

The Epistemological Background of Augustine's Dialogues*

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1. Augustine is the author of nine dialogues, eight of which have survived. All of them were written between his conversion to the Catholic faith in 386 and his ordination as coadjutor bishop of Hippo around 396.¹ The first four – *Contra Academicos*, *De beata vita*, *De ordine*, and *Soliloquia* – were composed before the author's baptism at the Easter Vigil of 387.² In Milan, during Lent of the same year, Augustine also sketched a dialogue on music (*De musica*), which he completed before his unexpected priestly ordination at the beginning of 391. *De musica* was part of a series of books on the liberal arts that Augustine had tried to write in dialogue form.³ He managed to complete one book on grammar, too; this, however, was lost during Augustine's lifetime.⁴ *De quantitate animae* was written during Augustine's second stay in Rome, between the autumn of 387 and the summer of 388. At the same time, Augustine began *De libero arbitrio*, Books 2 and 3 of which he finished in the years 391 to 395. Finally, once

* I warmly thank Caterina Tarlazzi for helpful criticism of the first version of this paper.

- 1 For more details on the chronology of Augustine's dialogues, see the prefaces to each dialogue in Catapano (2006).
- 2 To be more precise, according to Aug. *retract.* I,i–iv, Augustine first began to write *Contra Academicos* or *De Academicis*. During the composition of the three books of *Contra Academicos* he also wrote the one book of *De beata vita* (*non post libros de Academicis, sed inter illos*) and the two books of *De ordine* (*per idem tempus inter illos qui de Academicis scripti sunt*). In between (*inter haec*), he was able to compose two books of *Soliloquia*, a work which, however, remains unfinished.
- 3 According to the *Retractationes* (I,vi), while in Milan Augustine prepared the *principia* (i.e. the drafts) of books concerning six other disciplines (grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, and philosophy itself). At least one of these *principia*, entitled *De dialectica*, has been preserved. The one on rhetoric, which has come down to us among Augustine's works, may be authentic, too. Cf. Ruef (2003); Giomini (1990) 7–13.
- 4 Possibly the so-called *Ars breviata* is a compendium of the lost *De grammatica*: cf. Fussl (2005).

he had returned to Africa and before becoming a priest, Augustine wrote *De magistro*, his last dialogue.

According to Bernd Reiner Voss, the eight surviving dialogues can be divided into two groups: ‘scenic’ or ‘diegetic’ dialogues, on the one hand; ‘non-scenic’ or ‘dramatic’ dialogues, on the other.⁵ Each ‘scenic’ dialogue is presented to a dedicatee, whom Augustine addresses in a prologue; the author says that he is simply reporting conversations that took place over several days between him and some of his students, friends and relatives, and that were recorded by a stenographer or a secretary. Scenic dialogues are: *Contra Academicos*, *De beata vita* and *De ordine*. They are also called the ‘Cassiciacum dialogues’ since they are set on the farm of the grammarian Verecundus at *Cassiciacum*, a place near Milan.⁶ The ‘non-scenic’ dialogues, on the other hand, lack prologues and space-time setting, and simply represent, without narrative framework, a discussion between Augustine and another person.⁷ *Soliloquia* have intermediate features between the two groups. On the one hand, the conversation is spread over three days, and some details regarding the character A (Augustine) resemble Augustine’s real situation at Cassiciacum.⁸ On the other hand, there are only two characters in the dialogue (Augustine and Reason) and, after two very short narrative introductions (the so-called *Inquit-Formeln*),⁹ their exchange is made by simple juxtaposition of questions and answers.

According to Voss, moreover, the interlocutor’s role is different in scenic and non-scenic dialogues. In the scenic dialogues, speakers are relatively independent of each other. In the non-scenic dialogues, on the other hand, a more or less marked teacher-student relationship exists between the two partners.¹⁰ As Therese Fuhrer rightly observed, however, the relation between partners in Augustine’s dialogues is *always* that of a teacher to one or more students; Augustine himself takes over the part of the teacher

5 Cf. Voss (1970) 197: “Unter den literarischen Dialogen Augustins sind zwei Gruppen zu unterscheiden. Es sind, in der Reihenfolge der Entstehung, szenische und nicht-szenische bzw. erzählte und dramatische Dialoge.”

6 Cf. Aug. *conf.* IX,iii,5.

7 The only exception is *De musica*, in which the characters are a teacher and a student. Some manuscripts mark the two characters with other pairs of initials: *A/Aug* (*Augustinus*) & *L/Lic/Liq* (*Licentius*), or *A & D* (*Discipulus*), or *M* (*Magister*) & *L*. The original couple, however, was *M* (*Magister*) & *D* (*Discipulus*), as shown by Martin Jacobsson in Jacobsson (2002) lxvi–lxix.

8 For instance, the character A claims to be thirty-two years old (Augustine was born on 13 November, 354). Cf. all the passages quoted in Catapano (2006) 464.

9 See the first lines of *soliloq.* I,i,1 and I,xiv,24.

10 “In den szenischen wechselt die Zahl der Teilnehmer, die einzelnen Sprecher sind verhältnismäßig selbständig. In den nichtszenischen sprechen jeweils zwei Partner; das Gespräch ist durch ein mehr oder weniger stark ausgeprägtes Lehrer-Schüler-Verhältnis bestimmt” (Voss 1970, 197).

in almost all of his dialogues.¹¹ According to Fuhrer, therefore, the formal distinction between scenic/diegetic and non-scenic/dramatic dialogues does not correspond to a different relationship between the interlocutors of Augustine's dialogues.¹² She suggests, on the contrary, that scenic and non-scenic dialogues look back to two different kinds of dialogue: the philosophical dialogue belonging to the tradition of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero, in the first case; the teaching dialogue typical of school practice in the early centuries of the Christian era, in the second.¹³

Faced with these data regarding Augustine's dialogues, three questions can be raised: (1) why did Augustine choose the literary genre of the philosophical, scenic dialogue for his early works after his conversion? (2) Why did he soon abandon this model in favour of teaching, non-scenic dialogue? (3) Why, once he was a priest, did he no longer compose dialogues?¹⁴

2. Scholars have given different answers to the first question, as the problem of the purpose of the Cassiciacum dialogues is intertwined with the problem of their historicity. Advocates of historicity explain the scenic form of these dialogues by claiming that this format was the most natural way for Augustine to narrate conversations that actually took place at Cassiciacum. Upholders of the fictitious nature of the Cassiciacum dialogues, on the other hand, argue that the scenic form was the most suitable for the literary conventions of the philosophical dialogue in the Latin tradition. The *vexata quaestio* of the dialogues' historicity cannot be tackled here.¹⁵ I

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- 11 Except in *De musica*, as noted in footnote 7 above, and in *Soliloquia*, where Reason is the teacher. Cf. Fuhrer (2004) 67.
- 12 The only real difference concerns the degree of literary characterization of students: "Die Schülerrollen werden entweder im Rahmen der Ausgestaltung der Szenerie mit bestimmten Charakterzügen versehen, wie in den drei szenischen Cassiciacum-Dialogen, oder bleiben blass, auch wenn sie mit historischen Persönlichkeiten besetzt werden wie in *De Animae Quantitate* und *De Libero Arbitrio* (dem Freund Evodius) und *De Magistro* (dem Sohn Adeodat)" (*ibid.*).
- 13 "In ihrer ‚Reinform‘" – as Fuhrer explains – "sind die beiden Typen darin zu unterschieden, dass im philosophischen Dialog ein thematisch eingegrenztes Problem aus dem Gebiet der Philosophie erörtert, im didaktischen Dialog dagegen ein Gebiet möglichst umfassend (enzyklopädisch) behandelt wird" (*ibid.*). Fuhrer considers the non-scenic dialogues of Augustine (*De quantitate animae*, *De libero arbitrio*, *De musica* and *De magistro*) as examples of 'teaching dialogues', although she thinks that in *De magistro* Augustine combines the 'teaching' with the 'philosophical' kind. Cf. Fuhrer (2002a) 10–11.
- 14 He confined himself merely to completing *De libero arbitrio*, which he had already begun in Rome in 387/388.
- 15 Scholars still seem to make their way, as Goulven Madec wrote in 1986, "vers une sorte de bon désaccord, circonscrit par des concessions mutuelles. En définitive, on

will only make two simple remarks. First, let us assume that the raw material for the composition of the scenic dialogues came from real conversations to a greater extent than did that of the non-scenic dialogues: it still remains unclear why Augustine at Cassiciacum was willing to devote his *otium* to such conversations. Second, it is not obvious that real talks about philosophical topics are bound to generate philosophical works in dialogue form.¹⁶ There are, therefore, further reasons behind the early Augustinian choice of dialogue, and of scenic dialogue in particular. What are they?

According to Joanne McWilliam, the Cassiciacum dialogues and *Soliloquia* are an autobiographical tetralogy with apologetic purposes. In her view, each character of the Cassiciacum writings symbolizes one of the forces (internal or external) that played a role in Augustine's *itinerarium mentis*.¹⁷ In Therese Fuhrer's opinion, Augustine chose to write philosophical dialogues in order to illustrate that philosophy is compatible with religious attitude and practice.¹⁸ More recently, Catherine Conybeare pointed to two reasons for Augustine's use of the philosophical dialogue. First, Augustine intended to reassure his patrons regarding his resignation from the teaching of rhetoric in Milan: by writing philosophical dialogues, he was suggesting that, far from abandoning intellectual activity, he had moved to the highest form of it.¹⁹ Second, thanks to the flexibility of the

aurait le choix entre deux formules: ou bien, les *Dialogues* sont historiques tout en contenant des éléments fictifs; ou bien ils sont fictifs tout en contenant des éléments historiques" (Madec 1986, 209). As for me, I fully agree with the following assessment made by Therese Fuhrer: "Dabei steht ausser Zweifel, dass Augustin im Herbst 386 über die darin behandelten Themen mit seinem Kreis in Cassiciacum Gespräche geführt und diese in Form der Aufzeichnungen für seine Publikationen als Vorlagen benutzt hat; doch das in der Dialogtradition vorgegebene Privileg, die Aussagen und Handlungen umgestalten und stilisieren zu dürfen, durfte bzw. musste er sich herausnehmen" (Fuhrer 1997, 19). Cf. also my Introduction to Catapano (2006) x–xix.

- 16 Consider Plotinus's case. Despite being a follower of Plato and drawing his inspiration from discussions with his own disciples, as we learn from Porphyry (*vit. Plot.* 13), Plotinus wrote no dialogue but only treatises, which were not intended for publication (cf. *Porph. vit. Plot.* 4).
- 17 "The four works are, in essence, Augustine's intellectual and spiritual autobiography and therefore his apology as well" (Mac William 1990, 17). In MacWilliam's opinion, Augustine staged the story of his conversion in a symbolic way, in order to defend the intellectual dignity of his shift to the Catholic Church.
- 18 As she writes, "Das Eigentliche, um das es im Gespräch geht (das Bemühen um Erkenntnis), wird durch die Dramaturgie der Dialoge realisiert, d.h. in den Gesprächsszenen, durch die einzelnen Persönlichkeiten, die Darlegung ihrer Standpunkte und ihre Reaktion illustriert" (Fuhrer 2002b, 321).
- 19 "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) phi-

dialogue genre Augustine could put new contents in a traditional form, thus mirroring, Conybeare says, his personal situation of liminality in the transition from ancient culture to Christianity.²⁰

For my part, I would like to point out some lexical data. In the whole Augustinian corpus the lemma '*philosophia*' occurs 167 times, and 82 of these occurrences are included in the three Cassiciacum dialogues.²¹ Also, these dialogues are the only ones where Augustine uses either '*philosophia*' or other terms belonging to this lexical family (with the exception of two occurrences of the word '*philosophus*', one in *Soliloquia* and the other in *De quantitate animae*).²² As a consequence, I believe that the conception of philosophy which governed Augustine at Cassiciacum is crucial for understanding his use of the philosophical dialogue at that time. The way of life Augustine had eventually decided to embrace, abandoning the profession of rhetor and urging his loved ones to follow his own example, can be summed up in the word '*philosophia*'.²³ This word essentially means, in the young Augustine's usage, love or desire for wisdom, a careful search for truth concerning soul and God (that is to say: ourselves, our origin and our destination).²⁴ Such *studium sapientiae*, which demanded both intellectual rigour and moral discipline, normally took place in a community of people sharing the same aspirations and values.²⁵

losophy" (Conybeare 2006, 24). Cf. also Lim (2008) 160–161: "The early Augustine therefore used the dialogue form as a legitimising cultural form to support his own self-fashioning as a learned Christian devoted to the quest for truth and who, moreover, possessed the sort of Roman aristocratic *otium* usually associated with individuals from much more privileged backgrounds."

- 20 As Conybeare writes, "One should never underestimate the liminality of Augustine's position at this time – both intellectually and socially. He was caught in a 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" (Conybeare 2006, 26–27).
- 21 This data can be verified by means of the CD-ROM *Corpus Augustinianum Gissense*, 2nd edition (CAG 2). See information on <http://www.augustinus.de/bwo/dcms/sites/bistum/extern/zfa/cags/index.html>. Cf. also the appendices to Catapano (2001) 301–314.
- 22 Cf. Aug. *soliloq.* II,xiii,23; *quant. anim.* xxx, 58; Catapano (2001) 252–254, 273–274.
- 23 This is especially clear from the prologues to the three scenic dialogues. Cf. Catapano (2001) 22–46, 56–108, 176–197, 204–206.
- 24 Cf. Catapano (2001) 288–294. On Augustine's idea of philosophy, cf. also Catapano (2007); Catapano (forthcoming).
- 25 As Gerald Kobler and Ulrich Leinsle have rightly pointed out, "Augustin hat in seinen frühen Dialogen interessante Ansätze zu einer dialogischen Auffassung der Philosophie auf dem Hintergrund des gemeinsamen Lebens mit seinen Freunden

Augustine's experience at Cassiciacum shows, in this respect, the characteristic features of philosophy in the ancient sense of the word, which Pierre Hadot in particular has highlighted.²⁶ Ancient philosophy was not just a theoretical discourse, but also a way of life practised within a certain school made up of a master and disciples sharing some common beliefs. In many ways, the group of people living at Cassiciacum seems to be a school of this kind.²⁷ The conversations Augustine narrates in his Cassiciacum dialogues perform the function that ancient philosophical schools accorded to disputation – they are 'spiritual exercises' by which the teacher trains his disciples and helps them in pursuing wisdom.²⁸ Even the recording and publication of talks had an educational purpose, as Augustine himself says.²⁹ So, according to the model embraced by Augustine, full conversion to philosophy required the practice of community dialogue. No genre was better suited to represent and attest publicly such a lifestyle choice than the 'scenic' dialogue. In my opinion, Augustine's early choice of the narrative or diegetic kind of dialogue should therefore be explained by taking into account the metaphilosophical background of the Cassiciacum dialogues.³⁰

3. Let us now turn to the second of the three questions listed above: why do the dialogues written by Augustine after the Cassiciacum period all belong to the non-scenic kind? To the best of my knowledge, this problem has received little attention in secondary literature. Perhaps, one might think, Augustine abandoned the scenic dialogue because the reasons that had prompted him to adopt it had disappeared. After the publication of the first three dialogues and after his baptism, Augustine no longer needed to justify publicly his adherence to a certain ideal of philosophy. His decision to return to Africa also made it unnecessary to produce works specifically dedicated to members of the Christian intellectual élite of Milan such as

erarbeitet. Philosophie erscheint engstens verbunden mit der gemeinsamen Lebensform der «schola» von Cassiciacum. Sie ist ein dialogisches Tun auf der Basis gemeinschaftlichen Lebens" (Kobler/Leinsle 1986, 149).

26 Cf. Hadot (2002) and (1995). I agree with Madec that Hadot's concept of the Socratic dialogue as a spiritual exercise perfectly fits Augustine's philosophical activity at Cassiciacum. Cf. Madec (2005) 13.

27 Cf. Steppat (1980).

28 Cf. Aug. *c. Acad.* I,i,4; I,ix,25; II,vii,17; II,ix,22; III,i,1.

29 Cf. Aug. *c. Acad.* II,ix,22; *ord.* I,vii,20; I,x,30.

30 Conybeare, too, admits the possibility, supported by Laura Holt in an unpublished PhD dissertation, that Augustine "is [...] simply writing philosophical dialogues because that is the generic mode in which one [i.e. a teacher of Christian philosophy, in contrast both with rhetoric and with outmode trains of thought] teaches" (Conybeare 2006, 25).

Mallius Theodorus,³¹ and perhaps the Cassiciacum dialogues had not obtained the desired effect (of being accepted into that élite?).³²

Explanations such as these may be plausible to a certain extent. One must observe, however, that Augustine had already moved from the scenic to the non-scenic dialogue at Cassiciacum. As recalled at the beginning of this paper, the composition of *Soliloquia* – a work which retains only small traces of staging and, for the rest, inaugurates the series of non-scenic dialogues³³ – was contemporary with the writing of *Contra Academicos*, *De beata vita* and *De ordine*. In order to understand the reasons why Augustine abandoned the scenic dialogue, it is therefore useful to know the reason why he decided to create a text like *Soliloquia* that has no real precedent in ancient literature.³⁴

In a very interesting passage from *Soliloquia*, Book 2, Reason reminds Augustine (who is ashamed of having given his assent to a certain definition of false) why they chose to talk with each other alone. This important passage deserves to be read in its entirety:

*Ridiculum est, si te pudet, quasi non ob idipsum elegerimus huiusmodi sermocinationes; quae, quoniam cum solis nobis loquimur, Soliloquia vocari atque inscribi volo, novo quidem et fortasse duro nomine, sed ad rem demonstrandam satis idoneo. Cum enim neque melius quaeri veritas possit quam interrogando et respondendo et vix quisquam inveniatur, quem non pudeat convinci disputantem, eoque paene semper eveniat, ut rem bene inductam ad discutiendum inconditus pervicaciae clamor explodat, etiam cum laceratione animarum plerumque dissimulata, interdum et aperta, pacatissime, ut opinor, et commodissime placuit a meipso interrogatum mihi que respondentem deo adiuvante verum quaerere. Quae nihil est quod vereare, sicubi temere te inligasti, redire atque resolvere; aliter hinc enim evadi non potest.*³⁵

These statements made by Reason are perhaps the fullest and clearest expression of the young Augustine's attitude toward philosophical dialogue. First of all, Reason takes it for granted that dialogue is the best way of searching for truth, that is to say, of doing philosophy. Second, Reason

31 The dedicatee of *De beata vita*. For more information on this personage, see Catapano (2006) 226.

32 Augustine could find no similar élite of philosophically educated Christians in his homeland.

33 Cf. Voss (1970) 197: "Sie [scil. die *Soliloquien*] enthalten, wenn auch in verschwindend geringem Ausmaß, erzählerische und szenische Elemente, eröffnen jedoch andererseits die Reihe der Lehrgespräche."

34 The soliloquy genre was to be much used in the Middle Ages, as Stefan Faller has shown: cf. Faller (2001). Faller has also suggested classifying *Soliloquia* as an "inner dialogue". This expression reappears in the title of the latest book by Brian Stock, although he does not mention Faller. Cf. Stock (2010).

35 Aug. *soliloq.* II, vii, 14 (ed. W. Hörmann in *CSEL* 89, 63).

realistically remarks that the psychopathology of human relationships, so to speak, makes it very difficult to pursue truth through dialogue. All this lets us understand, I believe, that Augustine's soliloquy is not opposed to, nor an alternative to, the philosophical dialogue. Quite the contrary, as soliloquy tries to accomplish dialogue in the purest form.³⁶ Compared with the outer dialogue, the inner dialogue has the advantage of being more protected from the dangers that jeopardize interpersonal relationships. When talking with ourselves alone, we are safer from passions such as self-love and the lust for success that, in an outer dialogue, make us ashamed of our mistakes and want to prevail at the expense of truth. Moreover, and this is indeed the most important point, the outer dialogue cannot achieve its cognitive goal without the inner dialogue: the outer dialogue happily succeeds only in so far as it activates the inner one.

Augustine's idea of the primacy of soliloquy is based on a precise epistemological position, which I shall define as the Theory of the Internality of Truth. This theory claims that: (1) truth is present in the human mind, and (2) the human mind knows truth within itself. Proposition (1) is the ontological foundation of proposition (2), which, in turn, is epistemological evidence of proposition (1). Augustine's reasoning can be formulated as follows. If truth is present in the human mind, then the human mind knows truth within itself. Now, the human mind, whenever it knows something true, actually knows it within itself. So, truth is internal to the mind.³⁷

We find a clear statement of the Theory of the Internality of Truth in paragraph 6 of *De immortalitate animae*, a treatise intended to continue the reflections developed in *Soliloquia*.³⁸

*Sed cum vel nos ipsi nobiscum ratiocinationes vel ab alio bene interrogati de quibusdam liberalibus artibus ea, quae invenimus, non alibi quam in animo nostro invenimus [...], manifestum est etiam inmortalem esse animum humanum et omnes veras rationes in secretis eius esse, quamvis eas ignoracione sive oblivione aut non habere aut amisisse videatur.*³⁹

At least three things can be noted in this passage. First of all, Augustine is referring to the cognitive experience that takes place within the liberal arts. These disciplines are the subject of a large section of *De ordine*, Book 2. Here, Augustine describes the genesis of six disciplines: first, the arts of

36 I have tried to demonstrate this point in Catapano (2005).

37 We might say that the internality of truth is the *ratio essendi* of our inner knowledge of truth, and our inner knowledge of truth is the *ratio cognoscendi* of the internality of truth.

38 As a matter of fact, this treatise is a sort of memorandum (*commonitorium*) that Augustine prepared in Milan before baptism in order to complete *Soliloquia*. Cf. Aug. *retract.* I,v,1.

39 Aug. *immort.* iv,6 (ed. W. Hörmann in *CSEL* 89, 107).

language (grammar, dialectic, rhetoric); then, the arts that give contemplative pleasure (music, geometry, astronomy).⁴⁰ These disciplines increasingly provide knowledge of intelligible numbers and of the fundamental role of the One, and such knowledge is a preliminary to philosophy.⁴¹ Augustine's discourse on the liberal arts in Book 2 of *De ordine* closely foreruns the project of *disciplinarum libri* which he planned to write in dialogue form.⁴² So, Augustine's transition from the 'philosophical' to the 'teaching' dialogue – to borrow Fuhrer's terminology – was also owed to his ideas on the preparatory role, and the dialogic method, of the liberal arts.⁴³

A second thing to note in the above-mentioned passage is that human ignorance and forgetfulness do not prevent Augustine from maintaining the Theory of the Internality of Truth. In *De immortalitate animae* Augustine means to show precisely that knowledge is present even in the mind of those who, having never learned or having forgotten science, seem not to have it in themselves.⁴⁴ He claims that knowledge is always present in any mind, although not always in a conscious way.⁴⁵ Science consists of true rational principles (*verae rationes*) that are present in every soul – mostly, however, in a latent and unconscious form (*in secretis*). They are brought to consciousness only through the action of an inner *ratio* (*ratio*) (a solilo-

40 A wide range of different opinions exists on the sources of this first complete description of a real cycle of liberal arts in the history of thought. The extremes of the continuum are Adolf Dyroff's opinion on the one hand, and Ilsetraut Hadot's on the other. Dyroff (1930) claims that the source of this doctrine is a Pythagorean author whom Augustine knew through Varro, whereas Hadot (2005) argues for the influence of a Neo-Platonic source, perhaps Porphyry's *De regressu animae*. See the *status quaestionis* in Catapano (2006) cxxx–cxxxiv; Trelenberg (2009) 16–27.

41 Cf. *Aug. ord.* II,xii,35–xviii,47.

42 See footnote 3 above. As Augustine himself tells us in his *Retractationes*, the method of those 'books of disciplines' was to be the *interrogatio*. Cf. *retract.* I,vi: *Per idem tempus, quo Mediolani fui baptismum percepturus, etiam disciplinarum libros conatus sum scribere, interrogans eos qui mecum erant atque ab huiusmodi studiis non abhorrebant, per corporalia cupiens ad incorporalia quibusdam quasi passibus certis vel pervenire vel ducere* (ed. A. Mutzenbecher in *CCL* 57, 17).

43 According to the early Augustine, the debate on philosophical issues takes one up a blind alley without education in the *disciplinae*, which students learn thanks to the skillful questions of their teachers. As he says to his mother in *ord.* II,xvi,46, "on these and similar problems you should inquire either with that order of education (*ordine illo eruditionis*) or not at all".

44 Cf. Catapano (2003) 9–11.

45 Just before the quoted passage, we read the following statements: *Non autem quicquam se habere animus sentit, nisi quod in cogitationem venerit. Potest igitur aliquid esse in animo, quod esse in se animus ipse non sentiat. Id autem quamdiu sit, nihil interest. Nam si diutius fuerit in aliis animus occupatus quam ut intentionem suam in ante cogitata facile possit reflectere, oblivio vel imperitia nominatur* (ed. W. Hörmann in *CSEL* 89, 107).

quy, we could say) or under the stimulation of the *interrogare* of others. This is why learning is similar to recollection and can be described, as it is at the end of *Soliloquia*, as digging up knowledge buried within.⁴⁶

In *De quantitate animae*, with terms closely recalling Plato's theory of recollection in *Meno* (81 D) and *Phaedo* (72 E), Augustine affirms that, at birth, the soul brings all the arts with itself and that "what is called 'learning' is nothing else than the act of recollecting and remembering".⁴⁷ The epistemological background of *De quantitate animae* – and of *De musica*, too – is therefore a theory of knowledge as reminiscence: the soul knows by becoming aware of its hidden knowledge.⁴⁸ Knowledge takes place within, and the outer dialogue has only the function (which can be called 'maieutic', in a sense) of turning the attention of the soul to what is inside.

A third thing to note in the passage of *immort. an.* 6 is the connection between the theory of knowledge and the theory of the soul's immortality. As in Plato's dialogues, reminiscence is put forward as proof of immortality. Unlike Plato, however, Augustine does not derive the thesis of immortality of the soul from that of the soul's pre-existence (on which he never took up a definite position).⁴⁹ He prefers to frame a more complex argu-

46 Cf. Aug. *soliloq.* II,xx,34–35: *Repente tota res memoriae quasi lumen infunditur nihilque amplius, ut reminiscamur, laboratur. [...] Tales sunt, qui bene disciplinis liberalibus eruditi, siquidem illas sine dubio in se oblivione obrutas eruunt descendendo et quodam modo refodiunt* (ed. W. Hörmann in CSEL 89, 95).

47 Aug. *quant. anim.* xx,34: *Tantum nostrae sibimet opiniones adversantur, ut tibi anima nullam, mihi contra omnes artes secum adtulisse videatur nec aliud quicquam esse id, quod dicitur discere, quam reminisci et recordari* (ed. W. Hörmann in CSEL 89, 173). Augustine knew the Platonic theory via Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes* (I,xxiv,57–58) and defended it explicitly in a letter to his friend Nebridius (*epist.* 7,i,2), written in the same period as *De quantitate animae*. Cf. Hagedahl (1967) 143; Lütcke (1994) 354.

48 Compare the methodological statements in Aug. *quant. anim.* iv,5 and xv,26 with those in *mus.* I,vii,13; I,xi,19; III,ii,3–4; III,v,11; VI,xii,35–36.

49 Cf. O'Daly (1994) 319–322; Catapano (2010a) 557–558. In Aug. *lib. arb.* III,xx, 56–xxi,59, Augustine admits four major views on the origin of the human souls, without siding with any one: (1) the human souls derive from Adam's soul (traducianism); (2) they are created in time for every single man who is born (creationism); (3) they pre-exist in God and are sent by Him to their bodies (pre-existence in God); (4) they pre-exist somewhere else and come into bodies voluntarily (spontaneous embodiment of pre-existent souls). In his last texts on this matter (*epist.* 190 and 202/A; *De anima et eius origine*) only traducianism and creationism are still considered, but, apparently, the possibility of pre-existence is never rejected. On the other hand, Augustine strongly refuses the Platonic doctrine of reincarnation; as a consequence, he claims that the recollection of intelligibles is best explained by the theory of illumination (cf. Aug. *trin.* XII,xv,24).

ment, which makes use of Aristotle's notion of 'being-in-a-subject'.⁵⁰ Both in *Soliloquia* and in *De immortalitate animae*, the soul is described as the *subiectum* in which science (*disciplina*) exists; now, science lasts forever, because it is identical with truth; so, the soul too lasts forever and never dies.⁵¹ The internality of truth is thus conceived by Augustine, in his early works, as a sort of inherence. Truth is 'in' the soul in the sense that it is housed in the soul as in its ontological *subiectum*. I call this the Paradigm of Inherence.

In my opinion, the Theory of the Internality of Truth, understood according to the Paradigm of Inherence, contributed to Augustine's choice of non-scenic and teaching dialogues from *Soliloquia* onward. Given that knowledge already exists in the mind, albeit in an unconscious way, the maieutic dialogue (henceforth 'Socratic dialogue') undertakes the function of bringing to light the truth with which the interlocutor's soul is pregnant. As a consequence, historical accuracy concerning the chronological rates and the circumstantial details of the talks (which the scenic dialogues attempted to reproduce carefully) loses relevance. The number of characters is reduced to two, one acting as a guide and the other following the former. The readers are no longer informed of the characters' situation, but are implicitly invited to repeat the arguments on their own, in the inner dialogue, and thus to discover the same truth within themselves.⁵²

4. Augustine's last dialogue *De magistro*, however, contains a different paradigm of the internality of truth from the Paradigm of Inherence.⁵³ I suggest we call this new paradigm the Paradigm of Presidency. In a very famous passage, Augustine states:

50 Cf. Arist. *cat.* 2,1a,24–25: ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ δὲ λέγω ὃ ἐν τινὶ μὴ ὡς μέρος ὑπάρχον ἀδύνατον χωρὶς εἶναι τοῦ ἐν ᾧ ἐστίν. On the sources of Augustine's proof of the immortality of the soul, see Catapano (2006) cxxxiv–cxliv.

51 Cf. Aug. *soliloq.* II,xii,22–xiii,24; *immort.* i,1.

52 As regards the transition from the scenic form of dialogue to the non-scenic, or from the 'philosophical' to the 'teaching' kind, I therefore think that we can answer in the affirmative the question that Wilhelm Metz has appropriately put in the following terms: "Ob und wie die jeweilige Dialogform des Augustinus mit dem gedanklichen Gehalt seiner Werke zusammenhängt und ihn zum Ausdruck bringt, ob dementsprechend auch die Verwandlung der augustianischen Dialogform als ein Spiegel seines Denkwegs angesehen werden kann" (Metz 1999, 24).

53 The idea of the inherence of truth within the soul is already in jeopardy in the second half of *De immortalitate animae* (vii,12; xi,18; xii,19), where truth is defined as the *prima essentia* to which all things owe their being. It is clear that such a truth is independent of and superior to the soul, and therefore cannot exist in the soul as in its subject. Only in *De magistro*, however, is the Paradigm of Inherence abandoned once and for all and replaced by the Paradigm of Presidency.

*De universis autem, quae intellegimus, non loquentem, qui personat foris, sed intus ipsi menti praesidentem consulimus veritatem, verbis fortasse ut consulamus admoniti. Ille autem, qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est Christus, id est incommutabilis dei virtus atque sempiterna sapientia.*⁵⁴

Christ the Truth does dwell in the inner man, as the Scripture says in *Ephesians* 3,16–17 and as Augustine himself repeats in a famous passage from *De vera religione* (a treatise written in the same period as *De magistro*).⁵⁵ Christ does not live in the soul as a tenant resides in his domicile, however. On the contrary, he acts as a teacher sitting on the chair from which he teaches those who consult him. Truth *praesidet*, that is, it is sitting in front of, and presides over, the mind. The mind is, so to speak, the classroom in which the teaching of truth shines – it is no longer described as the ontological place where truth resides.⁵⁶ Whereas the Paradigm of Inherence corresponds to a theory of knowledge as reminiscence, the Paradigm of Presidency corresponds to a theory of knowledge as illumination.⁵⁷ If we know the intelligibles inside ourselves, it is not because they were already in the soul (Paradigm of Inherence): it is because they are made visible to our intellect by an incorporeal light coming from divine truth (illumination). This special light is not perceptible to the external senses, so it shines inside the mind itself.⁵⁸

54 Aug. *mag.* xii,38 (ed. T. Fuhrer in Fuhrer 2002a, 182).

55 Cf. Aug. *vera rel.* xxxix,72: *Noli foras ire, in teipsum redi. In interiore homine habitat veritas.* Cf. also *mag.* i,2 and, in later works, *epist.* 92,1; 140,xxvi,63; *de serm. dom.* I,x,27; in *Joh. tract.* 18,10; in *epist. Joh.* 8,1; in *Gal.* 17 and 38; in *Ps.* 9,12; 74,4; 140,7; *serm.* 165,ii,2; 346,2; 351,iv,11.

56 It is significant that, as noted by Gaetano Piccolo, “in tutto il Dialogo [*De magistro*], Agostino non accosta mai l’aggettivo *interior* a *magister*, ma usa l’avverbio *intus* per indicare quindi la modalità dell’insegnamento più che la collocazione del maestro” (Piccolo 2009, 44).

57 Consider for instance another famous statement from *De magistro* (xii,40): *Cum vero de his agitur, quae mente conspicimus, id est intellectu atque ratione, ea quidem loquimur, quae praesentia contuemur in illa interiore luce veritatis, qua ipse, qui dicitur homo interior, illustratur et fruitur* (ed. T. Fuhrer in Fuhrer 2002a, 184).

58 The idea of God as the sun of the minds and as the principle of intelligibility of scientific truths is already expressed very clearly in Book 1 of *Soliloquia* (I,vi,12; I,viii,15). We can also see traces of this idea in *De beata vita* and *De ordine*, as noted by Manfred Hoffmann (cf. Hoffmann 1966, 143, 146–147, 152–153). Only in *De magistro*, however, does Augustine draw all its epistemological consequences. As written by Hoffmann, “Ein direktes Erleuchtungserlebnis mit nachfolgender psychologischen Wirkung ist in den Soliloquien nicht zu finden. Beide Lehren stehen also nebeneinander; die Erleuchtungslehre hat die Erinnerungslehre noch nicht verdrängt” (Hoffmann 1966, 157).

Replacing the Paradigm of Inherence with the Paradigm of Presidency implies replacing the theory of reminiscence with the theory of divine illumination. Did this replacement have an impact on Augustine's use of dialogue? We have now come to our third and last question. *De magistro* is the last dialogue written by Augustine: one might ask whether the theory of illumination, depriving the Socratic dialogue of its previous epistemological foundation, led Augustine to abandon this literary genre forever.

Voss expressly rejected such a case, arguing that this interpretation does not take into account two facts.⁵⁹ First, Augustine kept up the dialogue form even after finally adopting the theory of illumination, as the dialogue *De magistro* itself shows. Second, the theory of illumination claims to explain the *same* cognitive process as the theory of reminiscence in a better way. According to Voss, there is no necessary implication between the Socratic dialogue and the doctrine of anamnesis, but only a historic link. In Voss's opinion, therefore, Augustine's abandonment of the dialogue form is explained by other reasons. One is that dialogue, as a literary form, belongs to the *schöne Literatur*, a kind of literature that Augustine no longer cultivated after his ordination to the priesthood (the only exception is *Confessiones*, of course). Another reason is that fundamental mysteries of the Christian faith (incarnation, Trinity, divine grace), which Augustine increasingly chose as the subject of his works after his ordination, are paradoxical and impenetrable by human reason.⁶⁰ „Der Tradition des platonischen Dialogs“ – Voss concludes – “fühlte er sich offenbar so stark verpflichtet, daß es dort, wo die Vernunft außer Kraft gesetzt wurde, wo ihre Regeln Ausnahmen erlitten, für ihn keinen Dialog mehr gab.”⁶¹

I agree with Voss that the theory of illumination does not imply a total devaluation of dialogue in Augustine's eyes. If this were so, illumination would also entail the utter devaluation of language. It is not human words, according to *De magistro*, that make us know things: accordingly, not only dialogue but any kind of verbal teaching would be thwarted. As a consequence, the enormous number of works written by Augustine after his dialogues would be huge evidence of inconsistency.⁶² Nonetheless, I do not

59 Cf. Voss (1970) 290.

60 “Bedeutsamer ist, daß Grundtatsachen des christlichen Glaubens als Paradoxa dem Zugang der Ratio verschlossen sind. Weder Menschwerdung noch Trinität noch Gnadenlehre hat Augustin im Dialog behandelt” (Voss 1970, 291).

61 *Ibid.*

62 As Madec rightly wrote, “Le *De magistro* n'est pas un dialogue sur l'impossibilité du dialogue, pas plus que sur l'impossibilité de l'enseignement, mais bien sur leurs conditions de possibilité. Il réduit le langage à sa matérialité, à son extériorité, pour révéler l'intériorité, la profondeur de l'esprit. Il s'applique à dissiper l'illusion d'une «communication horizontale» entre les hommes, pour convaincre qu'il n'est de communion des esprits que par leur union à la Vérité, à Dieu dont la présence

agree with Voss's second reason that the dialogue form, as the expression *par excellence* of philosophical reasoning, was unfit for the content of the Christian faith. This is not Augustine's own way of conceiving the relationship between faith and reason. It is well known that, in Augustine's view, faith is not opposed to reason – it *foregoes* reason, but it does not *forgo* reason (if I may make a pun in the Augustinian manner). Quite the contrary: faith requires reason to the extent that, by nature, faith tends to reach intellectual understanding and vision.⁶³

In conclusion, I believe that the reasons behind Augustine's abandonment of the literary dialogue were not epistemological, although I am not yet able to specify what they were. Other explanations are needed, in line with the first one given by Voss.⁶⁴ By referring to the metaphilosophical and epistemological background of Augustine's dialogues, we can find an answer to the first two questions we asked; not, unfortunately, to the third.

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illuminatrice est constitutive de tout esprit créé. Le schéma augustinien de la communication est donc triangulaire: pour dialoguer, il faut être trois, toi, moi et Dieu" (Madec 1976, 33–34).

- 63 Augustine himself defended the use of dialectic in theology against the Donatist Cresconius shortly after the year 405, without ever changing his mind. Cf. Catapano (2010b). On Augustine as a dialectician, cf. Fuhrer (2006). Several of Augustine's anti-Manichaean, anti-Donatist and anti-Arian works, which we can call 'theological dialogues' following Herwig Görgemanns and Therese Fuhrer, show that Augustine was 'un homme de dialogue' also in the theological field, to quote the title of a fine lecture by Fuhrer. Cf. Görgemanns (1997) 519–520; Fuhrer (2003) 188; Fuhrer (2004) 68. It should be acknowledged, however, that this 'theological' dialogue is made in a polemic spirit and in a controversial tone, far away from the modern meaning of 'dialogue' as the act of talking to other people with an open-minded attitude of respect for their opinions. Cf. Clark (2008) 119–120 and 128–132 (on *De civitate Dei*).
- 64 Gillian Clark has argued that his pastoral and social role as a bishop led Augustine to use less elitist forms of communication than dialogue, which were better suited to the faithful and more effective in practice. Cf. Clark (2008) 124–126 and 134.

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