other Cassiciacum dialogues (*inter haec*), take the form of a dialogue between Augustine himself and his own Reason—Ratio—who is personified as a woman.[1] This is neither surprising nor dwelt upon in the work. *Ratio* is a noun of feminine gender; it is natural to a Latin speaker to personify it as a woman.[2] But the dialogue is suffused with the temptations of sex; given its overt intellectualism, this is surprising. Even forty years later, Augustine is describing this, among all his literary productions at the time, as the one dictated by his passionate enthusiasm (*secundum studium meum et amorem*: *retr.* 1.4). Passion and intellect draw close to each other in startling ways.

In the early part of the conversation, Ratio tempts Augustine with the prospect of the perfect wife—'beautiful, virtuous, well-behaved, well-educated—or who could be easily educated by you', and so on (*pulchra, pudica, morigera, litterata, uel quae abs te facile possit erudiri*: *sol.* 1.10.17). Augustine rejects the notion utterly:

> I have decided that there is nothing which I should avoid so much as sex. I feel there is nothing which throws down the masculine mind so completely from its citadel as feminine charms and the physical contact which is essential to marriage.
>
> . . . nihil mihi tam fugiendum quam concubitum esse decreui. nihil esse sentio, quod magis ex arce deiciat animum uirilem, quam blandimenta feminea corporumque ille contactus, sine quo uxor haberi non potest. (*sol.* 1.10.17)

[1] Throughout this chapter, I use capitalized 'Ratio' to refer to the interlocutor in the dialogue, italicized *ratio* to refer to the general concept.

[2] Though for an excellent discussion of how reason has been crucially defined as masculine in the Western philosophical tradition, see Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason* (Minneapolis, 1984).

The topic is hardly novel: the question of whether a philosopher—a 'lover of wisdom', in Augustine's own insistent formulation—should take a wife was already a well-established subject of discussion. In fact, though Alypius discouraged the notion (*conf.* 6.12.21), the general conclusion was that the philosopher had a social obligation to marry;[3] Augustine's determined repudiation of it here is a little startling, even if we take into account his former Manichaeism (in which the *electi* were not allowed to marry). The image of the citadel (*arx*) where the masculine mind struggles to reside recalls most closely the words of congratulation in *De Beata Vita* for capturing the very citadel of philosophy, which Augustine addressed—to his mother. Does this passage contain within itself the undoing of its own metaphor? Is the citadel so impregnably a masculine precinct after all? Do those *nihil*s protest too much?

Perhaps. Once other desires are (ostensibly) laid aside, in the course of Augustine's discussion with Ratio, she proceeds to ask what sort of lover of wisdom he really is. 'You wish to see her and hold her naked, as it were, with a completely chaste look and embrace and with no clothing getting in the way . . . ' (*quam castissimo conspectu atque complexu nullo interposito uelamento quasi nudam uidere ac tenere desideras*: *sol.* 1.13.22). The imagery is unmistakably sexual; the *quasi nudam*, long postponed in the Latin, a shock.[4] Furthermore, this is permitted only to an incredibly select few (*paucissimis et electissimis*) of her lovers. Even in *De Libero Arbitrio*, which includes a calmer and more conventional summary of many of the findings of Cassiciacum, Augustine is still sexualizing his intellectual desires—in this case, for truth: 'do men really cry out that they are blessed when they are embracing the beautiful, intensely desired bodies of wives or even whores (!), while we doubt that we are blessed in the embrace of truth?'[5]

After Augustine has protested his utter fidelity to wisdom, Ratio goes on to tell us—and him—the qualities of wisdom's lovers. Some people can see the light of wisdom immediately, and need no teacher: 'for them, belief, hope, and love is enough'. Others 'are stricken by the very light which they desperately want to see', and subside into darkness.

[3] See e.g. Musonius Rufus fr. 14, citing the examples of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Crates, and the philosopher's obligation to set a good example in the *polis*.

[4] Does this put a rather different complexion on Augustine's reading of Paul *intentissime atque castissime* at *c. Acad.* 2.2.5?

[5] *an uero clamant, homines beatos se esse, cum pulchra corpora magno desiderio concupita siue coniugum siue etiam meretricum amplexantur, et nos in amplexu ueritatis beatos esse dubitamus?*: *lib. arb.* 2.13.35. More of the same, with *ueritas* and *sapientia* conflated, at *lib. arb.* 2.14.37: *omnes amatores suos nullo modo sibi inuidos recipit et omnibus communis est et singulis casta est.*

Those for whom belief, hope, and love—the Pauline trinity—is enough cannot fail to recall Monnica, and her confident self-positioning at the end of *De Beata Vita*, '*foue precantes, Trinitas*'. For the others, to attain wisdom 'in a certain order' (*quodam ordine*) is the 'function of good education (or discipline)', *bonae disciplinae officium*. These unnamed people seem to recall Augustine himself and his over-intellectualizing companions in *De Ordine*, the *disciplina* not just their own self-discipline or another's teaching, but the organized progression through the liberal disciplines mapped out therein. Lest we were in any doubt of the contrast, Ratio sums up: attaining wisdom *without* order is the function of 'a scarcely believable felicity' (*uix credibilis felicitatis*: *sol.* 1.13.23).

Have these dialogues traditionally been read, as it were, the wrong way round? They have repeatedly been treated, following Alfaric,[6] as a rather dry charting of Augustine's progression into a Neoplatonic version of Christianity which denies all things physical and prefers to avoid thinking about the implications of the Incarnation.[7] It has been claimed that Augustine is too reliant on the power of the intellect, and over-confident about its ability to discern divine truth.

But can we consider the implications of these works as precisely the opposite? What is remarkable is the way in which Augustine allows quite other considerations and interpretations to intrude. This he effects principally through his full-blooded use of the dialogue form, which we shall shortly explore further. Let us not forget that the cock-fight featured in *De Ordine* is described as revealing the 'beauty of reason' (*pulchritudo rationis*, *ord.* 1.8.25).

Consider, here, the personification of Ratio, in Augustine's soliloquizing conversation with himself—'interrogating myself, and responding to myself, as if *ratio* and I were two, though I was one' (*me interrogans mihique respondens, tamquam duo essemus ratio et ego, cum solus essem*: *retr.* 1.4.1). When Ratio describes the felicity of reaching wisdom without order as 'scarcely credible', is Augustine making her speak—as it were—in character? And if Augustine splits off the reasoning part of himself (gendered, if only grammatically, female), what is left? Who is the interlocutor who calls himself *ego*? He is, it would seem, the masculine and unreasoning part of the self, the part that struggles to separate itself from physical desire, to stick to the masculine *arx philosophiae*, and

[6] Prosper Alfaric, *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin*, i (Paris, 1918).

[7] See for example TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, 59: 'In the dialogues the reader is kept at arm's length by a style that is always self-consciously literate; Augustine discloses little of himself'—this compared with the 'deeply personal tone' of *conf.*.

then is seduced by the prospect of seeing wisdom naked. He is, in fact, the irrational Augustine.

Ratio it is, meanwhile, who speaks extravagantly of the need to 'flee those wretched things connected with the senses, and to take care lest, while we're using this body, our wings are dragged down by their sticky lime' (*. . . esse ista sensibilia fugienda cauendumque magnopere, dum hoc corpus agimus, ne quo eorum uisco pennae nostrae impediantur*: *sol.* 1.14.24). Which interlocutor in the *Soliloquia* is in control? Who is portrayed as being right? Dare we suggest that Ratio is being ridiculed? In any case, who is Ratio? How does she relate to Augustine—and to *ratio*?

Ratio in *De Ordine*

The notion that Ratio might be being ridiculed (even when cast as a mere interlocutor) is, of course, completely counter-intuitive—for us and, we might suppose, for Augustine. He had read his Cicero: he had grown up with the Ciceronian definition of a human being, *homo est animal rationale et mortale*.[8] We know this, because he quotes the phrase in *De Ordine*, during his discussion of the liberal disciplines, and his demonstration of how fundamental *ratio* is to them. He has just observed that *ratio* is 'a movement of the mind which can pick out and connect the objects of knowledge'; but, he adds, 'what that *ratio* is, and of what nature (*qualis*), only very few people know.' ('It seems amazing, but that's the way it is'! *ord.* 2.11.30.[9]) Let's see, he continues, where 'this word which is called *ratio*' is most frequently, and reflexly, used: *homo est animal rationale et mortale*. *Animal* is the genus; the qualifiers tell us respectively where the human being should return, and whence it should flee—that is, towards the permanent things of the mind (the *rationale*), and away from the transient things of the body (*ord.* 2.11.31).

But (Augustine warns) one should not neglect the distinction between the *rationale* and the *rationabile*. The *rationale* is 'what uses *ratio*, or could potentially use it'; the *rationabile* is 'what is made or said according to *ratio*'. Thus, the very baths in which the company is sitting and conducting its conversation could be called *rationabile*—made according

[8] This is in fact Augustine's paraphrase; the Ciceronian phrase is *si homo est, animal est mortale, rationis particeps* (*Ac.* 2.7.21).

[9] The key sections: *ratio est mentis motio ea quae discuntur distinguendi et conectendi potens . . . [sed] quid sit ipsa ratio et qualis sit, nisi perpauci prorsus ignorant. mirum uidetur, sed tamen se ita res habet*: *ord.* 2.11.30.

to *ratio*. But the *rationale* is a property of the living thing (this is now my own gloss) which uses *ratio*, not the thing created by mere humans which demonstrates its use.

The preceding paragraph explains why it is impossible simply to translate *ratio* into English as 'reason'. The baths are not made 'according to reason'; they are made by someone who possesses *ratio*, the power of a particular type of structured thought, and all that is implied by it. The *ratio* of the baths themselves bespeaks a harmonious sense of proportion—such as would be imparted by the design of a *homo rationalis*. The ability of *ratio* to mean so much more than simply 'reason' or a process of reasoning—especially, to embrace also the senses of 'proportion' and 'harmonious relationship'—explains its importance in Augustine's Cassiciacum debates; it also gives context to his resistance to *ratio*, of which more anon.

The *rationabile*, meanwhile, turns out to be at the basis of the objects of knowledge which Augustine is describing in the final section of *De Ordine*—that is, of the liberal disciplines. *Ratio* is, as we learned from the example of the baths, the basis for architecture; *ratio communis*—the *ratio* which human beings hold in common with each other—is the origin of speech, writing, and calculation. 'For one person could not be closely associated with another, unless they could talk together and, as it were, make their minds and thoughts flow back to themselves' (*nec homini homo firmissime sociari posset, nisi conloquerentur atque ita sibi mentes suas cogitationesque quasi refunderent*: *ord.* 2.12.35). Note that *ratio* in this sense is the basis for *human* communication; no claims are made here about the human relationship with the divine.[10] Thence emerges 'that infancy of the grammatical art, which Varro calls *litteratio*; I don't quite recall at present what it is in Greek'.[11]

The collocation of the words *ratio communis* is very unusual.[12] Although *communis* here is probably a predicate of *ratio*, rather than directly modifying it, the phrase seems to recall the *sensus communis*, 'common sense', which justified the inclusion of Lartidianus and Rusticus in *De Beata Vita*. These two were asked to contribute 'even though they had

[10] Yet the latter tends to be the context in which the phrase occurs: compare Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 8 (on the *ratio* humankind shares with Christ); Petrus Chrysologus, *Sermo* 148: *ut… esset tibi cum deo ratio communis, corpus commune cum iumentis*.

[11] A disingenuous claim, as demonstrated by Philip Burton, 'The Vocabulary of the Liberal Arts in Augustine's *Confessions*', in *Augustine and the Disciplines*, 141–64.

[12] Though compare Cic. *Acad. post.* 1.22, about the agreement of the philosophical schools that the *beata uita* resides in virtue: *communis haec ratio… adipisci quae essent prima in natura quaeque ipsa per sese expetenda aut omnia aut maxima*.

never even endured the attentions of a *grammaticus*' (*beata u.* 1.6). Here we seem to see an extension of the sense of *ratio* to something very general: the basic capacity of human beings to understand each other when they communicate with each other. This is a sense which precedes the grammarian, or indeed the imparting of any formal knowledge;[13] a sense, in fact, which is very close to the notion of 'common sense'. In the very process of describing the foundations of the liberal disciplines, Augustine is broadening the sense of *ratio* to describe something generally available. The Ciceronian sense, after all, is aspirational: it shows, as Augustine himself glossed it, 'where one ought to return'. That sense is not abandoned; but there is now another sense which runs alongside it, and requires no such special training.

Notwithstanding his gesture towards a democratized sense of *ratio*, Augustine goes on to describe the *ratio perfecta*—the perfect, or complete, *ratio*—which may be discerned in the discipline of disciplines, dialectic.[14] 'This teaches teaching, this teaches learning; in this, *ratio* herself shows and reveals what she is, what she means, and how valuable she is' (*ord.* 2.13.38). It is not surprising that many scholars, 'reading' *ratio* in Augustine, have stopped here. It is a magnificent testimony to a particular mode of thought and teaching—to the mode, in short, with which Augustine grew up, and which he seems to have set out to emulate at Cassiciacum.

But this is not, in fact, the climax of the description of the disciplines. We proceed swiftly on to rhetoric, which persuades the foolish of the conclusions reached through dialectic; and the most euphoric description is reserved for the *ratio* in music. (No wonder the *De Musica* was the only one of the projected treatises on all the liberal arts—made Christian—which Augustine completed.) With geometry and astrology, the list is closed.

It is at this stage that Augustine gives us the pell-mell sequence of routes of enquiry which we discussed earlier, and which ends in knowledge 'not of the highest God, who is known best by not knowing, but

[13] Note Augustine's account of the acquisition of language in *conf.* 1; in the context of the present discussion, we may especially note, *et dedisti ea homini ex aliis de se conicere et auctoritatibus etiam muliercularum multa de se credere. eram enim et uiuebam etiam tunc, et signa quibus sensa mea nota aliis facerem iam in fine infantiae quaerebam* (*conf.* 1.6.10). The transition into language comes at *conf.* 1.8.13, and Augustine specifies that this is not the product of formal teaching, but of the mind—*mens*—which God gave him. See further O'Donnell ad loc.

[14] Brachtendorf renders *disciplina disciplinarum* 'theory of science', which usefully illuminates the immediate context, though it obscures the ambiguities of the phrase: 'The Decline of Dialectic in Augustine's Early Dialogues', *SP* 37 (2001), 25–30.

of one's own soul', and goes on to compliment Monnica on the ease with which she approaches such mysteries, thanks to her disposition and way of life. There follows the excursus on the nature of language—and specifically, of her language—on which we have already remarked: it bears examination again, in this new context.

> If I were to say that you would come easily to a form of speech which lacks faults of pronunciation and language, I would certainly be lying. It was absolutely necessary for me to learn these things; and yet, the Italians still attack many of my pronunciations of words—and they in turn are criticized by me for their pronunciation. It's one thing to be secure in one's art, quite another to be secure in one's race.
>
> si enim dicam te facile ad eum sermonem peruenturam, qui locutionis et linguae uitio careat, profecto mentiar. me enim ipsum, cui magna necessitas fuit ista perdiscere, adhuc in multis uerborum sonis Itali exagitant et a me uicissim, quod ad ipsum sonum attinet, reprehenduntur. aliud est enim esse arte, aliud gente securum. (*ord.* 2.17.45)

Cicero, Augustine reassures himself, committed linguistic solecisms of the type which may be detected in his own speech. But 'in our times, the class of barbarisms is constructed in such a way that the very speech by which Rome was saved' (presumably, Cicero's orations against Catiline) 'should seem barbarous.' No wonder Augustine looks for another route to authenticity: Monnica has cut through to the 'almost divine natural force' of the grammatical art.[15] Could it be Augustine's sense of himself as outsider—as someone who was not 'secure in his race', whatever the heights he had achieved professionally—that led him to wonder whether *ratio* was, after all, so impregnable? Again, we shall return to this question.

In *De Ordine* itself, Augustine returns to the Ciceronian *homo*: 'nothing makes me superior to a beast, except that I am a *rationale animal*' (*nihil aliud me pecori praeponit, nisi quod rationale animal sum*: *ord.* 2.19.49). But, he asks, 'how is *ratio* immortal, while I am simultaneously defined as something both *rationale* and mortal?' (*quomodo igitur inmortalis est ratio et ego simul et ratonale et mortale quiddam esse definior*? *ord.* 2.19.50). The enquiry is left open: Augustine claims, jokingly, that in a dialogue on order he is exceeding the bounds of moderation, 'which is the father of order'. But in the meantime, he has left two very different possibilities dangling. On the one hand, if *ratio* is immortal—as proved (he notes) by the eternal proportionate relationship between the numerals one and two, or two

[15] Cf. *lib. arb.* 2.16.43, with its suspicion of the *facundus sapiens* who has *nimis suauitas uocis*, so that his hearers lose the sense of what he is saying.

and four—and I, by the exercise of it, am *ratio*, then 'that by which I am called mortal, is not mine'. On the other, if soul and *ratio* are not the same thing, yet 'I use *ratio* and become better through it', then one must move from worse to better—implying the change that goes with the condition of mortality.[16] And where does that leave the supposedly eternal and immortal soul? Augustine wants both to be able to claim some sort of immortality for *ratio* and to situate it in the embodied self. He is clear that *ratio* must be the key bridging concept, but is unsure of what the consequences of this might be.[17] The nature of *ratio*, and the consequences of that nature for the soul, are far from settled.

Talking to Ratio

The *Soliloquia* form another way of approaching that question; and we have seen already that Augustine plays with the possibilities of talking to *ratio* 'as if she and I were two, though I was one' (*retr.* 1.4.1). But is this Augustine's own *ratio*, or a general personified property? In other words, is he questioning his own reason—or Reason?

The dialogue format which Augustine chooses and sustains suggests further questions. After all, the term *soliloquia* is Augustine's own coinage:[18] he has created this treatise as a dialogue against the constraints of precedent and even of language. What is gained by naming Ratio as an interlocutor? Why could the marginal A. and R. not equally well stand for—say—'Alypius' and 'Romanianus'?[19] We may suppose that there must be possibilities of characterization peculiar to Ratio, which Augustine wishes to develop. If Ratio is to be questioned, even ridiculed, Augustine must be questioning her as he has assumed her to be—testing her boundaries within himself. Yet this very specificity is itself an illustration of the specificity of Ratio—whom suddenly we see as a construct in individual minds, not something (*ratio*) abstractly 'out there' and incontrovertible. The limitations of the 'view from no-

[16] Cf. the exchange about the wise man and his soul, *ord.* 2.2.6 and Ch. 4, pp. 113–20.

[17] This brings *ratio* very much into line with the Plotinian *noûs*; we see Plotinus struggling with the question of how to relate *noûs* to the embodied self at *Enn.* 4.3–4, *On the difficulties of the soul*.

[18] So L&S, Blaise; the term does not make it into Ernout–Meillet. See the discussion below of *sol.* 2.7.14.

[19] A question usefully posed by Stefan Faller, 'Die *Soliloquia* des Aurelius Augustinus—ein "innerer Dialog"?', in Lore Benz (ed.), *ScriptOralia Romana* (Tübingen 2001), 276.

where'—in this instance, the notion that *ratio* can somehow exist independently of human minds—are on display.[20]

We may note that it is in fact Ratio who is portrayed as proposing the term *soliloquia*. When 'Augustine' says that he regrets his over-hasty assent to a point in the argument, she responds:

> It's ridiculous to be ashamed, as if we hadn't chosen conversations (*sermocinationes*) of this type for this very reason: since we're just speaking to ourselves, I want them to be called *Soliloquia*, a novel name and perhaps a harsh one, but apt enough for the thing that needs to be represented.
>
> ridiculum est, si te pudet, quasi non ob idipsum elegerimus huiusmodi sermocinationes; quae, quoniam cum solis nobis loquimur, Soliloquia uocari atque inscribi uolo, nouo quidem et fortasse duro nomine, sed ad rem demonstrandam satis idoneo. (*sol.* 2.7.14)

Note that the conversations are in fact to be *uocari atque inscribi* the *Soliloquia*—'named (aloud) and entitled (in writing)'; this captures exactly the tense ambiguity between the spoken and the written which we have explored in the other dialogues, an ambiguity reflected by the English translation 'called'. And the purpose of constructing the *Soliloquia* in this manner is, it seems, to enable correction, reflection, revision. This mutability and polyphony should not provoke shame or embarrassment; it is in the soliloquies' very nature. Augustine remains determined to resist the declarative statement of the monologue or treatise. The *Soliloquia* are—paradoxically—Augustine's ideal dialogue: talking to himself, he creates endless possibilities for indeterminacy and postponing closure.

This begins to indicate, however, the complexity of the relationship between Augustine and Ratio. At the beginning of the *Soliloquia*, Augustine says, 'there suddenly spoke to me either I myself or someone else—whether inside or outside me, I don't know' (*ait mihi subito siue ego ipse siue alius quis, extrinsecus siue intrinsecus, nescio*: *sol.* 1.1.1). As so often, the *nescio* is revealing:[21] Augustine goes on, 'for this [i.e. whether his interlocutor was inside or outside himself] is the very thing which I am straining to

[20] The 'view from nowhere' is taken from Thomas Nagel: *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford, 1986). It would be anachronistic to take this challenge too far, of course; Augustine still considers that abstract properties—*sapientia*, for example—*can* exist independently of human minds. But he is nonetheless exploring their boundaries, and their boundedness in their human manifestations. Note *retr.* 1.5.2c, on *imm. an.*, objecting to the phrase *quod ibi dictum est non esse uitam cum ratione ulli nisi animae; neque enim deo sine ratione uita est, cum apud eum et summa uita et summa sit ratio.*

[21] See the discussion in Part Two, Ch. 4.

find out' (*nam hoc ipsum est quod magnopere scire molior*). The question is crucial, for it bears on where, and what, 'Augustine' is, and how he relates to what is beyond himself. It picks up on the transitional status of *ratio* explored in *De Ordine*. And it remains suspended over this entire dialogue.

Augustine has got no closer to resolving the question when, a couple of years later, he composes the treatise *De Vera Religione*. This is the work which contains the famous phrase, *noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi* (don't go outwards, return into yourself). Augustine elaborates: 'truth lives in the inner self. And if you find your own nature mutable, transcend yourself too' (*uera rel.* 39). Readers seldom notice, however, that Augustine continues, 'but when you transcend yourself, *remember that you are transcending your reasoning soul*' (*sed memento, cum te transcendis*). Those who have reason, the *ratiocinantes*, seek truth—but truth is ultimately somewhere outside the self: where, exactly, is *ratio* dropped? (Note the paradox of the invitation, at the moment of transcendence, to 'remember'.) For Augustine to spend the *Soliloquia* talking to his own *ratio* is a creative way of playing—through the use of personae that we have seen him developing elsewhere at Cassiciacum—with the question of whether *ratio* is separable from the self that is 'Augustine', and if so, how far.

Augustine differentiates his own sphere of competence from that of Ratio, too. For example: when Ratio enquires 'whether we are healthy (*sani*[22]), which is most important,' Augustine responds, 'You'll know this, if you can look at all into either me or you; I will respond to you as you question me, if I feel anything' (*hoc tu uideris, si uel in te uel in me aliquantum aspicere potes; ego quaerenti, si quid sentio, respondebo*: *sol.* 1.9.16). So Ratio's task is to 'look into' the reasoning self: the verb is *aspicere*, which puns on the fact that *ratio* has just been defined as the 'gaze of the soul', *aspectus animae* (*sol.* 1.6.12).[23] Augustine's portion, meanwhile, is to 'feel', *sentire*, the verb regularly used of registering sense-perceptions (*sensibilia*)—he, it seems, is the *animal mortale*. Time and again, as we shall see, Ratio tries to lift the conversation into the abstractions beyond the self, while the persona of Augustine refuses to ignore his obligation to 'feel'.

[22] Note that true *sanitas* of the eyes is displayed by those people—recalling Monnica—'for whom belief, hope, and love is enough': Ratio tells us so, at *sol.* 1.13.23.

[23] Surely closely related as a concept to *lib. arb.* 2.3.9, where *ratio* is defined as what sees oneself seeing (line 114)—and sees itself as well (line 145); it also—once again—recalls Plotinus: the *ópsis*, the gaze of the soul, being the point at which *noûs* makes the transition to the divine (*Enn.* 1.5.9).

This is most apparent in Ratio's attempts to prove the immortality of the soul, which are repeated so often that they become almost like a running joke; each time, Augustine drags the conversation back to earth with an awkward question.[24]

The joking to-and-fro is typical. A self-mocking subtext seems for Augustine to be another liberating feature of talking to his own Ratio, rather than to the potentially sensitive interlocutors based on his real friends, family, and students. He had already essayed a brief conversation with Ratio in *De Ordine*, though (as far as I can see) without the humour (*ord.* 2.18.48). But in the *Soliloquia*, he establishes the tone almost from the beginning. His persona prays, at Ratio's suggestion. (Note that each of the prayers in the work is proposed by Ratio—which provokes the suggestion that she is acknowledging her limitations.[25]) The conversation then proceeds as follows:

A: Right, I've prayed to God.

R: So, what do you want to know?

A: Absolutely everything I prayed.

R: Summarize it.

A: I yearn (*cupio*) to know God and the soul.

R: Is that all? (*Nihilne plus?*)

A: ecce oraui deum.

R: quid ergo scire uis?

A: haec ipsa omnia quae oraui.

R: breuiter ea conlige.

A: deum et animam scire cupio.

R: nihilne plus?

A little later, we resume in the same tone. Augustine says that he only loves God and the soul. Ratio asks:

R: So you don't love your friends?

A: How can I love the soul (*anima*) and not love them?

R: So, do you love fleas and bugs too?

[24] Augustine uses the technique of the 'staged' dialogues to slow the conversation down over this crucial point: for example, *sol.* 2.3.4, where he twice calls back Ratio with *nimis cito*, 'not so fast'. Note too the way in which Ratio points to herself—so to speak—as a temporizing device: *uides quam non frustra tantos circuitus egerit nostra ratiocinatio*, *sol.* 2.14.26.

[25] *sol.* 1.1.2, 2.1.1, 2.6.9. The last is most interesting, as it is explicitly a last resort (A: *in magnas angustias me coniecisti nec inuenio prorsus quid respondeam*), and there Ratio prays as well.

A: I said I loved the soul (*anima*), not animals! [One can almost hear him adding 'you idiot'.]

R: Either your friends aren't people, or you don't love them; every person is an animal, and you said you didn't love animals.

R: non igitur amas amicos tuos?

A: quo pacto eos possum amans animam non amare?

R: hoc modo ergo et pulices et cimices amas?

A: animam me amare dixi, non animalia.

R: aut homines non sunt amici tui aut eos non amas; omnis enim homo animal et animalia te non amare dixisti. (Both passages from *sol.* 1.2.7)

This prepares the way for the important point that how Augustine distinguishes his friends from fleas and bugs is by their possession of a *rational* soul. Time and again, the banter seems to be a way of fixing on significant moments in the dialogue, and making them (despite the commitment to writing instead of memory[26]) memorable.

At the very end of the *Soliloquia*, after Ratio (the interlocutor) has sought in so many ways to ensure that the discussion remains on a level of disembodiment, and to show that true wisdom relies on the extrication of the self from the body, Augustine (again, as her interlocutor) remains resolutely involved with the corporeal. Ratio accuses him: 'I believe you're terribly afraid that the death of a person brings on forgetfulness of everything—including truth itself, if one's found any—even if it doesn't kill the soul' (*non enim credo te parum formidare, ne mors humana, etiamsi non interficiat animam, rerum tamen omnium et ipsius, si qua comperta fuerit, ueritatis obliuionem inferat*: *sol.* 2.20.36). And Augustine responds:

I can't say too strongly how much this evil should be feared. What will that eternal life be—for that matter, what death would one not prefer to it—if the soul lives on in the condition which we see in a new-born child? to say nothing of the life which exists in the womb; for I do think there is one.

non potest satis dici, quantum hoc malum metuendum sit. qualis enim erit illa aeterna uita uel quae mors non ei praeponenda est, si sic uiuit anima ut uidemus eam uiuere in puero mox nato? ut de illa uita nihil dicam, quae in utero agitur; non enim puto esse nullam. (*sol.* 2.20.36)

The 'irrational' Augustine is resolutely attached to *sensibilia* and their value—for how else does the soul progress in this life, if not through

[26] As we saw earlier: *ergo scribendum est, sol.* 1.1.1.

the living? He will not concede that his fear of forgetfulness is wrong: 'this evil *should* be feared' (a translation which reflects precisely the construction in the Latin: *hoc malum metuendum sit*). Memory concerns the transient objects of sense perception; but it cannot be simply dismissed. It is a precious part of the self. That by which I am called mortal—to rephrase Augustine's words in *De Ordine*—is and must be mine. The role in which he casts himself in the *Soliloquia* only emphasizes this.

This recalls Licentius and his metaphor of the memory-slave in Part Two. The slave is responsible for administering the 'purse' of the wise man's memories—'not by the use of *ratio* (*ratiocinando*), but under the organization of that highest law and order' (*ord.* 2.2.7). Augustine says at that point that he will defer his objections to Licentius' *rationibus*. In some ways, the objections are delayed for years—until Augustine's formal workings-out of the notion of memory. In others, the objections are woven around and through the very metaphor Licentius chooses, and the entire trajectory of the conversations at Cassiciacum.

In *De Ordine*, Augustine reminds us that 'the way which we follow when the obscurity of things bothers us is twofold: either *ratio* or authority' (*duplex enim est uia, quam sequimur, cum rerum nos obscuritas mouet, aut rationem aut certe auctoritatem*: *ord.* 2.5.16).[27] He has talked of this twofold approach before, in *De Academicis*: 'there is no doubt that we are driven to learning by the twin weight of authority and *ratio*' (*nulli autem dubium est gemino pondere nos impelli ad discendum auctoritatis atque rationis*: *c. Acad.* 3.20.43). Authority, he says there, definitely derives from Christ; *ratio* he considers for the time being (Augustine's own caveat: *interim*) to derive from those parts of the Platonic works which are consonant with the Christian scriptures. Put like this, it begins to look as if *ratio* is a special sort of authority—an authority dependent on Platonic philosophy instead of on the Bible.

In *De Ordine*—written, apparently, in the middle of *De Academicis* (*retr.* 1.3.1)—Augustine seems to nuance this position. Philosophy promises *ratio*, but saves only very few. And what does it teach? It teaches us to understand in the proper way the awe-inspiring mysteries; these in their

[27] See Holte, *Béatitude et Sagesse*, 304–10 on *auctoritas*; note esp. 309: 'dans les écrits de Cassiciacum, l'on trouve de nettes affirmations reconnaissant aux "mystères chrétiens" une autorité intellectuelle et morale contraignante.' For a reading of the ideas in an explicitly grammatical context, see Vivien Law, '*Auctoritas, consuetudo* and *ratio* in St. Augustine's Ars grammatica', in G. L. Bursill-Hall *et al.* (eds.), *De Ortu Grammaticae: Studies in Medieval Grammar and Linguistic Theory in Memory of Jan Pinborg* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 1990), 191–207.

turn teach that there is one all-powerful God who is at the same time the 'three-powerful' father and son and holy spirit. Philosophy also teaches us *not to despise these mysteries* (*ord.* 2.17.46). The way, then, really is 'twofold' (*duplex*), not forked; there are not two different routes by which one arrives at the same place, but one route with two aspects, each of which depends in some way on the other.[28] Ultimately, all that the elaborate process of philosophical enquiry can teach the eager student is how to accept the mystery of divinity. Authority is the way for the less educated, but such people are dependent at the very least upon *ratio communis*—the organization of elementary communication—and on their own capacity as rational human beings (*homines rationales*), even if the more exalted, philosophical notions of *ratio* (in the traditional formulations) are not available to them. 'That immense fact that so great a God deigned to take on and direct a body of our type is the more full of mercy the more debased it seems, and the more profoundly it is removed from the arrogance of the clever (*ingeniosorum*)' (*quantum autem illud sit, quod hoc etiam nostri generis corpus tantus propter nos deus adsumere atque agere dignatus est, quanto uidetur uilius, tanto est clementia plenius et a quadam ingeniosorum superbia longe alteque remotius*: *ord.* 2.5.16).[29] The miracle of the incarnation leads Augustine to reflect on the gulf between any human interpretation or grasp of *ratio*, and the divine principles at work in the universe. Against that gulf, the distinction between human *ratio* and human authority becomes functionally almost non-existent.[30]

This puts in context the opening question of the treatise which Augustine began to compose against the Manichaeans soon after his baptism, the *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*:

So, from where should I begin? From authority, or from *ratio?* Certainly, the natural order is that, when we learn something, authority precedes *ratio*. . . . But

[28] This follows from the proposed inseparability of philosophy and theology; remember that Madec says that Aquinas is the first to assume that they are separable: 'Le néoplatonisme dans la conversion d'Augustin' (cf. above, Intro. n. 19). See also the excellent discussion of the problem in Virgilio Pacioni, *Agostino d'Ippona* (Milan, 2004), in which he uses symbolic logic to demonstrate that, for Augustine, 'la fede come categoria generale permea ogni attività intenzionale dell' uomo' (37).

[29] Van Fleteren, revealingly, takes the 'debased' to refer to the body *tout simple*, not to the fact of the Incarnation: 'Authority and Reason, Faith and Understanding in the Thought of St. Augustine', *AugStud* 4 (1973), 47.

[30] A very similar conclusion is reached by Karl-Heinrich Lütcke, *'Auctoritas' bei Augustin* (Stuttgart, 1968), 183–7. 1 Cor. 2: 6–8 may be relevant here: *sapientiam autem loquimur inter perfectos: sapientiam uero non huius saeculi, neque principum huius saeculi, qui destruuntur: sed loquimur Dei sapientiam in mysterio, quae abscondita est, quam praedestinauit Deus ante saecula in gloriam nostram, quam nemo principum huius saeculi cognouit: si enim cognouissent, nunquam Dominum gloriae crucifixissent.*

since our business is with those who feel and speak and act in every circumstance contrary to order, and they claim above all that *ratio* should be given absolute priority, I shall follow their custom and adopt what I think is a deeply flawed practice in disputation. You see, it delights me to imitate the lovingkindness of my lord Jesus Christ, who even took on the evil of death from which he wished to exonerate us.

unde igitur exordiar? ab auctoritate, an a ratione? naturae quidem ordo ita se habet, ut cum aliquid discimus, rationem praecedat auctoritas. . . . sed quoniam cum iis nobis res est, qui omnia contra ordinem et sentiunt, et loquuntur, et gerunt, nihilque aliud maxime dicunt, nisi rationem prius esse reddendam, morem illis geram; quod fateor in disputando uitiosum esse, suscipiam. delectat enim me imitari, quantum ualeo, mansuetudinem domini mei Iesu Christi, qui etiam ipsius mortis malo, quo nos exuere uellet, indutus est. (*mor. eccl. cath.* 1.2.3)

From internal evidence, it seems that the preface was written later than the rest of *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, after *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*;[31] elsewhere in *De Moribus*, Augustine favours something more like the 'twofold' approach, instead of the sharp division suggested here.[32] Note how Augustine's position in favour of *auctoritas* has become (or is for polemical purposes) more extreme. He explained in the section on the disciplines in *De Ordine* that 'authority is prior in time, *ratio* in fact' (*tempore auctoritas, re autem ratio prior est*: *ord.* 2.9.26)—in other words, that although we first learn things through authority, *ratio* is the superior process.[33] The Manichaeans, however, have given Augustine good reason to be suspicious of *ratio*; for it is upon *ratio* that they claim to base their entire system.[34] In *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, Augustine does something rather different with *ratio*, as we shall see; but he inveighs against the utter confidence with which the Manichaeans promise the knowledge of good and evil—'who with more chattering and boasting?' (*qui loquacius atque iactantius?*)—as if it were simply the end of a process of rational dialectic (*Gn. adu. Mn.* 2.25.38).[35] This must

[31] See Coyle, *Augustine's 'De Moribus'*, 66–76; id., 'Augustine's two treatises "De moribus": Remarks on their textual history', in *Signum Pietatis* (Würzburg, 1989), 75–7.

[32] See Thomas Deman, 'Héritage antique et innovation chrétienne dans le "De moribus Ecclesiae catholicae" ', in *Augustinus Magister* (Paris, 1954), 713–26.

[33] There is a neat hierarchical summary at *util. cred.* 11.25: '*quod intelligimus . . . debemus rationi, quod credimus, auctoritati, quod opinamur, errori.*'

[34] O'Donnell discusses this at *conf.* 5.3.6, and quotes Courcelle, *Recherches sur les* confessions (Paris, 1968), 65: 'Ainsi, le motif fondamental pour lequel Augustin a embrassé le manichéisme, est son appétit rationaliste.' This angle is also emphasized by Van Fleteren, 'Authority and Reason'.

[35] Cf. *util. cred.* 2.2.

have been one of the stimuli to Augustine for questioning the notion of *ratio* in the first place.

Another stimulus is hinted at in the earliest moments of *De Academicis*. Licentius says that 'the person who is devoted to seeking truth is living according to *ratio*' (*secundum rationem uiu[i]t qui quaerit perfecte ueritatem*: *c. Acad.* 1.3.9). Trygetius contradicts him: the person who is wrong—or who is wandering; the verb is the same in Latin—does not live according to *ratio*, 'and everyone is wandering, who is always seeking and never finding' (*errat autem omnis, qui semper quaerit nec inuenit*: *c. Acad.* 1.4.10). Augustine ultimately resolves the quarrel by resorting to scripture: 'believe him who said "Seek and ye shall find" '. As the Cassiciacum conversations continue, Augustine becomes less confident of when 'ye shall find'—or rather, it becomes increasingly clear to him that the goal will not be attained in this life. But he refuses to reject the notion of seeking; and it is, for him, bound up with the questioning of the most fundamental assumptions of his thought: for example, the assumption that thinking should be structured round *ratio*, in the sense of a logical order of reasoning. Here Augustine's dramatic portrayal of the contingency of human *ratio* comes into play once again. Academic claims to *ratio* are a real issue for him: he mocks Trygetius for suggesting that the Academics are relying on *ratio*, not hearsay (*fama*), in saying that they are seeking something like truth (*c. Acad.* 2.8.20). Later, Augustine points out caustically that according to the Academic position, which is supported by 'so many important rationales (*tot tantisque rationibus*)', we have to acknowledge that 'the more the wise man withholds his assent, the more likely it is that he will know wisdom' (*c. Acad.* 3.14.30). *Rationes* can be hollow, and lead nowhere.

Back to the *Soliloquia*: Augustine makes explicit another reason why he finds unquestioning reliance on *ratio* and, through it, on philosophical enquiry, to be suspect. Ratio—his interlocutor, that is—has undertaken a process of reasoning whereby discipline is truth; truth is immortal; therefore the soul in which discipline resides must also be immortal. The ambiguity of *disciplina* is convenient: it is left unresolved whether this is the *disciplina disciplinarum* of dialectic, or a more general notion of 'learning'. (Again, at the beginning of the unfinished *De Immortalitate Animae*, this syllogism is proposed, and explicitly linked with the soul's ability *recte ratiocinari*, to use *ratio* correctly. In the light of where Augustine goes with the association in the *Soliloquia*, this structure seems to display the absurdity of syllogism when applied to proofs of the soul's immortality; but this is more likely to be another occasion

when Augustine stepped back from the revolutionary implications of his enquiry, and tried to drag the work onto a more conventional track.) In *Soliloquia*, the persona of Augustine is dubious: he cannot see why the presence of discipline in the soul should be a condition of its immortality.

I don't see how discipline can always exist in the soul—especially the discipline of dialectic (*disputandi*), when so few have experience of it, and even someone who does had no knowledge of it the entire time from infancy onward.

non uideo, quomodo in animo semper sit disciplina, praesertim disputandi, cum et tam pauci eius gnari sint et quisquis eam nouit, tanto ab infantia tempore fuerit indoctus. (*sol.* 2.14.25)

Augustine's persona returns to the argument, unsatisfied, a few paragraphs later. Ratio has again insisted that the presence of discipline in the soul tells us that the soul is immortal:

R: So the soul is immortal. Now, trust your reasoning (*rationibus tuis*), trust the truth. . . . Turn away from your shadow, turn back into yourself: your only death is to have forgotten that you cannot die.

A: I hear, I'm returning to my senses (*resipisco*), I'm beginning to remember. But please explicate the remaining problems: how are discipline and truth understood to exist in an uneducated soul? We can't say that it's not mortal!

R: inmortalis est igitur anima. iamiam crede rationibus tuis, crede ueritati. . . . auertere ab umbra tua, reuertere in te; nullus est interitus tuus nisi oblitum esse, quod interire non possis.

A: audio, resipisco, recolere incipio. sed, quaeso, illa quae restant expedias, quomodo in animo imperito—non enim eum mortalem dicere possumus—disciplina et ueritas esse intellegantur. (*sol.* 2.19.33)

Ratio says rather dismissively that dealing with this question—if he really wants to—will take a whole extra book. She then reiterates that their reasoning so far has been flawless: the implication is clearly that it's absurd to bother questioning their conclusions.

This is terribly funny. Augustine is portraying his own *ratio* as eager to ensure that things are cut-and-dried and laid to rest: she is satisfied with her own, conventional, means of ratiocination (even if she occasionally, self-deprecatingly, refers to her own thought as a diminutive *ratiuncula*![36]) and does not wish to move outside that framework. Augustine's 'irrational' self, meanwhile, is dissatisfied and insistent: there are many circumstances which Ratio simply cannot encompass, and he is deter-

[36] *sol.* 1.15.29.

mined not to let them slide past. Ratio is depicted here as a parody of the limited intellectual: she is very good at what she does, but cannot move beyond it. The 'irrational' Augustine goads her, and then falls back. *Resipisco* literally means 'I'm coming to my senses' or 'I'm beginning to be wise again': surely this is ironic?

But the serious point remains. The proof of the soul's immortality cannot be bound up with so selective a criterion as the ability to reason—to do dialectic. Augustine's unpicking of what has come to seem like a glib Ciceronian claim is startling. This notion is crucial, and it epitomizes the moves towards inclusivity and away from academic elitism which we have watched Augustine making in Part Two. In the discussion there of the *peculium* of memory in *De Ordine*, we passed over the sequel to the conversation about the wise man's obligation to teach; but it is revealing in this context. Licentius is trying yet again to salvage his notion that the wise man's attention is properly devoted to things eternal and divine.

'So,' I said, 'could the living body of a given wise man be here now with us, while his soul was absent?' 'Yes, it could,' [Licentius] said. 'Even,' I said, 'if he were talking to us and teaching us something?' 'Even if he were teaching us wisdom itself,' he said, 'I would say that he was not with us but with himself (*non nobiscum sed secum*).' 'So, not in the body?' I said. 'No,' he said. To which I responded: 'Wouldn't you call a body which lacks a soul dead? I envisaged a living man!' 'I don't know (*nescio*) how to explain it,' he said.

ergo, inquam, posset alicuius sapientis uiuum corpus hic modo nobiscum esse, ut animus hinc abesset?—posset, inquit.—etiamne, inquam, si nobiscum conloqueretur et nos aliquid doceret?—etiamsi, inquit, nos ipsam doceret sapientiam, non illum dicerem nobiscum esse sed secum.—non igitur in corpore? inquam.—non, inquit.—cui ego: corpus illud, quod caret animo, nonne mortuum fateris, cum ego uiuum proposuerim?—nescio, inquit, quomodo explicem. (*ord.* 2.6.19)[37]

Augustine suggests that a preliminary solution may be found in the fact of God's presence everywhere—so the soul doesn't have to leave the body. But once again, notions about the soul have been crucially complicated by attention to the body. It will not do for the soul to be off seeking wisdom elsewhere, ignoring—as it were—its personal obligations.[38]

[37] This is consistent with Licentius' characterization throughout the Cassiciacum dialogues. It is he who is determined that the wise man is blessed *cum ab omnibus inuolucris corporis mentem quantum potest euoluit . . . ut et hic . . . ratione perfruatur* (*c. Acad.* 1.8.23).

[38] It is tempting to see in this exchange a reference to Porph. *Plot.* 8: 'even if [Plotinus] was talking to someone, engaged in continuous conversation, he kept to his train of thought.' If so, the reference is sceptical.

Again, we may look ahead to *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* for a blunt spelling-out of the implications. 'A human being . . . is a *rationalis* soul using a mortal and earthly body. So the person who loves his neighbour [Augustine is running through the Commandments] does good partly to the body and partly to the soul' (*homo igitur . . . anima rationalis est mortali atque terreno utens corpore. partim ergo corpori, partim uero animae hominis benefacit qui proximum diligit*: *mor. eccl. cath.* 27.52). Augustine moves on to discuss the necessity, for the supposed *homo rationalis*, of food, clothing, health, physical protection: he refuses, therefore, to consider the state of the body as irrelevant to the state of the soul.[39] Later, he inveighs against those who avoid the duty of caring for the bodily needs of others: 'they are frozen with the ice of inhumanity, rather than calm in the tranquillity of *ratio*' (*congelascunt potius rigore inhumanitatis quam rationis tranquillitate serenantur*: *mor. eccl. cath.* 27.54). The Manichaeans, with their obsessive attention to diet and to physical codes of spiritual purity, must have helped to shape Augustine's attention to such issues;[40] they compounded such attention to their own bodies with the refusal to attend to others—notably, to care for beggars.[41] With these furious words, Augustine dismisses utterly such solipsistic claims to spiritual—or, for that matter, philosophical—enlightenment. Other people—and their bodies—matter; any interpretation of *ratio* which claims that they do not is frigid and worthless.

Augustine does not know how, exactly, to link up body and soul: that is one of the reasons the *Soliloquia* sustains such a sense of aporia. But he repeatedly attempts to do so. We saw at the beginning of the chapter how Ratio tempts Augustine with the promise of the perfect wife (*sol.* 1.10.17), and the terms in which Augustine rejects the prospect. (Note that it is Ratio, not the senses, tempting Augustine—perhaps because it has traditionally been considered reasonable for the philosopher to take a wife?) His rejection, however, comes back to haunt him. The end of Book 1 of the *Soliloquia* purports to have been written on a second day. The intervening night is the only such pause in the work, and it appears to be there for a reason. When Ratio and Augustine resume their

[39] Cf. Matt. 25: 31–46—the separation of the sheep from the goats. The just have given food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty; Christ says, '*Amen dico uobis, quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.*'

[40] See the full and careful discussion of Jason David BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body in Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore, 2000), esp. ch. 5, 'Alimentary Rationales'.

[41] See O'Donnell on *conf.* 5.9.16, *nisi in ignem atque tormenta digna factis meis*, and *conf.* 6.6.9, *pauperem mendicum*.

conversation, she reminds him yet again that *sensibilia* should be completely avoided—and then recalls for him their nocturnal sequel:

R: How filthy, foul, accursed, repulsive a feminine embrace seemed to you yesterday, when we asked ourselves about the desire for a wife. Yet that night, while we were awake and going over those things again with ourselves, you felt (*sensisti*) how those imagined charms and bitter sweetness tantalized you very differently from how you had assumed they would . . .

R: quam tibi sordidus, quam foedus, quam exsecrabilis, quam horribilis complexus femineus uidebatur, quando inter nos de uxoris cupiditate quaesitum est. certe ista nocte, uigilantes cum rursus eadem nobiscum ageremus, sensisti, quam te aliter quam praesumpseras, imaginatae illae blanditiae et amara suauitas titillauerit . . . (*sol.* 1.14.25)

She dwells on the image for a while, until Augustine breaks in with 'Please shut up!' (*tace obsecro tace*). Augustine's province, once again, is shown to be that of 'feeling' (*sentire*), which gets in the way of his desire for certain knowledge. Ratio is about to recall him to his original objects of enquiry: 'Are you really saying that you want to know God and the soul?' (*animam te certe dicis et deum uelle cognoscere? sol.* 1.15.27). The question, in such a context, sounds like a tease.

But to be fair, the irrational Augustine had already anticipated this intervention. Early in his discussion with Ratio, she asks him whether he loves anything except knowledge of himself and of God. He replies:

I could respond that I love nothing more, going by the feeling (sensu) I now have, but it's safer to respond that I don't know (*nescire*). In my experience, it's often turned out that when I believed nothing else would affect me, something else would come to mind which disturbed me very differently from how I had assumed.

possem respondere nihil me amare amplius, pro eo sensu qui mihi nunc est, sed tutius respondeo nescire me. nam saepe mihi usu euenit ut, cum alia nulla re me crederem conmoueri, ueniret tamen aliquid in mentem, quod me multo aliter atque praesumpseram pungeret. (*sol.* 1.9.16)

This is exactly the move which Augustine later plays out with his distracting fantasies about the 'imagined charms' of a wife. He presents himself as knowingly enmeshed in his own human and physical limitations. The message of the *Soliloquia* is that such things cannot be left out of account. If Augustine were a successful Platonist, he would move from the beauty of his imagined wife up and out to heavenly beauty; he would consider her beauty merely a pale shadow of the ideal. (Is that why he does not, in fact, talk about beauty, but about sex—the *femineus complexus*—which is less easily made into an abstract property?) As it is, his point is that the irrationality of human feeling is part of life, even a

life lived in quest of God. That is why one should focus on the desire to seek God, not on the impossible finding. That is why time and again the most appropriate answer to a question is *nescio*.

Right at the beginning of the *Soliloquia*, Augustine says to Ratio, 'I don't think I know anything in the way in which I want to know God' (*sol.* 1.2.7). In the course of the work, Ratio presents her interlocutor with different examples—notably, geometrical forms and the discipline of grammar—to 'prove' that one may extrapolate from one set of objects of knowledge to another. But the matter remains unresolved until the end. When Augustine says, 'For the time being, let's enquire about the body', Ratio responds that if the body had true *forma*, it would be soul (*sol.* 2.18.32). Augustine the interlocutor is, understandably, baffled; Ratio reminds him of the analogy from geometrical forms, but though Augustine finally says, 'I understand everything which you were trying to demonstrate', the summing-up which precedes it fails once again to account for the connection between body and soul. He returns to the question a little later, asking Ratio to explain briefly 'what the difference might be between the true form which is contained in the understanding (*intellegentia*), and the one which thought (*cogitatio*) makes up for itself' (*quid intersit inter ueram figuram*[42], *quae intellegentia continetur, et eam, quam sibi fingit cogitatio*: *sol.* 2.20.34). But this proposes a distinction which was previously elided: between thinking (which necessitates no object outside itself) and understanding (which does demand such an object). Augustine, at the beginning of Book 2 of the *Soliloquia*, has said that 'he knows he thinks'; Ratio converts this without explanation into 'understanding' (*sol.* 2.1.1). Ratio presumes the link of *intellegentia* between the self and God (again recalling the Plotinian *noûs*); Augustine presumes no more than the thought, which remains problematically located in the body, and subject to the distractions of falsehood and the inadequacies of forgetfulness. Why else is so much of Book 2 devoted to discussing the false, while *ueritas* (truth) is taken for granted?

Augustine remains obsessed with the limitations of the body. If only he had completed the *Soliloquia* in the same vein, as he originally planned. We might see some resolution there; but we might—which is in many ways more interesting—see a determined

[42] *Figura* being equivalent to *forma*.

lack of resolution, and not be able to explain it away as the property of an unfinished work.

Be that as it may, we see how reluctant the 'irrational' Augustine is to relinquish his situation in the body; indeed, we see that he has constructed his persona in the *Soliloquia* to express this reluctance. We have seen how Augustine (the compositor) has reached this point through his exploration of the persona of Monnica. The theological importance is brought home in the *Soliloquia*. Ratio—one's own, humanly bounded *ratio*—has as yet been shown to be neither complete nor adequate for a true knowledge of God. Augustine has refused to allow the possibility that the souls of the young or uneducated might be qualitatively different from those of his intellectual peers—somehow, less immortal, because less truly *rationales*. Clearly, this gesture towards inclusivity will affect those who are debarred from education, by sex or class or income, as well as those who have simply not yet attained a suitable level of achievement.

All this lends context to Augustine's repeated claims about the *paucissimi*, the very few who can approach the divine (wisdom, or truth; however Augustine is configuring it at that particular moment) through the medium of philosophy. 'Philosophy promises *ratio*, and saves (*liberat*) scarcely anyone . . . ' (*ord.* 2.5.16). This is not merely descriptive; it is a problem, which Augustine—excellent rhetorician that he is—approaches from two angles simultaneously: both broadening the notion of *ratio* until it includes everyone (the *ratio communis*), and providing an alternative—authority—to the very focused, professionalized notion of *ratio*.

Potential *ratio*

But there is a third way in which Augustine extends the notion of the *homo rationalis*—and it takes us, once again, into the realm of liminality, of transitional ideas. We have already touched upon it, in discussing the distinction between the *rationale* and the *rationabile*. The *rationale*, it will be remembered, is 'what uses *ratio*, or *could potentially use it* (*uel uti posset*)' (*ord.* 2.11.31). We could connect this with the notion of the *dicibile* in *De Dialectica*. (This, of course, depends upon the assumption that *De Dialectica* is authentically by Augustine. I believe that the text we have represents his notes—or possibly those of a student—for a further dialogue, never completed. Why I link the text to Augustine ought to

become clear from what follows here.[43]) In the course of the work—which, as it survives, covers only a few paragraphs—Augustine is discussing the distinction between 'sign' and 'thing' (*signum* and *res*) with which he is later to launch his *De Doctrina Christiana*. He proposes the definition of a word (*uerbum*): 'a word is the sign for any thing, which is uttered by someone speaking and could be understood by someone listening' (*uerbum est uniuscuiusque rei signum, quod ab audiente possit intellegi, a loquente prolatum*: *dial.* 5.7). The word for 'could' is in the subjunctive: the force is not that the word *is* necessarily understood, but that it could—potentially—be so. He goes on to show that the word/thing relationship also contains two units which are, as it were, intermediary. The *uerbum* (word) is what is actually spoken. There is also *res ipsa*, the actual thing. But in between lies the *dicibile*, which is 'what the mind holds, not the ears', and the *dictio*, which is a word spoken to signify something else, instead of on its own account, *propter se*—a figure of speech? a metaphorical usage? the concept is under-explained. The *dicibile*, however, is glossed more fully. 'What I have called *dicibile* is a word; and yet, it does not signify a word, but what is understood in a word and contained in the mind' (*quod dixi 'dicibile', uerbum est, nec tamen uerbum, sed quod in uerbo intellegitur et animo continetur, significat*). It is the mental process associated with uttering, hearing, or reading a word: the unarticulated moment of cognition by which the word is understood.[44] It is, in fact, a *potential* word: the sayable.[45]

That this should indeed be connected with the idea of the *homo rationalis* as someone 'who uses reason, or could potentially use it' is made clear later in the work. Augustine is now discussing the notion of ambiguity; in this instance, he is attending to the ideas contained in words, in whatever form they are encountered ('even in spoken

[43] Jackson discusses the authenticity question in the introduction to his edition—first on historical grounds, then with a quantitative study. It seems that the question is fairly securely settled in favour of Augustine's authorship; Ruef, in *Aug-Lex*, points out that the burden of proof now lies on the opponents.

[44] This is my own explication. Jackson (edition, 126) remarks on the 'difficulty' of interpreting *dicibile*. *Dicibile* 'would not seem to be merely a thought or an idea in the psychological sense of those terms, but Augustine does not tell us how it is related to thought' (127).

[45] Compare the Stoic concept *to lekton*; Michael Frede explains it as 'what gets said by using the appropriate expression in the appropriate way' (109), but adds that *to lekton* is also (1) what is signified by the expression used to say something; (2) what the speaker has in mind/thinks when he utters the expression. See 'The Stoic notion of a *lekton*', in Stephen Everson (ed.), *Language* (Cambridge, 1994), 111. See also Emil Orth, 'Lekton=dicibile', *Helmantica*, 10 (1959), 221–26.

expressions')—as opposed to ambiguity in written words, which is confined to misunderstandings generated by seeing words on a page. He gives as an example the multitude of different things embraced by the word *homo*—of which, he says, the ultimate definition is the now-familiar *animal rationale mortale*. The definition is demonstrably correct, says Augustine, if 'every human being contains those same things and nothing else does except a human' (*omnis homo eadem contineatur et praeter hominem nihil*: *dial.* 9.17). He adds that, given time, he could defend the definition even in the case of those who are asleep or drunk or in a rage (*dial.* 9.17)—presumably, though he does not say so, with the notion of potentiality: were they awake or sober, these people would be found to be *rationales*.

Through mobilizing the idea of potential, the criteria for being a *homo rationalis* instantly become more fluid. One does not have to attain a certain point of achievement in the progress towards being a *homo rationalis*; simply being potentially capable of using *ratio* is sufficient. This is a very satisfying notion. It also bespeaks a fitting optimism about human nature—which is, after all, God's creation. Suddenly, the 'ignorant and the infants' are automatically included in any human claim to divinity and immortality.[46]

This prompts us to recall yet another way in which the framing of *De Beata Vita* is amusingly out of kilter with its contents. In the preface, addressed to Mallius Theodorus, we read of three different types of allegorical sailor, each trying to attain the harbour of philosophy. The first is the sailor whom the 'age in control of *ratio* has embraced' (note that it is the stage of life, not the sailor, which is the subject of the verb): he comes quickly to port. At a certain stage of the man's life, *ratio* is mastered—or masters him—and wisdom is attained. It looks, in fact, as if this is partly an elegant compliment to Theodorus: when such a sailor gets to port, he erects 'the brilliant standard of some work of his'.[47] Meanwhile, during the dialogue, Monnica says at a crucial point of the debate: 'If *ratio* compels this, I cannot deny it' (*si hoc cogit ratio, non possum negare*: *beata u.* 3.21). Yet, as we have seen, she does implicitly deny the conclusion; *ratio* is not the compelling force. The whole dialogue is, in a

[46] The status of women here is doubtful: however neutral the term *homo*, Augustine's list of possible contents for the word is resolutely masculine in gender. But we may infer from his treatment elsewhere that they are, in fact, included.

[47] The context of the quotations: *unum [genus nauigantium] est eorum, quos ubi aetas compos rationis adsumpserit, paruo impetu pulsuque remorum de proximo fugiunt seseque condunt in illa tranquillitate, unde ceteris ciuibus… lucidissimum signum sui alicuius operis erigunt*: *beata u.* 1.2.

sense, about the loss of that easy mastery exemplified by the sailor of the preface: about realizing that the controlling force of dialectic is simply not sufficient to approach the true truth. There is no specific moment at which the 'age in control of *ratio*' embraces the seeker. There is, indeed, little meaning to be attached to being 'in control of *ratio*' (*compos rationis*), if it is the potential to use *ratio* alone that brings one closer to God.

The Soul of Grammar

This is the point at which Augustine's exchange with Monnica in *De Ordine* becomes relevant once again. How is it, he asks, that his mother has managed to persist in her 'barbarisms and solecisms', and despise issues of correct language, and yet to 'recognize the near-divine force and nature of grammar, so as (apparently) to hold on to its soul while leaving its body for the learned' (*ord.* 2.17.45)? Because what matters above all is not the ability to use *ratio* in a certain prescribed manner, but to have the potential to use it. The potential is what brings one closer to the divine, not *ratio* itself. This puts into perspective a passage from the preface to *De Ordine*: 'who is so mentally blind as to hesitate to grant anything rational (*quicquam . . . rationis*) to divine power (*potentia*)?' (*ord.* 1.1.2). *Ratio* is firmly back where it belongs, with the divine.

But what does it mean, to 'hold onto the soul of grammar while leaving its body for the learned'? How can the educated step aside from years of rigid training to find that soul? We begin to see how in a delightful letter-exchange from the period of the Cassiciacum retreat, in which Augustine seems to be playing around with the notion. The letter in question (*ep.* 3) is addressed to his friend Nebridius. Nebridius is an intimate of Augustine's: he is introduced in the *Confessiones* as 'my dearest Nebridius, a young man exceedingly good and exceedingly chaste' (*carissimus meus Nebridius, adulescens ualde bonus et ualde castus*: *conf.* 4.3.6).[48] He always merits superlatives—'my sweetest

[48] Fuller prosopographical details supplied by O'Donnell on *conf.* 6.7.11; see also *PCBE: Afrique* s.v. Nebridius. In view of the argument here, it is interesting that Eugene Vance connects Augustine's composure at Nebridius' death with his arrival, through conversion, into a new language—'the immutable language of the Other': see 'Augustine's *Confessions* and the Grammar of Selfhood', *Genre*, 6 (1973), 22.

friend'—and, while his memory is hallowed by an early death by the time the *Confessiones* are composed, the letters do bespeak an unusual closeness.[49] This letter is part of a sequence in which Augustine extends the spiritual and intellectual exploration of Cassiciacum to include his friend.

The letter, in fact, serves as a reprise of many of the important intellectual interrelationships mapped at Cassiciacum. Nebridius, it seems, has called Augustine *beatus*—and before he's even read the *Soliloquia*! There is a catch, says Augustine:

> for I don't seem *beatus* to Nebridius by seeking, but—perhaps—by finding something. But what is that something? Is it that very process of reasoning (*ratiocinatio*), which I generally snuggle up to like my only girlfriend, and enjoy too much?
>
> neque enim Nebridio beatus quaerendo uideor, sed fortasse aliquid inueniendo. id autem aliquid quid est? an illa ratiocinatio, cui tamquam unicae meae blandiri soleo et ea me nimis oblectare? (*ep.* 3.3)

There follows a passage to which we shall shortly return, which purports to summarize the findings of the *Soliloquia*. The letter ends up:

> It gave me pleasure to write these things to you. Actually, it delights me that you thank me if I don't conceal anything from you which comes into my mouth, and I rejoice that I please you like this. I would rather fool about in the presence of someone whom I cannot displease. But if it is in the control of chance that a man should love a man, consider how fortunate I am: I rejoice so much in chance things, and (I confess) I want such goods to increase abundantly. Those chance goods—the people who are most truly wise, who alone can rightly be called fortunate, don't allow that they should be either feared or desired [*cupi*]—or is it *cupiri*? You will know. And that works out well, because I want you to acquaint me with this conjugation. For when I juxtapose similar words, I become unsure of myself. Certainly, 'I desire' is like 'I flee' or 'I taste', 'I throw' or 'I capture'. But whether the infinitive form is *fugiri* or *fugi*, *sapiri* or *sapi*, I have no idea.
>
> haec placuit scribere tibi. delectat enim me, quod mihi gratias agis, si nihil te, quod in buccam uenerit, celem, et gaudeo, quia sic tibi placeo. apud quem igitur libentius ineptiam, quam cui displicere non possum? at si in potestate fortunae est, ut hominem amet homo, uide quam beatus sim, qui de fortuitis tam multum gaudeo et talia bona, fateor, desidero mihi ubertim adcrescere. fortunae autem bona uerissimi sapientes, quos solos beatos fas est uocari, nec timeri uoluerunt nec cupi—an cupiri? tu uideris. et belle accidit. nam uolo me declinationis huius gnarum facias. cum enim adiungo uerba similia, incertior fio. nam ita est cupio ut fugio, ut sapio, ut iacio, ut capio; sed utrum fugiri an fugi, utrum sapiri an sapi sit modus infinitus, ignoro. (*ep.* 3.5)

[49] See also *conf.* 8.6.13, 9.3.6; Brown, *Augustine,* 57.

There is more in the same vein before Augustine signs off: 'I can't say enough what a pleasure it is to read you' (*nam non queo tantum dicere, quantum uolupe est legere te*).

The tone of the entire letter has been to discuss serious things in a frivolous mode. There is more than a hint of the homoerotic here—enough to make the reader wonder about the force of 'exceedingly chaste' (*ualde castus*) when Nebridius is introduced in the *Confessiones*. In the Latin particularly, the playfully homoerotic declaration of friendship is very striking. There is a tight interweaving of personal pronouns in the first lines (*tibi—me—mihi—te*). This would be less remarkable, were it not for Augustine's choice of verbs about which to be confused, none of which would be out of place in Latin love elegy. And the one on which he chooses to dwell is *cupere*, to desire: 'I want you to acquaint me with this conjugation', he writes to Nebridius, which could equally well mean 'I want you to make me skilful at turning out of the usual way' or 'turning aside' (*gnarus declinationis*).

But the most pressing question about this puzzling paragraph is: why the expression of bafflement about the conjugation of these verbs? Are we really to believe that the sometime professor of rhetoric in Milan—now planning a sequence of treatises on the liberal disciplines—has no idea whether the present passive infinitives of *cupio*, *fugio*, and *sapio* conform to the third or the fourth conjugation?

The whole thing seems at first sight to be an elaborate tease. Augustine the expert defers coyly to his friend about matters of grammar—and perhaps more generally about unconventional ways of thinking, depending on how far we can extend the double entendre in *gnarus declinationis*. In the midst of the language of intimacy, however, he suddenly pulls back: the translation above, 'that a man should love a man', is slightly over-stated. The Latin is not *ut uirum amet uir*, which would be pointed indeed, but simply *ut hominem amet homo*, arguably the more neutral 'that one person should love another'.[50] Augustine tosses his correspondent to and fro. In the summary of his *Soliloquia*, we see the following: 'Of what do we consist? Of soul and body. Which of these is better? Obviously, the soul. What is praised in the body? The only thing that I see is beauty. What is the beauty of the body?

[50] On *uirilitas*: J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore, 1982), 69–70. On *homo* for Augustine as primarily 'man' rather than 'person', however, see the remarks on *dial.* above: *homo* is broken down into *puer*, *iuuenis*, *senex*, and so on, but nothing of feminine gender (*dial.* 8.17).

The congruence of parts—with a certain sweetness of colour' (*unde constamus? ex animo et corpore. quid horum melius? uidelicet animus. quid laudatur in corpore? nihil aliud uideo quam pulchritudinem. quid est corporis pulchritudo? congruentia partium cum quadam coloris suauitate*: *ep.* 3.4). So we pass swiftly over the soul to what is praiseworthy in the body. The 'congruence of parts' is congruent with what Augustine has had to say in more serious moments on the importance of harmony and proportion; the 'sweetness of colour' (*coloris suauitas*) seems to come directly from Plotinus' *On Beauty*, though in the context of this exchange it looks a little coy.[51] Remember too the way in which Augustine, in this bald sequence of question-and-answer, is parodying the dialogue style which he had developed with such care. He despatches the discussion with the briskest of exchanges, but then wavers:

> My *Soliloquia* now comprehend that none of these things could be, and one has been sufficiently persuaded of it [impersonal passive]; but, with a sort of habituation to evils, I am terrified, and I stumble. In sum, even if the soul dies—and I don't see any way it can happen—one has made sufficiently sure [impersonal again] during this period of leisure (*otium*) that there is no blessed life in the happiness of sense-perceptions. With these things and such-like I seem to my Nebridius, if not blessed, then at least simulating blessedness (*quasi beatus*). Let me seem so to myself as well; what do I lose thereby, or why should I protect a good reputation?
>
> nihil autem horum fieri posse Soliloquia nostra iam continent satisque persuasum est; sed nescio qua consuetudine malorum territamur atque titubamus. postremo etiam si moritur animus, quod nullo modo fieri posse uideo, non esse tamen beatam uitam in laetitia sensibilium hoc otio satis exploratum est. his rebus fortasse atque talibus Nebridio meo si non beatus, at certe quasi beatus uideor. uidear et mihi; quid inde perdo aut cur parcam bonae opinioni? (*ep.* 3.4)

This reads as hopelessly ambiguous. The antecedent of 'these things' must be the sense-perceptions (*sensibilia*), whose 'happiness' (*laetitia*—as opposed to *beatitudo*) Augustine has been enjoying. The passage seems to mean that he has been using his leisure to indulge in such things, and has discovered their hollowness (but why does he distance himself through the use of the impersonal passive?); but he then seems to say that this indulgence is good enough for himself and Nebridius, at any rate.

[51] *Enn.* 1.6.1: 'Nearly everyone says that it is good proportion of the parts to each other and to the whole, *with the addition of good colour*, which produces visible beauty' (Armstrong's translation).

The *otium* plays a part in this, as well. Much is made of Augustine's struggles with the temptations of sex; but in Book 1 of the *Soliloquia*, notwithstanding the alluring vision of a wife, the chief suppressed temptation seems to be that of *otium*.[52] The most tempting sort of wife is the one who can buy him the opportunity *in uno loco uiuere otiose* (*sol.* 1.11.18). Augustine remains absorbed in the idea of being a gentleman of leisure, though the status of the occupation with regard to his Christian commitment is ambivalent at best.[53]

It is not irrelevant that Augustine has claimed to be 'fooling about' in this letter. Look at the way he has been mocking his own over-dependence on *ratiocinatio*. (In his next letter to Nebridius, he reverts to the same tone, talking about 'that little bit of reason so well known to you,' *illa tibi notissima ratiuncula, ep.* 4.2. Remember Ratio's own self-deprecating *ratiuncula* in the *Soliloquia*![54]) And we have learnt now how much, for Augustine, is comprehended within that term. *Ratio* is the part of the human being that brings it closer to God, and part of the definition of a human being with which Augustine himself has grown up. *Ratio* is at the basis of the liberal disciplines, through which—properly applied—one may achieve the blessed life (however, exactly, the *beata uita* is to be interpreted). But at the same time, Augustine associates *ratio* with the logical falsehood and heretical certainties of Manichaeanism; and he recognizes the way in which a traditional notion of *ratio* excludes those who do not have access to extensive academic training. He is also constantly sensible of the fact that human *ratio*—immortal or not—would be functionally meaningless without a body to reside in. In his summary for Nebridius of the *Soliloquia*, Augustine seems to be playing with the possibility that *ratio* might meaningfully exist while separated from the body—and rejecting it. Bodies

[52] Mandouze, *Saint Augustin*, 194, describes *otium* as 'intraduisible moins pour des raisons de langue que pour des raisons de civilisation'. Teske, revising the Porphyrian reading of Folliet, describes Augustine's use of *deificari in otio* (*ep.* 10, also to Nebridius) as 'thoroughly Christian'—but there is still a demonstrable yearning for that *otium*. 'Augustine's *Epistula* X: Another Look at *Deificari in otio*', *Augustinianum*, 32 (1992), 298.

[53] The temptations of leisure: see also *sol.* 1.4.9, R: *ne propera, otiosi sumus*; 1.9.16; 1.12.20 (the life *concorditer* that has been associated with *otium*); 1.13.22, where the company in his search for wisdom *tanto mihi amiciores futuri, quanto erit nobis amata communior*. See Trout, 'Augustine at Cassiciacum'.

[54] Other than at Cassiciacum and in this letter, *ratiuncula* only appears twice in Augustine's works: at *mor. eccl. cath.* 1.7.12; and at *ciu.* 20.20—in both instances, of the pitiful forces of human reason before divine mysteries.

complicate philosophy; and Augustine seems to be rather enjoying the complication.

Let us return to the verbs about which Augustine, in his finale, has chosen to be confused: *cupio, fugio, sapio, iacio, capio* (I desire, flee, taste, throw, capture). Is it *cupi* or *cupiri*, he asks Nebridius modestly? 'You know'—or 'you will have given it some thought' (*tu uideris*). In fact, all five verbs are equivalent in form, being third-conjugation *–io* verbs, which suggests that Augustine is not quite as confused as he claims to be. But some people were, nevertheless, confused about such things.[55] Is Augustine gesturing towards a demotic usage? He continues:

> I could go for[56] *iaci* and *capi*, if I wasn't afraid of someone capturing me and throwing me down wherever he liked as a laughing-stock, to convince me that *iactum* and *captum* are one thing, *fugitum*, *cupitum*, and *sapitum* another.[57] And likewise, I don't know whether these three should be pronounced with a long, sinuous penult, or a short, unaccented one.
>
> possem adtendere iaci et capi, ni uererer, ne me caperet et pro ludibrio iaceret, quo uellet, qui iactum et captum aliud, aliud fugitum, cupitum, sapitum esse conuinceret. quae item tria utrum paenultima longa et inflexa, an graui breuique pronuntianda sint, similiter nescio. (*ep.* 3.5)

So in a paragraph, Augustine covers faults both of morphology and of pronuncation—or perhaps, of *lingua* and of *locutio*—and proclaims his disdain for them.[58]

We could suggest that this strange conclusion to the letter might be an attempt to throw off the trappings of *illa ratiocinatio*—to begin to explore what a discourse that played with the conventional *ratiocinatio* of grammar might look like. The passage in general picks up on the suspicion of *ratio* that Augustine has allowed himself to voice intermittently at Cassiciacum. We have seen, for example, that when the eager Licentius expresses confusion about how one could be 'neither without

[55] Over time the -i-stem third conjugation forms were indeed assimilated to the fourth conjugation: see Väänänen, paras. 311–12.

[56] I risk this very colloquial translation of *adtendere*: this seems to me commensurate with Augustine's tendency in this letter to use lightly words which he takes as theologically significant elsewhere (remember Adeodatus and the person who *deum adtendit et ad ipsum solum se tenet*: *beata u.* 3.18).

[57] Note that the theme of *iaci* and *capi* is continued in what happens to Augustine: thrown down, captured (*iactum*, *captum*). The double applications of the participles (thing or person?) contribute to yet another ambiguous passage.

[58] Though, once again, we may assume that Augustine is overplaying his ignorance, he does remark some thirty years later, *Afrae aures de correptione uocalium uel productione non iudicant* (African ears don't distinguish between shortening and lengthening vowels): *doct. chr.* 4.10.24.

God nor with God' (God has possession of everyone, but not everyone enjoys God), Augustine responds briskly, 'Don't let that bother you. Where the thing fits, who would not despise the actual words?' (*. . . ubi res conuenit, quis non uerba contemnat? ord.* 2.7.21).[59] Is Augustine here playing out a despite of 'the actual words'? The implication seems to be that the important thing is to *be desired*, not to conjugate *cupio*: to realize the *res* behind the *uerba*.

He seems to nudge us towards that conclusion in another way, too: he includes in his concluding passage two marked colloquialisms—an unusual gesture, even in his familiar letters to Nebridius. 'Whatever comes into my mouth' (*quod in buccam uenerit*) seems to signal a release from the sort of insecurities about 'barbarisms and solecisms' which Augustine had expressed in *De Ordine*: a freedom between friends which triggers intellectual experimentation. (If only Augustine had got around to writing the *Retractationes* for his letters!) 'That works out just fine' (*et belle accidit*) gives Nebridius permission to respond in kind. Looking at the three surviving letters from Nebridius—none a direct answer to this—it is not clear that he does so. But nevertheless, Augustine is extending the notions of inclusivity which he has explored at Cassiciacum, above all through his portrayal of Monnica trumping his own account of the liberal disciplines with a validation of her own, more direct, approach to wisdom. *Vix credibilis felicitas*! (*sol.* 1.13.23).

There is no other letter to Nebridius quite like this in the surviving corpus, though the flirtatious, teasing tone can be detected on a few other occasions. In *Letter* 4, Augustine urges him not to think that Augustine himself, in his search for understanding, has already reached 'a certain manhood of the mind' (*ad quandam mentis iuuentutem*); he adds, 'for we are boys—but pretty good-looking ones (*forsitan belli*), as is generally said, and not wrongly.' The first surviving letter from Nebridius (*ep.* 5) is in much the same teasing tone. Later, Augustine talks about the conversation 'about the perpetual sort of body of the soul, or quasi-body, which tossed us around panting and perspiring' (*nos . . . iactauit anhelantes atque aestuantes [sermo] de animae scilicet ueluti perpetuo quodam corpore uel quasi corpore*: *ep.* 13.2).[60] The intimacy is reflected again too, especially when they are discussing the possibility of living together: 'should I come and go frequently and be now with you, now with them?

[59] A point of view later developed into his antipathy to rhetorical education in *conf.*; cf. *c. Acad.* 2.11.25, and primacy of *res* over *uerba*.

[60] Cf. *conf.* 12.10.12: Augustine returns *aestuans et anhelans* to the spring that is God.

But this is to live neither together nor to our liking' (*eamne crebro et redeam et nunc tecum, nunc cum ipsis sim? at hoc neque simul neque ex sententia uiuere est*: *ep.* 10.1). But while the friendship and the lightness of touch remain, the intense experimentation seems not to.

Augustine seems in this early letter to be experimenting with a sort of anti-grammar: a way in which to show up the limitations of *ratio*, to encode a disruption of the *ordo disciplinarum liberalium*—and, incidentally, a way in which to express intensely personal relationships such as he clearly enjoys with Nebridius. Once he has prayed to God for help, Augustine writes in *Letter* 4, 'I am filled to the brim with such great confidence of things not never remaining [a literal translation] that I am amazed, for the time being, that I need that *ratiocinatio*' (. . . *tanta non numquam rerum manentium praesumptione compleor, ut mirer interdum illa mihi opus esse ratiocinatione*: *ep.* 4.2).

We may remember Augustine's *cri de coeur* at the beginning of the *Soliloquia*. 'I don't believe I know anything in the way in which I want to know God' (*sol.* 1.2.7). In our reading of the *Soliloquia*, we have seen him turning different possibilities for that knowing around to the light. The remarkable letter to Nebridius is perhaps the most extreme case. 'When I juxtapose similar words,' writes Augustine, 'I become unsure of myself.' But that could be precisely what Augustine wants to do: to become *incertior*, to destabilize the traditional foundations of his knowledge, to dislodge Ratio a little from her position of primacy—and to see what comes in to take her place.

Epilogue
Exploiting Potential

What did Augustine do with the insights which he had won at Cassiciacum? Albeit fragmentary and interstitial, they represented an important new way of approaching his most fundamental concerns: with modes of language and communication and teaching; and with the relationship of language to wisdom and to God.

For a while, it seems, he retreated from the radical implications of his new enterprise. He half-heartedly pursued his programme of publishing treatises on the Christian versions of the liberal arts: he only completed the *De Musica*. He wrote a sequel to the *Soliloquia* of grinding conventionality, the *De Immortalitate Animae*. He continued to write philosophical dialogues, and sometimes they address important themes with considerable thoughtfulness—one thinks particularly of *De Magistro* and *De Libero Arbitrio*; but he abandoned the elaborate—and, as we have seen, endlessly revealing—staging of Cassiciacum. Changes of speaker are indicated, in general, only by a dash; there is little or nothing in the way of scene-setting and introductory material.[1] Even in *De Magistro*, purportedly a conversation with his beloved son Adeodatus, the sense of human connection and of the stimulating randomness of human interaction, which had suggested so many of the novel turns at Cassiciacum, is almost wholly absent.

In the mean time, Monnica died, and was buried in Italy; Augustine moved from Italy back to Africa, to his home town of Tagaste. He had been baptized as planned at Easter 387, but was neither ordained nor, apparently, seeking ordination. It is not clear what his plans were at this stage; it is certainly not clear how he planned to marry the skills that had brought him worldly success with his Christian commitment. Even the hindsight of the *Confessiones* tells us almost nothing. O'Donnell, resisting

[1] Though Simon Harrison reads the dialogic structure of *De Libero Arbitrio* as crucial to its content in 'Do We Have a Will?'. For a justly renowned reading of *De Magistro*, see M. F. Burnyeat, 'Wittgenstein and Augustine *De Magistro*', *ProcArSoc* suppl. 61 (1987), 1–24.

their teleological account, writes of Augustine in this period as 'one of the great might-have-been-a-has-beens of world history.'[2]

But the 'irrational' thoughts planted at Cassiciacum were quietly germinating. It seems to me that they bear fruit for the first time some two years later (the date of composition is only approximate) in Augustine's first commentary on Genesis, his *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*.[3]

This is a work not much read, even by ardent Augustinians. If it is studied at all, it tends to be merely as the preliminary effort in Augustine's lifelong project of examining and explaining Genesis.[4] And on the rare occasions when the scholarly gaze is directed its way, the response tends to be unenthusiastic. Julien Ries sums up the achievement of the work as follows: 'nerveusement, trop hâtivement, (Augustin) défend la Genèse.'[5] But if we read it as the first realization of the insights of Cassiciacum, rather than a halting attempt to produce a commentary that will soon be superseded, we can see how exciting a part it plays in Augustine's intellectual trajectory.

Perhaps the problem, in the intervening period, had lain in Augustine's persistent use of the philosophical dialogue, when—as we have seen—he had already pushed its generic possibilities as far as they would go for him at Cassiciacum. Be that as it may, the decision to embark upon biblical commentary instead seems to have been a liberation to him. It was the moment at which he was finally able to break free from his own dialogue with Cicero, and from the literary predilections of his Ciceronian past. All Augustine's writing, all his life, was to take the form of vivid and engaged interlocution, whatever the precise genre; but this engagement with the Manichaeans, buttressed by his profound reflection upon the Bible, seems to have opened new avenues for him. Here truly we see the subject matter which can make great men out of *paruuli*.

There are three specific themes drawn from Cassiciacum that we see Augustine developing to exquisite theological effect in *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*: the quest for inclusivity; the questioning of the conventions

[2] James J. O'Donnell, 'Augustine: his time and lives', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge, 2001), 19.

[3] Not his first work explicitly against the Manichaeans: that honour goes to the *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De Moribus Manichaeorum*.

[4] Gilles Pelland, *Cinq études d'Augustin sur le début de la Genèse* (Tournai/Montréal, 1972), is a case in point.

[5] Julien Ries, 'La Bible chez saint Augustin et chez les manichéens I', *REAug* 7 (1961), 262.

of language; and the formulation of 'potential' as a notion that transcends rigid dichotomies. Each is inextricably interlinked with the rest. All are fundamental to his Christian commitment.

De Genesi Contra Manichaeos was previewed at Cassiciacum. It is not surprising that Augustine should already have been preoccupied in reflecting upon Genesis, given that the Manichaeans—with whom he had been associated for the preceding nine years—rejected the Genesis account of creation, and produced a tortuous version of their own which purported to explain the grounds for their dualism.[6] The work, in a sense, begins in the second book of *De Ordine*. The context is that in which Augustine tells Monnica—'as far as I dare as a son, and as far as you permit me'—to stick firmly to her faith and her way of life: she needs no more elaborate way of approaching God. We have seen how complicated this apparently simple advice was, and how profound its implications for Augustine and his associates—for those who could not simply pare away their education and their intellectual preoccupations. He pursues the complexity with a tumbling heap of questions:

> But about issues which are utterly obscure and yet divine: how God could *both* make nothing evil *and* be omnipotent *and* there be so many evils; and for whose benefit He, who was not needy, made the world; and whether evil always existed or began in time and, if it did always exist, whether it was under the control of God and, if it was, whether that world, in which that evil was tamed by divine ordering, also always existed—but if, on the other hand, this world began to exist at some juncture, how was evil contained by God's power before it existed, and what need was there to make a world in which evil, which the power of God was already reining in, was included to harm souls? . . . and, if we say that evil was troublesome to God and, as it were, wicked to Him—which some people think—no one educated will contain their laughter, no one uneducated will not be furious (*nemo doctus risum tenebit, nemo non suscensebit indoctus*); for what evil, of whatever nature, could possibly harm God?
>
> de rebus autem obscurissimis et tamen diuinis, quomodo deus et nihil mali faciat et sit omnipotens et tanta mala fiant et cui bono mundum fecerit, qui non erat indiguus, et utrum semper fuerit malum an tempore coeperit et, si semper fuit, utrum sub conditione dei fuerit et, si fuit, utrum etiam iste mundus semper fuerit, in quo illud malum diuino ordine domaretur—si autem hic mundus aliquando esse coepit, quomodo, antequam esset, potestate dei malum tenebatur et quid opus erat mundum fabricari, quo malum, quod iam dei potestas frenabat, ad

[6] Kevin Coyle addresses the question of how much of this doctrine Augustine would actually have known in 'What did Augustine know about Manichaeism when he wrote his two treatises *De Moribus*?', in *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne, 2001), 43–56.

poenas animarum includeretur? . . . si autem inportunum fuisse et quasi improbum malum deo dicimus, quod nonnulli existimant, iam nemo doctus risum tenebit, nemo non suscensebit indoctus; quid enim potuit deo nocere mali nescio qua illa natura? (*ord.* 2.17.46)

These issues are, it seems, of passionate concern to Augustine, and so intimately interlinked in his mind that he cannot really separate them out syntactically. Observant syntacticians will note that we have not yet reached the verb which relates to the 'issues which are utterly obscure and yet divine', with which the extract begins. In fact, Augustine finally concludes the thought after twenty-three printed lines of indirect questions—by which time, he needs to recapitulate his subject: 'about these types of things, one should enquire either in the due order of education, or not at all' (*ergo de his atque huius modi rebus aut ordine illo eruditionis aut nullo modo quicquam requirendum est*).

There are two very odd things about this passage. The conclusion of the passage (as quoted here) is surprising. Why are the responses of the *docti* and the *indocti*, the educated and the uneducated, divided like this? Who is reading this, anyway? Why does one group laugh while the other gets angry? Meanwhile, when the passage is taken out of context, it seems obviously to be programmatic for a study of these problems. But it comes at the very *end* of the work which set out to answer these questions—or at least, to explicate the 'divine order' which allows for the presence of evil in the world. (Think of the *pulchritudo rationis* observed in the cock-fight: *ord.* 1.8.25.) Augustine has spent the course of the dialogue allowing himself to be diverted into other themes, many apparently tangential to the issue of divine order—memory, for example. Perhaps he was not yet ready to address these problems. Perhaps he was only beginning to see how deeply they needed addressing, even after the sort of conversion he had 'staged' for Licentius in the opening pages of the dialogue. Perhaps he had not yet realized that working with his old models—the treatises on the liberal disciplines—would not satisfy such questions.

We must, in fact, take these questions not as the end of the *De Ordine*—in which they are merely a diversion—but as the beginning of a project which was to preoccupy Augustine for the next forty years of his life: the interpretation of Genesis. Already, for Augustine, the fundamental issues to which the confirmed Christian should apply his or her intellect are those set out by the Manichaeans—who are clearly the 'some people' who think that evil is troublesome to God. This is a preliminary reflection on the problems raised by reading the first chapters of Genesis: specifically, the problems of why God created

the world, what sense we can attach to the notion that it was created *ex nihilo*, and how evil could have got into the world. In *De Ordine*, the enquiry about the origins of evil is shelved while Augustine pursues other matters. But it seems that, when he embarked on *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, he had finally reached the right stage of his own Christian education to address them.

We should not underestimate the audacity of this project. For in it, in place of his Ciceronian mantle, Augustine assumes one which he could not yet have known would be his: that of authoritative expositor of the Christian scriptures.[7] And he is walking a precarious line of intellectual self-presentation. He needs to prove that he is no longer a Manichaean; at the same time, he needs to make it plausible that he—and those of similar intellect and integrity—should have been taken in by them. The Manichaeans cannot be simply derided as caricatures, but must on some level be seriously engaged. Who Augustine's audience might be, we cannot be sure, but—just as in the passage from the *Retractationes* which we cited at the very beginning of this work—he appears to be confident that he will have one.

De Genesi Contra Manichaeos is, as we shall see, ambitious and complex in its ideas. But Augustine begins by embracing the lessons in inclusivity which his mother had taught him at Cassiciacum. He explicitly addresses the widest possible audience in the simplest possible language:

> If the Manichaeans were choosy about whom they deceived, I would be choosy too about the words (*uerba*) in which I responded to them; but since they persecute with their error not only the learned but also those without a proper education and, while they're promising the Truth, try to turn those people away from it, their folly has to be refuted not with elaborately polished speech, but with clear facts (*rebus manifestis*). Now, I've been persuaded by the opinion of certain truly Christian people: though they are educated in liberal learning, when they read earlier books which I published against the Manichaeans they perceived that they were either difficult or impossible to understand by the less experienced (*ab imperitioribus*). So they kindly advised me not to depart from the ordinary way of speaking, if I were intending to drive out these most destructive errors from the minds of the uneducated as well. After all, this sort of ordinary, simple speech is understood by the learned (*docti*) as well, while the other sort is not understood by the uneducated (*indocti*).

si eligerent Manichaei quos deciperent, eligeremus et nos uerba quibus eis responderemus; cum uero illi et doctos litteris et indoctos errore suo

[7] Note that this is some five years before Augustine begins to take up this role more aggressively, with his letter (*ep.* 28) to Jerome on the interpretation of Galatians.

persequantur et, cum promittunt ueritatem, a ueritate conentur auertere, non ornato politoque sermone, sed rebus manifestis conuincenda est uanitas eorum. placuit enim mihi quorundam uere Christianorum sententia, qui cum sint eruditi liberalibus litteris, tamen alios libros nostros quos aduersus Manichaeos edidimus cum legissent, uiderunt eos ab imperitioribus aut non aut difficile intellegi et me beneuolentissime monuerunt, ut communem loquendi consuetudinem non desererem, si errores illos tam perniciosos ab animis etiam imperitorum expellere cogitarem. hunc enim sermonem usitatum et simplicem etiam docti intellegunt, illum autem indocti non intellegunt. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.1.1)

This should not be mistaken for a conventional humility-topos of introduction. It lacks the self-reflexivity of a humility-topos, which tends to apologize that this is the best effort of which the author is capable; and it lacks the concomitant self-contradiction, for the author will couch his apology in the most extravagant and elaborate language he can muster. But Augustine here displays neither false modesty nor affected circumlocution. His message bespeaks genuine self-criticism: I have written on this subject before, and a significant part of my target audience didn't understand me; so now, rather than dressing things up in 'polished speech', I will pay attention to the ordinary way of speaking, the *loquendi consuetudo*. His concern is with real communication, not just self-promotion. He has learnt his mother's lesson well: she no longer needs to bring forth 'from her own pantry' a reminder to explain himself to the less educated (*beata u.* 2.16).[8]

The preface to *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos* avoids the convention of self-contradiction as well. Augustine really is writing in beautifully simple language; and, despite the fact that he essays complex ideas in this work, he continues his simplicity of expression throughout.[9]

We see how this is realized when we compare the treatment of the *docti* and the *indocti* in this preface with that in the *De Ordine*. In the earlier work, the *docti* laugh ('no one educated will contain their laughter')—amused, sophisticated, unconcerned by heretical flounderings—while the *indocti* take it all too seriously, and are enraged by the blasphemy. The effect of the division is disjunctive, and it is reinforced at the eventual end of the sentence with the myriad questions with its dismissive conclusion: 'about these types of things, one should enquire either in the due order of education, or not at all.' But in *De Genesi Contra*

[8] This is all read very differently by Pelland, *Cinq études*, 17: 'Augustin ne songe pas à faire plus qu'un ouvrage de vulgarisation'.

[9] On Augustine's striving for simplicity in *Gn. adu. Man.*, see Dorothea Weber, '*Communis Loquendi Consuetudo*: Zur Struktur von Augustinus, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*', *SP*, 33 (1997), 274–9.

Manichaeos, the *docti* are suddenly making the response of the *indocti* their concern. Augustine describes them as acting *beneuolentissime*, with extreme solicitude (translated 'kindly' above). They urge Augustine to write more accessibly on behalf of the less well educated. These *docti*, then, wish to associate themselves with the *indocti*, rather than distinguish themselves from them.

Who are these *docti* who are chastising Augustine? Or could they be simply imaginary? It would be nice to know, but it does not really matter. It remains unclear for whom he is writing this commentary: whether he had resumed contact with former mentors or patrons in North Africa; or whether he is thinking of Alypius and other companions from his Italian days; or whether he had simply been spotted by local churchmen (the *mediocres*[10]) as a talented recruit and expositor of the Bible. (We should not, I think, take too seriously the notion that being not yet ordained he was not allowed to teach on such subjects: talented men were few. Look at the way in which the rules were waived so that Augustine could preach as soon as he was ordained.[11]) But the key points are two. Augustine is not dedicating this commentary to any specific patron or mentor: we may assume that his choice of genre and content is not shaped by such a person's preferences. And Augustine, who was formerly proud to align himself with the *docti*, is now keen to bridge the distance between himself and the uneducated—even if it means inventing learned chastisers for himself in this preface.

With this self-consciously inclusive strategy, Augustine adopts the insight towards which his mother—in his own portrayal, at least—had nudged him. We can see now that it was not so irrelevant that the programme for a commentary on Genesis should be juxtaposed, in *De Ordine*, with an exhortation to Monnica, however unrelated the two may have seemed at the time: Augustine has come to realize that the projects of explication and inclusion are complementary.

Moreover, the strategy of inclusion is an important rallying cry against the Manichaeans, who operated a strictly hierarchical system for disseminating knowledge. The elect alone had full access to the

[10] As Peter Brown reminds us, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover, NH, 2002), 48 (with further references there).

[11] On the exceptional dispensation, see F. Van Der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop* (English translation: London/New York, 1961), 6–9; *Ep.* 21 contains an anxious plea from Augustine to his bishop, Valerius, that he should at least be given some time to study the Bible more thoroughly before he begins to preach.

doctrines of Mani; the hearers, of whom Augustine had been one, served the elect, but learnt relatively little.[12] Contrast this with Augustine's emphasis here on the importance of *sermo simplex*, simple speech: his first topic is the choosing of words (with the implication that words carefully selected will be recondite and exclude the *indocti*); his second, their different effect on those with different levels of education. Words unchosen imply an address to the multitude: Augustine is trying to *un*learn his erudition. (Here, then, are the seeds of his sermon delivery.) This purposeful inclusiveness would surely have been anathema to the Manichaeans. Indeed, later in the work, Augustine contrasts false knowledge with simplicity: he likens the Manichaeans to the serpent in the garden of Eden, and observes tartly: 'No one promises the knowledge of good and evil with more verbosity and arrogance than they . . . and in general, all heretics deceive with the guarantee of knowledge, and chastise those whom they find believing simply' (*nulli enim loquacius atque iactantius promittunt scientiam boni et mali . . . et omnes quidem generaliter haeretici scientiae pollicitatione decipiunt et reprehendunt eos quos simpliciter credentes inuenerint*: *Gn. adu. Man.* 2.25.38).

The commentary begins. In the first book, Augustine goes through Genesis line by line, indicating the Manichaean critique of the concepts involved, and then responding to it. In each case, the tone of the Manichaean critique is one of literal-minded materialism.[13] (At the end of the work, this approach is distilled into a magnificent anti-Manichaean catechism: 'they say . . . we deny . . .'. Augustine remarks on the pattern with apparent satisfaction in the *Retractationes*.) One example may count for many. '*Et tenebrae erant super abyssum*: and darkness was over the abyss.' 'This', writes Augustine, 'the Manichaeans criticize, saying: so, was God in darkness, before he made light?—They are the ones who are really in the darkness of ignorance and so do not understand the light in which God was before he made the other sort of light' (*quod Manichaei reprehendunt dicentes: in tenebris ergo erat deus, antequam*

[12] See Augustine's own report in *ep.* 236.2, cited by O'Donnell, with further useful observations, at *conf.* 3.6.10.

[13] See *conf.* 3.7.12 on the literal-minded Manichaean questioning of the scriptures (*cum a me quaererent unde malum, et utrum forma corporea deus finiretur et haberet capillos et ungues, et utrum iusti existimandi esset qui haberent uxores multas simul . . .*); *conf.* 5.10.19–20 juxtaposes Manichaean materialism with their paradoxical declaration of the absurdity of Christ's incarnation. See also *util. cred.* 2.4. Further on Manichaean hermeneutics: Pollmann, *Doctrina Christiana*, 11–21.

faceret lucem? uere ipsi sunt in tenebris ignorantiae et ideo non intellegunt lucem, in qua deus erat, antequam faceret istam lucem: *Gn. adu. Man.* 1.3.6).

After years of competition in the rhetorical schools—the sort of hollow verbal competition for which Augustine reproved Licentius and Trygetius at Cassiciacum (*ord.* 1.10.29 and the debate *gloriandi causa*)—Augustine makes this sort of riposte all too easily. But there is a point of immense theological and semantic importance to be established:

> And God said, let there be light, because where there is no light, there is darkness, not because darkness is anything (*non quia aliquid sunt tenebrae*), but darkness is designated by the very absence of light—just as silence is not an actual thing, but when there is no sound, it's called silence; and nudity is not an actual thing, but when there's no covering on the body, it's called nudity . . .
>
> *et dixit deus: fiat lux*. quia ubi lux non est, tenebrae sunt, non quia aliquid sunt tenebrae, sed ipsa lucis absentia tenebrae dicuntur, sicut silentium non aliqua res est, sed ubi sonus non est silentium dicitur. et nuditas non aliqua res est, sed in corpore ubi tegumentum non est nuditas dicitur. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.4.7)

We may remember that the Manichaeans posited a god of Light who was always on the defensive, fighting against the pre-existent Dark.[14] Augustine offers here a neat solution to the problem of the order of generation of darkness and light: he was obviously pleased with it, for he uses it several times in later works (for example, *c. ep. Man.* 30.30). There is some debate as to whether Augustine would have heard the sermons of Ambrose on the seven days of creation, collected and published as the *Hexameron*, while he was waiting for baptism in Milan;[15] but in any case Ambrose does not deal with the problem of darkness as well as Augustine does. Ambrose writes, 'There was darkness, because the splendour of light was lacking' (*tenebrae erant, quia*

[14] See Augustine's account at *haer.* 46: *iste [haeresis] duo principia inter se diuersa et aduersa, eademque aeterna et coaeterna, hoc est semper fuisse, composuit: duas naturas atque substantias, boni scilicet et mali . . . opinatus est*. There are five elements of darkness, and five of light, which is the nature of God (and Good): *his quinque elementis malis debellandis alia quinque elementa de regno et substantia Dei [censent] missa esse, et in illa pugna fuisse permixta: fumo aera, tenebris lucem, igni malo ignem bonum, aquae malae aquam bonam, uento malo uentum bonum*. (Manichaean inventiveness wears rather thin in the latter three couplings.) Further on the doctrine, and Augustine's battles against it, see François Decret, *Aspects du Manichéisme dans l'Afrique romaine* (Paris, 1970), 193–252: 'Les deux principes'.

[15] Courcelle, *Recherches* 96–103 favours Holy Week 386 as the date when the *Hexameron* would have been preached; he cites evidence from *conf.* that Augustine went regularly with his mother to hear Ambrose preach, and argues that this date gives Augustine time to digest the results. Franco De Capitani reviews the evidence and reserves judgement in 'Studi su sant'Ambrogio e i Manichei II: Spunti Antimanichei nell'*Exameron* Ambrosiano', *RFN* 75 (1983), 4–5.

splendor deerat lucis); but he then spoils the thought by adding, 'There was darkness, because the air (*aer*) itself is dark' (*tenebrae erant, quia aer ipse tenebrosus est*), which begs the very question he is supposed to be addressing (*Hex.* 1.8.28). But Augustine takes the idea of 'lack' and makes it into a full statement about the ontological status of darkness. Darkness *is not anything*: it does not exist. We only use the word to indicate that there is no light there—just as we use 'nudity' to indicate that there are no clothes there! Furthermore, if all that darkness can be said to be is the absence of light, we cannot ascribe ethical properties to it either. It is neither bad nor good: it is absence.[16]

Once again, Augustine has turned an exploration led by Monnica to profound theological purpose. We remember how she asked, 'Should we call the person who lacks silver and money needy, but not the person who lacks wisdom?' (*beata u.* 4.27). This prompted a disquisition by Augustine on *uerba non habendi*, 'words of lack', in which he first used the darkness and light analogy. Now it has become one of the key elements in his explanation of the story of Creation.

Pursuing his exposition of Genesis 1, Augustine explains briskly that the earth, at the moment of creation, is described as 'invisible and unformed' (*inuisibilis et incomposita*) because God had not yet organized it with 'ordered differentiation' (*ordinata distinctione*).—He sneers that the Manichaeans don't understand 'even the most obvious things'.—At this point, he reaches his first great expository challenge, the notion that 'the spirit of God was carried over the water':

> The spirit of God was not carried over the water in the way in which the sun is carried over the earth, but in another way which few people understand. You see, that spirit was not carried over the water through physical space (*per spatia locorum*), as the sun is carried over the earth, but through the power of its invisible sublimity (*per potentiam inuisibilis sublimitatis suae*).
>
> et tamen non sic spiritus dei superferebatur super aquam, sicut superfertur sol super terram, sed alio modo quem pauci intelligunt. non enim per spatia locorum superferebatur aquae ille spiritus, sicut sol terrae superfertur, sed per potentiam inuisibilis sublimitatis suae. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.5.8)

The spirit of God is (Augustine tells us) the 'will of the creator' (*uoluntas fabri*)—which in its turn is the same thing as his *caritas*, the spirit of love in which he created the world. But what are we to make of the final phrase in this passage? It cannot refer to anything conventionally spatial

[16] Rowan Williams provides an excellent summary of the importance of this idea: 'Insubstantial Evil', in *Augustine and his Critics* (London/New York, 2000), 105–23.

or temporal. The former, Augustine makes explicit in his remark about the *spatia locorum*; the latter is symbolized by the contrast with the passage of the sun. So the 'power of its invisible sublimity' must be somehow construed metaphysically. Roy comments beautifully upon this passage, but here he fails us by simply paraphrasing: this phrase 'ne doit pas être entendu d'une élévation spatiale mais de la puissance d'une invisible sublimité'.[17] This leaves us none the wiser about what *potentia* and *sublimitas* might actually mean. We shall return to this later.

Augustine continues:

> If [the Manichaeans] were to seek reverently, they would find how this should be understood: at this point, water (*aqua*) isn't invoked so that we should understand by it what we actually see and touch today—in the same way that the earth (*terra*), which is called invisible and unformed, isn't the same sort of thing as that which can now be seen and handled; no, in the statement 'in the beginning God made heaven and earth', the whole of creation—which God made and established—is signified by the name(s) of heaven and earth. So: these things are given the names of visible things because of the weak understanding of the little people (*paruuli*), who are not so capable of understanding invisible things.
>
> hoc si pie quaererent, inuenirent quemadmodum intellegendum esset: non enim aqua sic appellata est hoc loco, ut haec a nobis intellegatur quam uidere iam et tangere possumus, quomodo nec terra, quae inuisibilis et incomposita dicta est, talis erat qualis ista quae iam uideri et tractari potest; sed illud quod dictum est: *in principio fecit deus caelum et terram*, caeli et terrae nomine uniuersa creatura significata est quam fecit et condidit deus. ideo autem nominibus uisibilium rerum haec appellata sunt, propter paruulorum infirmitatem, qui minus idonei sunt inuisibilia comprehendere. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.5.9)

Augustine is beginning to move into metaphysical realms through a technique new to him, the divorce of names from their physical referents. The result is to divert their semantic scope away from the obviously 'sensible' to the intelligible. It is hard not to see behind this the disdain for mere words which he articulated at Cassiciacum: 'for where the thing fits, who would not despise the actual words?' (*ubi res conuenit, quis non uerba contemnat? ord.* 2.7.21). We may recall how in those dialogues he used non-verbal strategies to circumvent the restrictions imposed by words. So far (and we are only at Genesis 1:2!) he has already shown that sometimes words must be employed to capture a different sense from their conventional one—including words, like *terra*, which are deeply rooted in reference to spatio-temporality and to

[17] Roy, *Intelligence*, 271–2.

what one might call ontological positivism, things which 'really are'.[18] He has arrived at this through two observations, the latter of which was first adumbrated at Cassiciacum: that spatio-temporal relations do not apply to the divine; and that apparently negative concepts do not denote the presence of evil, but simply the absence of a positive concept. Nothing really is *nothing*.

Here—to revert to the process of signification—the names of *caelum* and *terra* are being detached from their obvious referents, and made to act as signs for the whole of creation. A little later, Augustine essays an explanation of the paradoxical notion, formless matter (*informis materia*), and we learn more about how this process of detachment could work:

> That formless matter which God made from nothing is at first called *caelum* and *terra*; and it says, *in principio fecit deus caelum et terram* not because it already existed, but because *it could potentially do so* (*quia hoc esse poterat*); for scripture also says that *caelum* was made later on.
>
> informis ergo illa materia quam de nihilo deus fecit appellata est primo caelum et terra, et dictum est: *in principio fecit deus caelum et terram*, non quia iam hoc erat, sed quia hoc esse poterat; nam et caelum scribitur postea factum. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.7.11)

Here is the distinction between the two possible referents of *caelum*: the unformed or potential one, and the conventional one. Augustine likens 'potential *caelum*' to the seed of a tree, in which we might say there were 'roots and trunk and branches and fruit and leaves'. And we can see, once again, how this is an insight of Cassiciacum which has (as it were) borne fruit, for this is how Augustine extended his notion of a human being to include even babies, women, the uneducated. Each is the seed of a reasoning being: they use reason, or *could potentially use it*. The idea of potential is serving as a crucial inclusionary concept—here, to include the different senses of *caelum*. It also serves to break down the rigidity of Manichaean dualism. One need not choose between unitary interpretations of *caelum* and not-*caelum*, for example, when the notion of 'potential *caelum*' is available.

We should pause for a moment here to observe how different this notion of potential being is from anything in the Neoplatonic (or sub-Neoplatonic) material by which Augustine was in theory influenced at

[18] Note that this is the key to Robert J. O'Connell, 'The *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* and the Origin of the Soul', *REAug* 39 (1993), 129–41, though he doesn't articulate it quite like this. He talks about the *corpus coeleste* as 'a body essentially different in quality and *kind*' (132).

the time. For example, Philo Judaeus writes in his *Quaestiones in Genesim*: 'As scripture says that before they grew on the earth, (God) made plants and grass and the other things, it is evident that He made incorporeal and intelligible ideas in accordance with the intelligible nature which these sense-perceptible things on earth were meant to imitate.'[19] Augustine expounds nothing like this non-material blueprint for matter. In fact, he does exactly the opposite; for in Augustine, there is matter as potential (the *informis materia*), but not form.

He reiterates this in a passage on the problematic business of assigning names to the *informis materia*:

> All these names—heaven and earth, or invisible and formless earth and the abyss with its darkness, or the water over which the spirit was carried—all of these are names of the formless matter, so that an unknown thing may be suggested for the less educated in known words (*ut res ignota notis uocabulis insinuaretur imperitioribus*); and not with a single word, but many, because if there were only one, it might be thought to mean what people usually understand in that word.
>
> haec ergo nomina omnia, siue coelum et terra siue terra inuisibilis et incomposita et abyssus cum tenebris siue aqua, super quam spiritus ferebatur, nomina sunt informis materiae, ut res ignota notis uocabulis insinuaretur imperitioribus, et non uno uocabulo, sed multis, ne, si unum esset, hoc esse putaretur quod consueuerant homines in illo uocabulo intellegere. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.7.12)

Here Augustine comments again on the way in which different names may be used as shorthand denotation for a single referent: his intention of loosening the link between word and referent is explicit. Once again, the 'less educated' or 'less experienced' make their appearance, to be guided by these techniques. And we learn that *materia* is not in fact matter, but what may potentially become matter. It is in fact better described as a state or condition of potentiality. Only later, at the making of dry land and sea (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.12.18), does the *materia informis*, which has been called both 'earth' and 'water', take on its sensible properties. With the notion of 'potential matter', Augustine mediates between the intelligible and the sensible, without needing to invoke formal exemplars in the intelligible realm. His play with different notions and levels of *ratio* in the *Soliloquia* is one of the ways in which he has opened up the space for this move.

Incidentally, this interpretation has the merit of giving Augustine an invincible response to the Manichaean mockery that God should have

[19] Philo *Quaest. Gen.* 2, on Gen. 2: 5—in the Loeb translation from the Armenian.

fashioned Adam out of mud: 'they don't have an elementary understanding of how many senses both "earth" and "water" can have in scripture; after all, mud is a mixture of earth and water' (*non intellegentes primo, quam multis significationibus uel terra uel aqua in scripturis ponatur; limus enim aquae ac terrae commixtio est*: *Gn. adu. Man.* 2.7.8).

Returning to the passage which offers multiple names for a single 'potential' referent, we should also note the important word *insinuaretur*. I have translated it here as 'suggested', but literally it means putting something—in this case, the apprehension of meaning—directly into the breast (*in sinum*). We learn that God is 'pure understanding' (*intellectus*—the intelligible); he does not speak in any given language—not 'Hebrew or Greek or Latin or any other'—and so, when the Bible says 'He named' what it means is, 'He caused to be named' (*'uocauit' autem dictum est 'uocari fecit'*: *Gn. adu. Man.* 1.9.15). Therefore, when God spoke to His creation (and this is His 'invisible creation', presumably while it is still potential), 'he suffused it with an inner spring, speaking in its understanding, so that it might not receive external words . . . but be sated from its own source, that is, by truth flowing from its inmost parts' (*irrigabat eam fonte interiore loquens in intellectu eius, ut non extrinsecus uerba exciperet . . . sed fonte suo, hoc est de intimis suis manante ueritate satiaretur*: *Gn. adu. Man.* 2.4.5). This is a clear challenge to the literal-mindedness of the 'wholly carnal' Manichaeans (*conf.* 3.6.10—or *Gn. adu. Man.* 2.7.8, for that matter), who object to the notion that God might have body parts. And this must be the mode of expression to which Augustine is referring when he says that 'following the *insinuatio* of the whole of creation, both visible and invisible,' he will turn to consider man. God has 'named' all of creation—but by this special mode of inner communication, speaking to the breast (again, metaphorical) of all his beings (*Gn. adu. Man.* 2.7.8). Finally, God—

> put flesh in place of that rib (from which Eve was created), so that by this name the emotion of love (with which each person loves his own soul) might be suggested (*insinuaretur*) . . . For in this place, it is not named 'flesh' to denote carnal lust, but rather in the way in which the prophet said that a stone heart was taken from the people and a fleshly one given instead.
>
> . . . in locum illius costae carnem adimpleuit, ut hoc nomine insinuaretur dilectionis affectus, quo diligit quisque animam suam . . . non enim sic nominata est caro isto loco, ut carnalem concupiscentiam significet, sed illo modo potius, quo propheta dicit auferri populo cor lapideum et dari cor carneum. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 2.12.17)

Insinuatio suggests the perfection of divine communication, before the need for 'external words'; it is the way in which God names—paradox-

ically—without language, and in which he makes known his intentions for his creation.[20]

In default of notions which may be conveyed directly *in sinum*, Augustine is eloquent on the limitations of human language:

> The words of the Old Testament operate like this: they don't teach that God is weak, but accommodate our weakness. Nothing can appropriately be said about God. (*nihil enim de deo digne dici potest.*) But for us, things are said which we can understand—so that we may be helped to attain those things which cannot be said in any human language.
>
> sic sunt et uerba ueteris testamenti, quae non deum infirmum docent, sed nostrae infirmitati blandiuntur. nihil enim de deo digne dici potest. nobis tamen, ut nutriamur et ad ea perueniamus quae nullo humano sermone dici possunt, ea dicuntur quae capere possumus. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.8.14)

Human language is, in fact, so limited that it must leave a vacuum in any attempt to speak of God. In the face of this absolute ineffability, human gradations of understanding are negligible. Augustine allies himself beyond doubt with the *paruuli* here—those who are weak of comprehension, the *indocti* whom he has set out to include.[21] This should recall his recognition, in *De Ordine*, that the 'solecisms and barbarisms' for which his mother might be criticized count for nothing in the effort to approach God, 'who is known better by not knowing'. It should also recall Augustine reflecting on the insignificance of human authority *and* human *ratio* in the face of the miracle of incarnation (*ord.* 2.5.16). Augustine has worked his learned readers through to the discovery that, in the sight of God, the *indocti* must include themselves.

We may look at one more example of how the scriptures communicate, according to Augustine. The commentary here is upon 'and evening came (lit. 'was made') and morning came'. The Manichaeans object that this phrase is used before the distinction is made between day and night, and is therefore nonsensical.

[20] *Insinuatio* seems to effect the transition between formlessness and form at *conf.* 12.19.28, during the exegesis of Gen. 1: 1 and 1: 2: *et uerum est quod omne mutabile insinuat notitiae nostrae quandam informitatem, qua formam capit uel qua mutatur et uertitur*. This portion of *conf.*, we may note, deals with (*a*) the multivocality of scripture; (*b*) the notion of potential matter and the problems of naming: *uerum est quod, unde fit aliquid, potest quodam genere locutionis habere iam nomen eius rei quae inde fit: unde potuit uocari caelum et terra quaelibet informitas unde factum est caelum et terra.*

[21] Contrast Augustine's description in *conf.* of his youthful disdain for the language of the Bible: *sed ego dedignabar esse paruulus* (*conf.* 3.5.9).

It remains that we should understand that in that space of time the distinctions between the tasks are denoted: evening, because of the completion of finished work, and morning, because of beginning future work, by analogy, that is, to human tasks (*de similitudine scilicet humanorum operum*), because for the most part they start in the morning and stop at dusk. The Holy Scriptures, you see, habitually translate words from human things (*de rebus humanis*) to divine ones.

restat ergo, ut intellegamus in ipsa quidem mora temporis ipsas distinctiones operum sic appellatas: uesperam propter transactionem consummati operis et mane propter inchoationem futuri operis, de similitudine scilicet humanorum operum, quia pleraque a mane incipiunt et ad uesperam desinunt. habent enim consuetudinem diuinae scripturae de rebus humanis ad diuinas res uerba transferre. (*Gn. adu. Man.* 1.14.20)

The translation of human language to the divine—and, at the same time, the way in which the divine simply cannot be summed up in human language—is something with which Augustine has been concerned throughout this work. The delicacy of the solution can be highlighted by contrast with Philo's: 'After the kindling of the intelligible light, which preceded the sun's creation, darkness its adversary withdrew: for God, in His perfect knowledge of their mutual contrariety and natural conflict, parted them one from another by a wall of separation (i.e. dusk and dawn)' (*op. mundi* 33: Loeb translation). Once again, the crucial questions are begged here.

Having explored these further passages, we may now return to the mystifying phrase which attempts to explain how the spirit of God was carried over the face of the water. We now know that the 'water' refers to the *informis materia*, paraphrased as the 'state of potentiality'. What, then, is the sense of *per potentiam inuisibilis sublimitatis suae*?

I would suggest that *potentia* is at the same time the power to create the 'state of potentiality', and is co-extensive with it.[22] It is fundamental to the process of creation, and to the mystery of how matter can emerge from nothing—not because it solves that mystery, but because it sums up its inexpressibility. It moves us irrecoverably beyond the assumption that everything must be reducible to matter—or, indeed, to matter and non-matter, nothingness. Augustine is then making the etymological connection that the *sublimitas* of *potentia* is not just invisible, but beyond the limits of expression (*sub limite*). If this seems impossibly complicated, we may note the conclusion of Augustine's line-by-line commen-

[22] This is very close to the sense adduced in *TLL* s.v. *potentia* II: '*pertinet ad condicionem, qua quid fieri uel exsistere potest*'. Many of the attested instances come from Marius Victorinus: note esp. *adu. Arium* 2.3, p. 1091b, *deus . . . potentia et* lógos *actio, in utroque autem utrumque; nam et potentiae quod potest esse est, et quod est, potest esse; ipsa igitur potentia actio est.*

tary on Genesis: the creation story 'can therefore in no way be spoken in words' (*nullo modo ergo uerbis dici potest*: *Gn. adu. Man.* 1.23.41).[23]

Augustine has realized three of his great insights from Cassiciacum. He has picked up on his mother's prompting to inclusivity. The result is a commitment to explain himself, and counter heretics, in simple language. But even as he teaches, it is also a theological commitment to consider himself, before God, one of the *paruuli* or the *imperitiores* from whom he would earlier have separated himself: one of those who is himself in need of the (apparently) simple language of the scriptures, because the 'language' of God is so impossibly far beyond his comprehension.

Alongside the quest for inclusivity comes the questioning of language—and specifically of the conventions of language. This starts with Augustine's statement about the irrelevance of Monnica's 'barbarisms and solecisms', and was perhaps also fuelled by his reflection on what it might mean to be 'secure in one's art, not in one's race'. It develops into the joking display of anti-erudition with Nebridius. But who could have suspected that the insights which he would draw from the impossibility of correctly conjugating *cupio* would lead him to see how he might make sense of the *exact words* of the creation story in Genesis? How he might loosen the links between word and referent—and, further, argue that this is the exact strategy of the Bible, in using multiple words for one amorphous notion? How the important thing might be the *res* behind the *uerba*—but it might not, in fact, be a 'thing' at all?

From this, we get to Augustine's third, and most important, insight: his realization that human language is *in itself* grounded in ontology, in notions of being. This ontology can approximate the non-material, but it cannot conceive of anything that simply is not, that does not exist. Augustine cannot effectively oppose the materialism of the Manichaeans until he loosens the grip of language on being; and that is what he is accomplishing in his commentary *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*. The particular way in which he accomplishes this is by mobilizing the idea of potentiality. Nothing can, even potentially, be worthily said about God (*nihil… de deo digne dici potest*). But Augustine uses the space between word and referent to open up a notion of potential being which mediates between absolute nothingness (that from which the world was

[23] On Augustine's difficulties producing a literal reading of Genesis, see Dorothea Weber, '*In scripturis exponendis tirocinium meum succubuit.* Zu Augustins frühen Versuchen einer Genesis-Exegese,' in *L'esegesi dei Padri latini* (Rome, 2000), i. 225–32.

created) and ontological fulness. Thus, paradoxically, by giving no content whatsoever—ethical or ontological—to nothingness, and assigning instead the possibility of fluidity and change to the realm of potentiality, he challenges the apparent necessity of material dualism—of which he himself, along with the Manichaeans, had been convinced.[24]

It seems fitting that Augustine first happened upon the notion of potentiality as he reflected upon the constraints of *ratio*; at any rate, the constraints of the way in which *ratio* was popularly invoked. The importance of *ratio* lies in the potential to exercise the rational faculty, not in the specific mode of its exercise, nor in rigid definitions of what *ratio* might constitute. The human being itself cannot be reduced to simple dichotomies; how, then, could the whole of God's creation be so?

In his quest to counter material dualism, Augustine succeeds in finding the bridging notion of potentiality. It is not exactly liminal, for it is not a threshold between one state or concept and another; it is far more comprehensive, containing always the possibility of presence. But one cannot help feeling that it is no coincidence that this notion was born of so liminal a period in Augustine's own life—liminal biographically, geographically, and intellectually.

Instead of opposing evil substance to good, Augustine posits—through his use of language—a worldview which has three elements, none unequivocally bad: absolute nothingness, of which nothing can be predicated; the *informis materia*, or state of potentiality, which was first created from it; and reality as a whole, ontological plenitude, which—being created by God—must be fundamentally good, but in the slippage between word and referent or, as it were, back to nothingness, may yet go awry; for human reality can never measure up to God's, but only hint at it under different appearances.

We may note, finally, the way in which Augustine begins to find through Biblical exegesis a clarity of focus which had eluded him at Cassiciacum. At Cassiciacum, he chose a literary genre which emphasized open-endedness, and he pushed it to its limits. The parameters which he had inherited are held up to question; there is no fixed point of literary reference. Moreover, Augustine resists the role of *dux* in the dialogues,

[24] And thereby leaves the way open for Trinitarianism—the development with which Roy, *Intelligence*, is concerned.

and repeatedly tries to foster—or emulate—a plurality of voices. The results veer between excitement and conventionality. They may, as we have seen, produce extraordinary insights; they may return, as if by default, to banal points of departure. But with this first commentary on Genesis, many of the problems of focus are avoided. Augustine has found the fixed point round which he can exercise his genius for interrogation and nuance: the text of the Bible. He has found the way in which to negotiate the problem of being cast as *dux*: he will accept his role of teacher, but count himself nonetheless among the *paruuli*. The result is sometimes plodding; but it is not bedevilled by the pressures of classical textuality and the expectations of patronage. And it lays the groundwork for the interpretative florescence that was to come.

In *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, Augustine's project of Christian interpretation is truly launched. His privileging of process and potential, his eagerness to communicate with a wide audience, and his reluctance to claim superior knowledge, have all been developed and foreshadowed in the interrogations of the dialogues. While at different times in his life, these ideas might be overshadowed or constrained by ecclesiastical obligation or political pressure, his commitment to them always re-emerged. The dogmatic fixity with which posterity has come to associate him is something very different from the nuanced questioning and notions of potential which 'the irrational Augustine' originally espoused.

These are thy wonders, Lord of Power,
Killing and quickening, bringing down to hell
And up to heaven in an hour;
Making a chiming of a passing-bell.
We say amiss,
This or that is:
Thy word is all, *if we could spell.*

George Herbert
From *The Flower* (1633)

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Note on Method

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Augustine amongst the Natals

quid est enim philosophia? amor sapientiae. (What then is philosophy? The love of wisdom: *c. Acad.* 2.3.7)

The wisdom of love is perhaps the first meaning of the word 'philosophy'. In fact, if theology is understood as the discourse on or about God and metrology as the science of measures, why has the reverse order been imposed in the interpretation of the word 'philosophy'? And above all, why has only one meaning been retained: the love of wisdom? (Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, 1.[1])

It may seem perverse to juxtapose Irigaray's inversion of the conventional interpretation of 'philosophy' with Augustine's reiteration of convention. But Augustine was more than capable of supplying some 'daring inversions' of his own. What about the instance in which that phrase was coined, the 'daring inversion' from 'God is love' to 'love is God'?[2] This book has sought out the moments at Cassiciacum when Augustine dared to break with convention and, perhaps, to think about philosophy as the *sapientia amoris*.

I have shown how crucial to this exercise was the presentation of his thoughts in a set of fully-staged dialogues; and how crucial as well was the critique offered by the presence of his mother as a participant. I propose now to reflect more explicitly on the privileging of motifs of birth and becoming that ensues from these choices—a privileging that is only now, through the work of Irigaray and a few others, being re-introduced to Western philosophy.

You can imagine with what surprise and wry pleasure I read these words a few pages later in *The Way of Love*, some time after I had completed 'A Really Liberal Education' (Ch. 4 above):

Why thus has the wisdom of love and, in part, wisdom itself, been forgotten? Due to a taste for games? The arrogance of whoever masters something or

[1] Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love* (London/New York, 2004).

[2] The term is T. J. Van Bavel's; see 'The Double Face of Love in St. Augustine: The Daring Inversion: Love is God', *Congresso Internazionale su S. Agostino nel XVI centenario della conversione* (Rome, 1987), iii. 81–102 (an earlier version in *AugStud* 17 (1986), 169–81).

someone? A certain contempt for life and for the one who gives it? All that and many other things. For example, the will or the need to continue to philosophize among men, conversing with men's methods about problems concerning men. With, thus, a privileging of the object, of the similar, of the multiple, as the speech of little boys, adolescents, and men bears witness. (4–5)

Remember Augustine's tears as he reproves the young men squabbling *causa gloriandi*? Remember the *aetas compos rationis* embracing Mallius Theodorus, the *aetas* which is later so conspicuously called into question? Remember Augustine's introduction of Monnica as my mother, 'to whom I believe that I owe my entire life'?[3] He is resisting the urge 'to philosophize among men'; he is (to continue in Irigaray's words) 'confronting the delicate relational, but also logical, problems that a dialogue with one or several different subjects poses'.[4]

The importance of dialogue—true dialogue, not interrupted monologue—to this philosophical project scarcely needs emphasizing. Yes, Augustine is the controlling presence in these dialogues, however much he might choose to dissemble that control. But because he takes seriously the difference of his interlocutors, because, moreover, he moves beyond the verbal into the paralinguistic signals on which I have remarked, he creates some space to address these 'delicate relational . . . problems'. 'There no word is yet available, no "object" constituted. Nevertheless *there is not nothing*, and silence itself requires being redefined, restructured through advancing into a new speech.'[5] There is a space between speakers which may not be named or nameable, but which is nevertheless pregnant with potential—fleetingly sketched, perhaps, better by a verb than a noun.[6] The dialogue, if fully realized, is *the* written genre of 'becoming' (perhaps only letters can approach it), resisting closure in the many aspects which I outlined

[3] See respectively *ord.* 1.10.29; *beata u.* 1.2; 'cuius merito credo esse omne, quod uiuo': *beata u.* 1.6, and the discussion of these passages at pp. 100–7, 164–5, and 69–70.

[4] *Way of Love*, 5. The original title for my study of the letters of Paulinus of Nola (eventually published under the name *Paulinus Noster*) was *The Relational Self*, because I saw Paulinus as constructing a self in his letters which was profoundly constituted by relationalism—a presumed, triangulated interrelation between himself, his correspondent, and God.

[5] Irigaray, *Way of Love*. 44; my emphasis, to draw the parallel with Augustine's discussion of the nature of nothingness. Note that the context is a discussion of 'the task of discovering, beyond the customary rationality of the West, *a different speech and reason*' (43).

[6] *Way of Love*, 60; Irigaray cautions against even using verbs which take a direct object, because of the consequent relationship of subordination. Cf. the reciprocity evoked at *ord.* 2.12.35: 'For one person could not be closely associated with another, unless they could talk together *and, as it were, make their minds and thoughts flow back to themselves*.'

in Part One, 'Why Dialogues?'—for example, in its liminal state between speaking and writing, and in its open-ended invitation for audience participation. Of the Augustinian dialogues which I have discussed here, this is ironically most true and most pressing in the *Soliloquia*, where the very fact of opening up an internal process into a publicly 'performed' dialogue creates an unforeseen possibility of further conversation.

I was initially indebted to the brilliant work of Grace Jantzen for beginning to provide me with a framework in which to think about the aspects of Augustine's work which ran so far counter to my expectations.[7] Jantzen takes particular inspiration from the work of Irigaray and Hannah Arendt, while freely acknowledging that she is reappropriating them (as I cheerfully reappropriate all three[8]). All three share an emphasis on the simultaneous possibilities and impossibilities of language—on its situatedness in humans, on its inadequacy before the divine—which is clear in Augustine too.

Jantzen's response to the Heideggerian master narrative of 'being-toward-death' is not just a matter of resistance or denial; it is instead the ambitious project of developing a thoroughgoing theory of natality which rewrites that master narrative in every particular. Natality—coined in this sense by Arendt in *The Human Condition*—is understood simply as a philosophical reorientation towards the fact that we have all been born into the world, as opposed to the fact that we shall all die. (The rewriting is captured on the most basic level by Jantzen's insistence on using the term 'natals' for 'mortals'.) This rewriting of the priorities of the philosophical conversation engenders a new appreciation for the subjectivity of the situated, embodied, sexuate self in its relationships with others, and a privileging of becoming, temporality, and immanence, instead of fixity, eternity, and transcendence. This is not to say that Jantzen is in any negative construction earthbound, or

[7] As explained in my Preface. See esp. Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*. Also of particular interest here are ead., 'Contours of a Queer Theology', in Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton (eds.), *Feminism and Theology* (Oxford, 2003), and 'Before the Rooster Crows: John Locke, Margaret Fell, and the Betrayal of Knowledge in Modernity', *Literature and Theology*, 15 (2001), 1–24.

[8] Jantzen led me particularly to Irigaray's piece on Plato's *Symposium*, which I found hugely generative: 'Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato, *Symposium*, "Diotima's Speech" ', in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (London, 1993; first published in French, 1984). I was already familiar with Arendt's remarkable reading of Augustine in her doctoral dissertation (published as *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago, 1996)), but Jantzen prompted me also to read Arendt's *The Human Condition* (Chicago, 1998).

eschews a relationship with the divine. On the contrary: she writes from an explicitly Christian perspective. She merely seeks her divine in the embodied, the mutable, and the mundane.

This also reconfigures philosophy of religion *for women* as a site of possibility rather than constraint. Suddenly the flux and mutability that has historically been associated with the female becomes, not something to be regulated and repressed, but the thing in itself that holds out the potential for immortality. This insight has been built upon a return to that most fruitful of dialogues, Plato's *Symposium*. Diotima says:

> mortal nature seeks as far as possible to be eternal and immortal, and it is only in this way, by producing offspring, that it is able to do so, through always leaving behind another, a young one, in place of the old. [Memory is then also included in this plan for immortality.] . . . By this means. . . . a mortal thing participates in immortality, both in terms of its body and in all other regards. (Pl. *Smp.* 207d; 208b: Cobb's translation)

Now, within the *Symposium*, of course, the conclusion of the dialogue is endlessly deferred: a few lines later, Diotima (as reported by Socrates) changes gear completely and moves to the beauty of metaphysical pregnancy, producing a vision of 'the beautiful'; then Alcibiades bursts in, chattering and flirting, and ultimately speaks in favour of worldly engagement instead of detached contemplation of 'the beautiful'; he in turn is trumped by Socrates, who argues all night and then goes off to start his day. But whatever the subsequent trajectory of Plato's thought, within the dialogue the metaphysical is not unequivocally privileged. And the very lack of closure invites us, the readers, in to the conversation—for clearly, the conversation continues.[9]

Irigaray, glossing Diotima, writes, 'Procreation and generation in beauty—this is the aim of love. Because in this way the eternity and the imperishability of a mortal being are made manifest.'[10] She sees clearly the possibility of this vision of immortality. But she stops short of realizing its full potential by failing to consider the way in which a child's growth through time, and the parent's involvement in it, continue constantly to enact this possibility. Instead, she focuses only on the moment of birth.

[9] Henderson too insists that we are *active* participants in this conversation, in 'The Life and Soul of the Party: Plato, *Symposium*', in Alison Sharrock and Helen Morales (eds.), *Intratextuality* (Oxford, 2000), 287–324.

[10] Irigaray, 'Sorcerer Love', 26.

Hannah Arendt's ' "web" of human relationships', her emphasis on interconnectedness, are fruitful ways of developing this move.[11] Leo Bersani's reading of the *Symposium* is very much in this vein, reflecting on the disclosure of the subject within this web of relationships: 'by its very enunciation "father" moves toward "child", and this logical model of relationality not initiated by lacks or gaps of being might start us moving *toward relationality acknowledged as an ontological necessity antecedent to lack*.'[12] In other words, in this reading which explicitly revises Freud, our position as natals in the world is *not* always already constituted by the lack postulated as necessary to desire (and hence to growth), but instead is constituted as automatically and immediately in relation to others.

This links us back to the Cassiciacum dialogues in two ways. First, the emphasis on Monnica *as Augustine's mother* looks much richer and more significant when we think of childbearing and childrearing—the conditions of natality—as a mode of participation in the divine. We are not accustomed to doing so, and this is due partly to the weight of orthodox Christian theology, where the impossible paradox of the virgin mother Mary is held up as the ideal for womanhood. (This paradox is juxtaposed by Julia Kristeva against her own experience of childbirth in her creative meditation 'Stabat Mater', another crucial piece here. 'There is him, however, his own flesh, which was mine yesterday. Death, then, how could I yield to it?'[13]) But Augustine shows, at various places in his work, that he did think seriously about this. Remember his reference to 'the life which exists in the womb; for I think there really is one' (*sol.* 2.20.36). He is fascinated by the fact of life in the womb as an instance of God's miraculous disposition, and particularly by *how* it comes to be in the womb:

> Some people demand that we give them an account of how God could be mixed with man so that the single *persona* of Christ should result, when this only needed to happen once, as if they could give an account of the thing which happens daily: *how a soul may be mixed with a body, so that one human person should result.* (*ep.* 137.11)

[11] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 183. See also Charles Taylor's rich and ethically engaged development of the idea of 'webs of interlocution', amid which self-definition and self-understanding are necessarily achieved: *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); the 'webs' on p. 36.

[12] Leo Bersani, 'Sociality and Sexuality', *Critical Inquiry*, 26 (2000), 651.

[13] Julia Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater', in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader* (New York, 1986), 169. 'Cependant, il y a lui, sa chair à lui, qui fut mienne hier. La mort, alors, comment pourrais-je y succomber?'; ead., *Histoires d'Amour* (Paris, 1983), 232.

When I first started thinking about the presence of Monnica in the Cassiciacum dialogues, I thought that a reading from 'her' perspective would at best be an attempt to reclaim a woman's voice (as usual, mediated by the exhaustively problematized conventions of masculine reportage). It was not until I set her against all her virginal forebears and contemporaries, real and imagined—Diotima and Thecla (the latter in Methodius' *Symposium*, though it could just as well have been the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*), Macrina and Hypatia—that I realized just how important Augustine's emphasis on *mater nostra* might be. It is not that he is invoking some sentimental notion of motherhood—indeed, as we have seen, his portrayal of Monnica is often far from sentimental. But he is evoking all the time at Cassiciacum the notions of relationality, of relationships between human beings and between humans and God, and their growing and changing through time. The crucial difference between Monnica and the virgins is not sexual experience, but the way in which she is implicated in a web of human relations which the virgins are encouraged to eschew—the special status of virginity giving them and their male mentors the opportunity to pretend that they can.[14] That implication and relationality begins to show a way towards the divine—towards, perhaps, the 'wisdom of love'.[15]

There remains the second way in which the Cassiciacum dialogues might be invested in the notion of natality as a mode of participation in immortality. At the moment when Augustine is beginning to reflect seriously on the implications of Christ's incarnation for his own life, he also brings into the foreground, in the person of his mother, a reminder of his own incarnation. We can expect this to produce a certain emphasis on the embodied self; but more prominently in these dialogues it brings an emphasis on the embodied nature of language. Jantzen, building on Kristeva, points out that 'language, whether spoken or written, is in the first place physical'; she talks about 'its rootedness in the maternal body from the earliest formations of gestation and infancy'.[16] Kristeva contrasts the physical basis of language—its 'sounds, cadences, tones, and rhythms'—which she names 'the

[14] The figure of Macrina is constructed by her brother as a dramatic refusal of the possibilities of relationality: her mother repeatedly says 'that she never stopped holding her in her womb' (*V. Macr.* 5). The *locus classicus* for the circumscription of virgin lives in Latin literature must be Jerome's *ep.* 22. Brown, *Body and Society* 259–84, emphasizes total seclusion as an 'ideal' (263, 270), while exploring a far more complex and nuanced social practice.

[15] For a very different, but gratefully complex, reading of Monnica in the *Confessiones*, see Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints* (Philadelphia, 2004), 76–88.

[16] Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 194, 195.

semiotic', with 'the symbolic', which is the web of signifiers which we conventionally associate with language. In spoken language, in particular, these will be inseparable. One does not need to adopt Kristeva's terminology to see that Augustine's emphasis, at Cassiciacum, on the paralinguistic—the tears, the shrugs, the irritation; even the joking and mocking so clearly present at times between 'Augustine' and Ratio—serves to reiterate and reinforce the embodied nature of language.

This takes us back to a very suggestive passage in Arendt's *Human Condition*. 'Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company . . . The word itself . . . indicates its "potential" character. Power is always, as we would say, a power potential and not an unchangeable, measurable, and reliable entity like force or strength.'[17] If we construe 'word' as 'the symbolic', and 'deed' as 'the semiotic', we can see how Augustine, reflecting so fruitfully on the embodied word (or is that the embodied Word?), then mobilizes the notion of potential, as mapped in Part Three and the Epilogue. The ever-shifting relationship between the signifier, the person who produces it, and his or her audience—even before we address the nature of the signified—gives rise to this dynamic notion: a possibility, a 'potential', which acknowledges human boundedness, and yet reaches beyond it. This is how Augustine begins to bridge the divide between immanence and transcendence.

Let me finally illustrate these notions with a reading of a short passage written much later in Augustine's life. In *De Ciuitate Dei*, Augustine is talking about the creation of Adam and Eve. As in *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, he prefers the account of Gen. 2: 22, in which Eve is created from Adam's rib, to that of Gen. 1: 27, in which God creates both male and female simultaneously. God did this, says Augustine, 'so that in this way the unity of that association and the bond of harmony might be more emphatically impressed upon him, if humans were joined together not just by similarity of nature, but also by the affection of kinship' (*ut eo modo uehementius ei commendaretur ipsius societatis unitas uinculumque concordiae, si non tantum inter se naturae similitudine, uerum etiam cognationis affectu homines necterentur . . . : ciu.* 12.22). So Augustine takes the biblical passage to which the justification for women's subjection is usually traced, and instead reads it as an originary account of a most throughgoing form of relationality: *everyone* is bound together by kinship (*cognatio*), from Adam on, because the woman is made from

[17] *Human Condition*, 200.

Adam (and everyone else thereafter from woman).[18] Is this not Bersani's 'relationality acknowledged as an ontological necessity antecedent to lack'?

The key issues that arise in thinking through the ideas around natality, then, reach far beyond immediate categories of gender to thinking about language—its production, its modes, its referents; relationality—in physical or metaphysical kinship; and, above all, the relationship between immanence and transcendence. Augustine at Cassiciacum is enacting, thinking through, the wisdom of love. The 'disenchantment' that he stages there is fruitful indeed.[19]

> noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat ueritas; et si tuam naturam mutabilem inueneris, transcende et teipsum. sed memento, cum te transcendis, ratiocinantem animam te transcendere. (Don't go outwards, return into yourself. Truth resides in the inner person. And if you find your own nature mutable, transcend yourself, too. But remember, when you transcend your self, that you are transcending your reasoning soul: *uer. rel.* 39.72.)
>
> . . . Unless what Diotima proposes to contemplate, beauty itself, is seen as that which confounds the opposition between immanence and transcendence. As an always already sensible horizon on the basis of which everything would appear. *But one would have to go back over everything to discover its enchantment.*[20]

'To go back over everything' in search of a new enchantment: this is what I have been beginning to do.

[18] See also Van Bavel's profoundly humane commentary on *trin.* 12, where Augustine produces a creative (re-)reading of Gen. 1: 27 to address the question of whether woman is made in the image of God: 'Woman as the Image of God in Augustine's "De Trinitate XII" ', in *Signum Pietatis* (Würzburg, 1989), 267–88.

[19] To echo the combination of Markus and O'Donnell with which I began; see Preface, n. 3.

[20] Irigaray, 'Sorcerer Love', 33; my emphasis.

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I use the abbreviations in *Aug-Lex* for the titles of Augustine's works—despite the ensuing discrepancy between *De Academicis* and *c. Acad.* In the main text, I leave all titles in full and untranslated, since so often (*beata u.*, *doctr. chr.*!) the very interpretation of the titles is contested.

For other patristic works, I use the abbreviations of Blaise; for classical works, those of *OLD*.

AMBROSE

Hex. *Hexameron*: ed. Schenkl, CSEL 32.1 (1897).
Hymni ed., tr., comm. Charlet, Cerf (Paris, 1992).
Psal. *Explanatio psalmorum xii*: ed. Petschenig, CSEL 64 (1919).

AUGUSTINE

c. Acad. *De Academicis / Contra Academicos*: ed. Green, CCL 29 (1970).
beata u. *De Beata Vita*: ed. Green, CCL 29 (1970).
ciu. *De Ciuitate Dei*: ed. Dombart and Kalb, CCL 47 and 48 (1955).
conf. *Confessiones*: ed. Verheijen, CCL 27 (1981); rev. edn. and comm. O'Donnell (Oxford, 1992; online at <http://www.stoa.org/hippo>.
dial. *De Dialectica*: ed. Pinborg, comm. Jackson (Dordrecht/Boston, 1975).
doctr. chr. *De Doctrina Christiana*: ed. Green (Oxford, 1995).
ep. *Epistulae*: ed. Goldbacher, CSEL 34.1 and 2, 44, 57 (1895–1923); ed. Divjak, CSEL 88 (1981). *Epp.* 1–100 newly ed. Daur, CCL 31 (2004) and 31A (2005).
c. ep. Man. *Contra epistulam Manichaei quam uocant fundamenti liber unus*: ed. Zycha, CSEL 25.1 (1891).
Gn. adu. Man. *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*: ed. Weber, CSEL 91 (1998).

haer. *De Haeresibus ad Quoduultdeum liber unus*: ed. Plaetse and Beukers, CCL 46 (1969).
imm. an. *De Immortalitate Animae*: ed. Hörmann, CSEL 89 (1986).
lib. arb. *De Libero Arbitrio*: ed. Green, CCL 29 (1970).
mag. *De Magistro*: ed. Daur, CCL 29 (1970).
mor. eccl. cath. *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De Moribus Manichaeorum*: ed. Bauer, CSEL 90 (1992).
mus. *De Musica*: *PL* 32.
ord. *De Ordine*: ed. Green, CCL 29 (1970).
retr. *Retractationes*: ed. Mutzenbecher, CCL 57 (1984).
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Leg. *De Legibus*: ed. Vahlen, Teubner (1883).
Off. *De Officiis*: ed. Winterbottom, OCT (1994); comm. Dyck (Ann Arbor, 1996).
Q. fr. *Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem*: ed. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, 1980).
Rep. *De Re Publica*: selection ed. and comm. Zetzel (Cambridge, 1995).

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u. Macr. *Vita Macrinae*: ed. Maraval, Sources Chrétiennes 178 (Paris, 1971).

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op. mundi *De Opificio Mundi*: tr. Colson and Whitaker, Loeb (1929).
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Phdr.	*Phaedrus*: ed. Burnet, OCT (1901); comm. and tr. Rowe (Warminster, 1986).
Smp.	*Symposium*: ed. and comm. Dover (Cambridge 1980); tr. Cobb (Albany, NY, 1993).
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INDEX LOCORUM

Page numbers in bold denote principal discussions of a passage.

GENERAL INDEX