



# *Universitetet i Bergen*

*Institutt for lingvistiske, litterære og estetiske studier*

LAT 350

Mastergradsoppgave i Latin

Høstsemester 2013

**Teleological sentiments from Saint Augustine's *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos* and the extra- inter- and subtextual Potentiality of Appeal to its pagan aristocratic Reader**

Johannes Aksel von Achen

---



## Content:

---

1 Introduction	5
a: Augustine the Man	5
b: <i>De Civitate Dei</i>	7
c: The Reader of <i>De Civitate Dei</i>	8
d: The Scope and Procedure of this Master's Thesis	9
e: Some literary Decisions	12
PART I: EXTRA- AND INTERTEXTUAL CONDITIONS FOR THE TELEOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION OF <i>DE CIVITATE DEI</i> TO THE PAGAN ARISTOCRATIC READER	13
2 The Importance and Implications of <i>Telos</i>	14
Three Prefatory Elucidations	14
a: What in general is Teleology and what does It got to do with the pagan aristocratic Reader of <i>De Civitate Dei</i> ?	14
b: <i>Telos</i> as End or Fulfilment?	15
c: A <i>telos</i> in Activity?	17
3 Augustine's affinity with the City of Men and with its pagan aristocratic Inhabitant	20
Affinity with the Late Roman Empire	20
a: the Empire and its People	20
b: The Edifice of the Empire in teleological and providential Context	22
The pagan aristocratic Reader: a common Language, a different Belief	26
a: Language as a common Denominator	26
b: Willingness to believe	28
4 The Fusing of pagan and Christian Epistemai	32
Augustine's Relation to and Use of the Gold of Egypt	32
a: Useful and harmful Knowledge	32
b: Confirmation of Truth by pagan Maxims	34
Familiarity with <i>Fatum</i> Polytheism and Oracles	36
a: <i>Fatum</i>	36

b: Polytheism	38
c: Oracles	40
PART II: AUGUSTINE’S TELEOLOGICAL SENTIMENTS AND SUBTEXTUAL EXHORTATIONS	42
5 Using one’s Power in a teleologically correct Manner	43
<i>Uti or Frui</i>	43
<i>Potestas and Consūlere</i>	47
a: Power	47
b: Consulting	50
c: The true Motive and Authority of Power	52
6 One should enjoin Oneself to the Peace ( <i>pax</i> ) of the City of God by eschewing Vanity ( <i>vanitas</i> ) and confronting Truth ( <i>veritas</i> )	55
Varieties of Peace	55
a: Peace as an axiomatic Necessity	55
b: The false Peace of the City of Men and the true Peace of the City of God	57
Vanity and Truth	59
a: Towards Nothing	59
b: Right and wrong Orientation	63
c: The Exigency of Truth	66
7 Conclusion: the Potentialities of Appeal	69
a: Felicity, which the Reader seeks	69
b: Predestination as Appeal rather than pessimistic Determinism	72
c: The Assimilation of Pagan Episteme into Augustine’s Teleology	78
Acknowledgements	81
Bibliography	82

# 1

## Introduction

---

### (a) Augustine the Man

The protagonist, around whose opinions and philosophical outlook the attention of this thesis is centred, is today known as Saint Augustine of Hippo. A rough introductory synopsis of his life and a brief mention of that life's impact in his times are necessary to understand the man behind the Latin texts to be treated and put in context in that same dissertation.

Aurelius Augustinus was born 13<sup>th</sup> of November 354 C.E. into a nominally Christian household in the *municipium* of Thagaste. This town was located in Numidia Cirtensis, one of the provinces constituting the Diocese of Africa in the Praetorian Prefecture of Italy in the Late Roman Empire. After a standard elitist education in the liberal arts in which he proved to be a virtuoso, Augustine embarked on a fine career being first a grammar teacher (*grammaticus*) in his hometown in the years 373.C.E. and 374 C.E (Brown, 2000, p. 3), and subsequently he attained the much more esteemed position of a teacher in rhetoric in Carthage (Brown, 2000, p. 54), where he also became an adherent to the sect of Manichaeism<sup>1</sup>.

As the story has it in his autobiography *Confessiones*, Augustine was disappointed with the standard of discipline among the students at his school, and consequently moved to Rome in 383 C.E.<sup>2</sup> and there established his own school of rhetoric. Demurring in his heart against Manichaeism which had proved to be an intellectual disappointment, Augustine became sympathetic to Scepticism of the New Academy (Eriksen, 2011, p. 69). Eventually

---

<sup>1</sup> Manichaeism was a gnostic dualistic religious sect, popular in Augustine's Africa at the time. Sometimes labelled as a Christian heresy, sometimes considered an altogether separate religion, it nevertheless incorporated Jesus Christ into its purview as a supreme being of light or divine force.

Let us bless our Lord Jesus who sent to us the Spirit of Truth. He came; he separated us from the error of the world. He brought us a mirror. We looked; [we] saw this universe in it. ( *Psalm 223: 2*)

This is a Manichean Bema psalm in Richard Valantasis' *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, translated by Jason David BeDuhn.

<sup>2</sup> Jason BeDuhn provides a much more practical reason to Augustine's move to Rome. It is a plausible suggestion. He points out that the 21<sup>st</sup> of May in the year 383. C.B Gratian issued an edict which condemned Augustine as a Manichean and hence his 'escape' to Rome. (BeDuhn, 2010, p. 141).

the vicissitudes of life, whether one label them as faith, providence or serendipity, landed him with a much coveted professorship of rhetoric at the imperial court in Milan, a city where Neo-Platonism, a revived and mystical form of Platonism, flourished.

This is not the place to delve deeply or even superficially into the doctrines and philosophical schools with which Augustine got acquainted before he became a Catholic Christian both formally and by a change of volition; but suffice it to remark that Neo-Platonism had a great deal more in common in cosmology and teleology, ontology and ethics with Christianity than what Manichaeism or Scepticism had. Many Neo-Platonists believed in a Supreme Being more compatible to the omnipotent God of Christianity than that of the vulnerable Manichaean Deity (vide Osmun, 2010, p. 67-68). As it were, Neo-Platonism became a transitional step towards Augustine's final religiosity.

Inspired by this newfound wisdom of Neo-Platonism Augustine went to Cassiciacum, 30 km northeast of Milan, to live a contemplative life with likeminded friends and acquaintances, including his son Adeodatus. While immersing himself in Neo-Platonic books, he became a catechumen in the Catholic Church<sup>3</sup>. His baptism took place in Milan in 386 C.E. and, having reoriented his will and lifestyle and obtained a genuine belief in the Catholic faith, he went homeward with the intention of continuing the lifestyle implemented at Cassiciacum. Augustine arrived back at Carthage late in 388 C.E. and sold his patrimony to fulfil this intention.

However, in 391 C.E. Augustine reluctantly became ordained as a priest (Brown, 2000, p. 64) functioning under the catholic Bishop of Hippo Regius, a coastal city in the province of Africa not too far from Thagaste. He was invested with the bishopric of this city in 396 C.E. (though he was appointed coadjutor bishop already the year before) and kept it until his death in 430 C.E. 28<sup>th</sup> of August (Brown, 2000, p. 380).

---

<sup>3</sup> One ought also take into account the mundanely pragmatic reasons as to why he was prepared to take on the Catholic faith, but the conversion under the fig tree he famously relates in *Confessiones*, might possibly have taken place as well; or something like that, as long as it implied a resolve to change a way of life. During his evolution of mental orientation and like his friend Nebridius, who did not easily settle for any final answers (Augustine *Ep.* 98.8), he never became permanently convinced to have found a solution that would satiate his never waning zeal for wisdom which began with the reading of Cicero's exhortatory *Hortensius*. (Augustine, *Confessiones* 3.3)

He was therefore never converted to them in the sense he finally became converted to Christianity; the underlying tone of *Confessiones*, for example, implies not a conversion from Neo Platonism to Christianity, but from his own vices which had led him to seek a final teleological answer elsewhere than under the authority of the Catholic Church.

## (b) Augustine's literary legacy

Augustine's life as bishop ran parallel to several settlements on heresies and converged with decisive historical moments for the society in which he lived and for those which came after him. Ecclesial posterity has benefited much from his polemics in theological controversies. Whether Augustine's side has been taken outright, amended or rejected, important questions have been raised openly and sometimes imparted into the catechisms of the Catholic Church in which he was baptized. His most momentous controversies were raised against Manichaeism, Donatism and Pelagianism, the first of which presented an occasion for discussing and evangelising Christian morality, cosmology and ontology. The second controversy raised debate over the role of the Church and the functioning of the sacraments; and the third prompted austere predestinarian<sup>4</sup> and traducian<sup>5</sup> ideas of which the latter have partly become canon. He has furthermore written countless other works on various subjects, the greatest of which has captured my attention and is the Latin text responsible for and handled by this thesis.

Any topic extracted from Augustinian texts is vast one. An immense legacy of literature, which includes 270 letters, 150 exegeses of biblical psalms, 40 other lesser works and the major works of *De Civitate Dei*, of *De Doctrina Christiana* and of *De Trinitate*, makes Augustine's arsenal of Latin texts the largest one to date. Additionally there remain copies of between 400 and 500 of his sermons<sup>6</sup>. All these texts are imbued with moral teachings, some of course more than others, and some by association and some directly, and together they are written in a timespan of over 40 years. There are consequently many "Augustines" upon whose sentiments and perspective one can expound. His philosophical outlook did not remain constant even after his ordination, exactly because of the famous

---

<sup>4</sup> The Catholic Church denies predestinarianism: The essence of this heretical predestinarianism may be expressed in these two fundamental propositions which bear to each other the relation of cause and effect: (a) the absolute will of God as the sole cause of the salvation or damnation of the individual, without regard to his merits or demerits; (b) as to the elect, it denies the freedom of the will under the influence of efficacious grace while it puts the reprobate under the necessity of committing sin in consequence of the absence of grace (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12376b.htm>).

<sup>5</sup> The Catholic Church is as canon one form of traducianism in lieu of creationism and generationism: 'Traducianism [is] in general the doctrine that, in the process of generation, the human spiritual soul is transmitted to the offspring by the parents. However 'theologically, corporeal traducianism is heretical because it goes directly against the spirituality of the soul' (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15014a.htm>).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.augnet.org/?ipageid=231>

controversies mentioned above - and because of the effect deeper study and prolific writing can have on the outlook pertaining thereto. This aspect of Augustinian studies is important to bear in mind when using ancillary sources in order to explain Augustine's thought in general on specific topics. Discrepancies, as they appear in the complete oeuvre of Augustine, can be subversive to the totality of a paradigm whenever too many crucial viewpoints have been substituted.

(c) *De Civitate Dei*

Augustine wrote *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*, his magnum opus, in a time span of 14 odd years, from 412 C.E. to 426 C.E. It is a large synergetic work, even by modern standards. In substance it is an exhaustive defence of and elaboration on Christian philosophy, undertaken at the behest of a secretary of state and a close friend, who a few years later became a martyr and saint, Marcellinus of Carthage, to answer the charge that the Christians were responsible for the sack of Rome, perpetrated in 410 C.E. by the Goth Alaric. Ever dwindling, the traditional pagan elite at the time blamed Christianity for not having paid proper homage to these protective gods, and so accused their religious negligence and defiance as the real culprit of Rome's misfortunes. Augustine fought back with acute logic, discrediting the vainly assumed beneficial cosmology of the gods. His arguments were acid, asserting that none of the Romano-Greek gods was powerful enough to protect Rome.

When can Segetia [ever] provide for the Empire, she who is not granted the responsibility for [both] corn and trees at the same time?<sup>7</sup>

*Quando ergo Segetia urare imperium, cui curam gerere simul et segetibus et arboribus non licebat? (civ. Dei, IV: 8)*

Augustine drew examples from history to explain that Alaric's was not the first invasion of Rome; and in this case the people was actually lucky enough to be invaded by a Christian who allowed churches to work as sanctuaries, filled up as they were with Christians and pagans alike (*amplissimae basilicae implendae populo cui parceretur*) (*civ. Dei, I: 7*). Augustine then began in book five to rebut pagan philosophy as almost equally futile, and in the eleventh book he started to reveal the beginning (XI-XIV) the progress (XV-XVIII) and end (XIX-XXII) of the of the City of God and the City of Men (*retr. II: 43*).

---

<sup>7</sup> I have chosen not to translate *ergo* which heralds the rhetorical question and the potentiality of an oxymoronic answer, and I have instead inserted two auxiliary words in square brackets to convey the point of Augustine.



The delineation of the two comparative societies was possibly not intended for the original book; the prudent author alleged the main reason for continuing was

lest someone should reproach me for only having argued against the [opinions and paradigm]<sup>8</sup> of others and not having asserted my own.

ne quisquam nos aliena tantum redarguisse, non autem nostra asseruisse reprehenderet.  
(*ibidem*)

And given this resultant exposition on the two destinies of two kinds of wills (*civ. Dei*, XIV: 28) the work became thoroughly teleological and eschatological<sup>9</sup>. Teleology, which is never treated by him as a separately introduced subject, must be distilled from his associative thinking and is the lens through which many of his conceptualizations come into view. Augustine's whole literal corpus is a constancy of intertextuality exactly because of the prevailing teleological undertone.

This tendency occurred to me in the incunabula of my acquaintance with Augustinian literature. At my second reading of *De Civitate Dei*, I soon became more attentive as to how pragmatically persuasive the rhetoric was in tone and how encyclopaedic it behaved, encapsulating much of the ancient world and literature which I had studied for some years; and this led me to be interested in a reader as a conceit and to be aware of his predisposition and plausible reaction to the sentiments presented in the 22 books.

(d) The reader of *De Civitate Dei*

One can with good reason imagine our reader to be a pagan aristocrat. That the pagans are the prime addressees, rather than the Manicheans or Neo-Platonists is suggested in the main title of the whole oeuvre, *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*; and that the ideal reader of *De Civitate Dei* is supposed to be an aristocrat can be documented with the unambiguous address to the

---

<sup>8</sup> I assume *opinions and paradigm* under the inclusive Latin adjective *aliena*.

<sup>9</sup> What could be labelled as Augustine's teleology is less thematically restricted than how one would classify as his eschatology which only occupies itself with the consideration of the end, *ἔσχατος*, of times without, it seems, emphasizing the whys and wherefores. So the former's delineable turf of is more encompassing, as it were, and more theoretical, when dealing in general with final causes and the ontological process and order which pertain thereto. Its moral and phenomenological descriptions are diachronic, although an explanation can make use of concrete examples. Eschatology reveals what actually will happen, regardless of theory. E.g: The very last chapter of *De Civitate Dei* is an eschatological exposition but possesses information vital for the teleological encouragement evoking the concomitant motivation to consider oneself in that eschatological outline.

traditional nobility, whereby Augustine exhorts them all, appealing to their ingenuity, to desire the decent way of teaching Christian theology in lieu of their paganistic traditions.

Laudable talent of the Romans, o progeny of Regulus, of Scaevola, of Scipio and Fabricius!

*Indoles Romana laudabilis, o progenies Regulorum Scaeuolarum, Scipionum Fabriciorum (civ. Dei, II: 28)*

Moreover the autonomous reader of *De Civitate Dei* would have had to be erudite and master the Latin language in comparison to those listeners of Augustine's sermons preached in the cathedral at Hippo. There was a popular trend contemporaneous with Saint Augustine, namely of illiteracy who bore no impediment to the obtainment of understanding divine will and of happiness. The erudite Augustine and his friend Alypius respected illiterate piety as can be read from the conversion in a garden of Milan in and his statement some weeks before: 'The uneducated are rising up and they capture heaven' (*Surgunt indocti et caelum rapiunt*) (*conf. VIII: 8.19*). Augustine clearly did not become one of those illiterate holy men, however fascination he might have had with them; and luckily so for the simple fact that the enormous production of *De Civitate Dei*, still available today, would not be possible but for his education. The literacy among the upper echelons of society also gave the opportunity for readers to be influenced by the understanding and consent of what he wrote, so that a further impact in the future Europe could ensue.

#### (e) The Scope and Procedure of this Master's Thesis

I have allocated two themes in the thesis which will be treated in each of two parts, the first of which will consider the conditions for the intake of the teleological messages vis-à-vis the pagan aristocratic reader. Chapter two will introduce the meaning and implications of Augustine's teleology of which an aspect will be further discussed in the following chapter on how this could affect the confrontation with the substance of the text itself on the part of the reader. Chapter three will seek to understand Augustine's relation to the reader's own world. I would thereby like to evince that the ancestors of the reader, in spite of not being the ultimate champions in the providential design of Augustine's God, is subtextually given due recognition for the pagan aristocrat to savour and digest. In the same chapter the common

denominators of language and education and the pagan's own effort of belief will be presented as extratextual influences on reader's intake of the teleological sentiments in *De Civitate Dei*.

Finally the last chapter of part one of the thesis will take a look at Augustine's confrontation and approximation to the reader's paradigm as a sort of deliberately conspicuous reversion of what I would postulate is ultimately the goal of *De Civitate Dei*, namely to make the aristocratic or any other educated pagan reader approach and assent to the sentiments of the work in order to join the citizenship of the eponymous real City which *De Civitate Dei* promulgates as the ultimate bliss and most harmonious peace (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 13).

I hope to show that Augustine does not force the pagan aristocrat to start all over but rather reinvent the reader's assumptions about divine reality adapting it to Judeo.-Christian cosmology. Chapter four will seek to understand Augustine's relation pagan concepts and the literature familiar to the pagan aristocratic reader. Therein, I examine how Augustine uses seemingly discordant epistemai, namely from pagan and Christian worlds, and unites them onto the canvas of his teleology. All in all, what the first part endeavours to illustrate is how the devotion of Augustine can have an effective appeal to the cultured and intellectual persona of a wavering pagan in the 5<sup>th</sup> century's Late Antiquity on these conditions.

The second part of the dissertation will be presenting and discussing the sentiments that constitute two messages: a preparative message and a final absolute communication which are both distillable from the text. Part two will start an exposition on the notion of using and enjoying as forms of experiencing and orienting one's actions. Then I want to explicate the concomitances of power, whereby some specific allusive exhortations to contextualize one's life with a higher divine purpose are put forth, so that consequently the possession of power can both be an asset and a burden as it implies teleological responsibility. If this is understood by the aristocratic reader and a false sense of powerfulness is effaced, then he might more easily be able to fulfil the rubrical exhortation which is under exposition in the next chapter.

That chapter will be introduced with the pinpointing of what specific type of peace Augustine is referring to as the final salvation for the reader and highlight Augustine's caveat against vanity, id est behaviour and orientation which is a teleological cul-de-sac and which will threaten the attainment of peace and a future citizenship of City of God; and finally the notion of truth will be explicated as the antidote to vanity and the aiding principle to happiness.

The conclusion will attempt to answer satisfactorily on how the teleological and

existential sentiments in chapter five and six constitute valid ethical information with salvific consequences for the reader, as is evident from the subtext of *De Civitate Dei* itself. Lastly it sums up how the phraseology of the teleological sentiments, in regard to the extra- and intertextual conditions which have been exposed in part one, establish a real potentiality of appeal for the pagan aristocrat.

(f) Some literary Decisions

I want to show in the thesis that philology is an adroit way of distilling a sentiment from subtextual meanings. All translations of the original Latin texts will be my own renditions. This is not because there is anything grammatically or rhetorically unsatisfactory with the already translated editions of Augustine's works. Commutation of the syntax or perchance the replacement of a word with a synonym is committed for one of three purposes: of either simplification, of exactness or most importantly in order to contrive a slightly different response to the words used in English which might be relevant to the discussion at hand, without in any way being unfaithful to the authors' intended meaning. It has been impossible (and it would indeed be pointless) not to be affected by the translated version, read for the intake of substance, but I have then translated it anew and verbatim as a prelude to the final rendition, so that other preferable translative choices would become apparent.

In reference to a nonspecific person, who must be denominated by a gender by the third person singular pronoun, I have followed the trend of the day to use the same gender as that to which I myself, the writer, belong, namely the masculine.

The tenses sustained in the thesis are, apart from the introduction and some conscious exceptions, in either the present or present perfect to make Augustine more alive and reilluminate the rapport between him and the pagan aristocratic reader.

## **Part I:**

Extra- and intertextual conditions for the teleological  
Communication of *De Civitate Dei* to the pagan  
aristocratic Reader

---

## The Importance and Implications of *Telos*

---

### THREE PREFATORY ELUCIDATIONS

For prefatory elucidation, three mandatory questions should be asked before further investigation:

- (a) What in general is teleology and what does it have to do with the pagan aristocratic reader of *De Civitate Dei*?

Teleology is the field of study of final causes, whether it is behind the ken of religious existentialism, or whether it is of simple syllogistic philosophical reasoning. Final causes diverge from the other Aristotelian causes of efficiency, materiality and form, whose functions Andrew Woodfield has illustrated with this straightforward example.

In answer to the question ‘Why did this building come to be as it is?’ We can say ‘Because of the bricks and mortar’ (material cause); ‘Because it is a house’ (formal cause); ‘Because the builder made it’ (efficient cause); or ‘Because it is for living in’ (final cause). (Woodfield, 1976, p. 4)

Alongside the same rationale, taking the “building” to denote the human being, the existentialist and incumbent reader of *De Civitate Dei* may have considered himself as being and asked the simple question ‘Why are we like we are?’ to which a tentative answer, prosopetic of Augustine, could be: Because we are “body and soul” (material cause) (*b. vita*, II: 7); because we are humans (formal cause); because we were made thus by God (efficient cause). As for the final cause a much longer answer is needed to the question asked above, for it is beyond my intellect or erudition of Augustinian studies to condense the answer into one sentence. The aristocrat who has begun *De Civitate Dei* is not going to receive a summary response either, but he is still likely to seek out an explanation of cosmos which incorporates the final cause of his own creation; the likelihood is an agreement with Brian Stock’s notification that ‘the moral of the story [of Augustine’s conversion] is that a “true religion” cannot be located by an individual unless he first believes in its goals, which supported by

influence of tradition, he will later understand' (Stock, 1998, p. 176).

Therefore Augustine's own philosophical journey and final approbation of Christianity yields a fine and salient example on how the search for a consistent teleology is preeminent in deciding a worldview. The incunabula of every newcomer's or still prospective convert's embrace of Augustine's ethical perspective, which is sustained by the wholeness of his religion, is most efficaciously proceeding by the grasp of this religion's teleology. A conversion (*conversio*) is a turning, a *versio*, aligning the convert with (*con-*) a new goal, in this case God. Teleology is consequently what defines the convert's new religious orientation and what can sustain it by comprehension.

(b) *Telos* as end or fulfilment?

What, then, is Augustine's teleology as it is evinced in *De Ciuitate Dei*? First I must confess this: I have yet to come across a sentence in which Augustine mentions the Greek term *τέλος*. Hence Augustine's teleological messages must be distilled from context, from his associative thinking, and then the vision of *telos* can be constructed and adduced from individual sentiments which form a consistency of that particular philosophical discourse and outlook. Therefore I would like to consider the implications of the literal absence of *telos* and what ontic destination the reader can anticipate from the substitutes of the Greek term.

*Telos* generally translates into English as *fulfilment* or *completion* and is the equivalent of the Latin *effectus*. Other translations of *telos* are *issue*, *result*, and *end*. The verb *τέλλω* means to *make to arise*, to *accomplish* and in a passive sense: to *come forth*, to *arise*<sup>10</sup>.

In a more august existential purview for any entity, existence leads up to an intentional *telos* as a consummation, the fulfilling purpose of its being; and here *effectus* can seem too commonplace and mundane. Where the endpoint is emphasized rather than any random result *finis* is more apposite, and the English word *finished* is precisely derived from *finire* (through old French) and its derivatives *finis* and *finale*, frequently appear throughout *De Civitate Dei*. A cause is describing something which already is, albeit abstractly. *Telos* is, when distilled as a solid concept, something that will be in the future. A human who has reached its final *telos* has no anticipated *telos* but simply exists as its supposed outcome. Its former ontic imperfection has passed and is *finished*.

---

<sup>10</sup> It can also be applied as a cessation in the expressions to *βίον*, *the end of life*, and be associated with gloomy prospects as in *τέλος θανάτου* the *point* or *term of death* (lat. *exitus mortis*) (Liddell; Scott, 1978, p.799).

However, since language is not a nomenclature (Dardano; Trifone, 2008, p. 7), it is erroneous, precarious at best, to equipose the versatile significances of *telos* with *finis* which has a more restricted repertoire of meanings. To explain, *telos* as ‘end’, as in the ‘endpoint’ which is connoted by the Latin *finis*, can be downright misleading, since there is for Augustine little resemblance of finality and termination when it comes to a soul’s existence once *telos* has been reached. And to make things more complex, *finis* not only carries connotations which diverge noticeably from the Greek word *telos* but also purport different insinuations by the denotation of *end* alone, depending on the objective or subjective to which it relates in the subtext. At some point in *De Civitate Dei* even Augustine himself feels the need to clarify the vitally different consequences and circumstances which can be associated by an endpoint – a need ushered by the much less frequent use of *effectus* which by its explicit meaning of *result*, could have erased some semantic misunderstandings at crucial points in the text. Exempli gratia, Augustine attaches to *finis* of *bonum* (good) and *malum* (evil) divergent repercussions, though the essential notion of *completion* is the same.

Ergo the *end of good* signifies here, not that it is finished, so that it no longer exists, but that it is completed; and the *end of evil* is not where it ceases to be, but where its harm ultimately leads to. Those [ends] are in that respect the highest good and the highest evil.<sup>11</sup>

*Finem boni ergo nunc dicimus, non quo consumatur, ut non sit, sed quo perficiatur, ut plenum sit; et finem mali, non quo esse desinat, sed quo usque nocendo perducat. Fines itaque isti sunt summum bonum et summum malum. (civ. Dei, XIX: 1)*

Moreover, since one can see in the paragraph that *summum boni* and *summum mali* have the meanings of *result*, one can subsequently ask whether Augustine means *telos* as the ideal end, whereto the nature of a human soul is in all propriety intended, or as the actual result, however lamentable.

In *De Civitate Dei* it is adumbrated that *telos* does not so much represent an absolute end, but a discontinuation of ontic growth. As hell is the nadir of existence<sup>12</sup>, the notion of

---

<sup>11</sup> The denial that a language is a nomenclature induces the translator’s selection to the substituting word, proffering to the reader an intact meaning throughout the translative process. *Consumere* and *perficere* both means *to finish*, but Casell’s Latin dictionary adds *to use up, consume* to the translation of *consumere* and *to accomplish, achieve* to the translation of *perficere* (Simpson, 1977, p. 436). Also, the derivative nouns *consumtio* and *perfectio*, respectively meaning a *consuming* or *destroying* and a *completion* or *perfection*, make the difference clearer.

<sup>12</sup> Properly speaking evil does have a *telos*, in the sense of a result. The soul does not cease to exist because otherwise it could not be punished, but ‘it can rightly be called dead for it does not live from God [anymore]’ (*recte mors animae dicitur, quia non uiuit ex Deo*) (*civ. Dei, XIII: 2*).



heaven epitomizes the zenith of existence. There in heaven each and every one becomes who they were supposed to be, the fullness of their being. Hell on the other hand is simply a place, or rather a perpetual state of mind which forbids teleological fulfilment. Although Augustine's teleology resonates with a stronger tone of finality and conclusiveness, with its linear notion of history and time (*civ. Dei*, XII: 14) compared to the metempsychosis of Platonism and the recycling of the world of Heraclitus<sup>13</sup>, this finality is not tantamount to a total discontinuation of versatility and activity. There will be both movements and motionless states in heaven (*motūs et statūs*) and this indicates temporality. Still, there will be a final end of longing (*finis desideriorum*) and 'this gift of experience and [loving] action will indeed be common to all as eternal life will be shared'<sup>14</sup>. Hence the reader is not met with a conclusive escape from everything temporal, but this laudable future condition is hardly disappointing. Whether one calls it *finis* or *telos*, for the good the final destination will entail happiness.

(c) A *telos* in activity?

To distill cohesive teleological messages in *De Civitate Dei* as a mean, as a set of instructive principles by which one can achieve and adhere to that ontological self-actualization which is the peace of the City of God, one must ask what *telos* is in essence for Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo who is the author of the work. When one declares *telos* with Augustine's convictions, one is talking of none other than the Christian Trinitarian God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in a Trinity. I think it pertinent to render a thorough delineation of the divine hypostasis in which Augustine believed; and, since this description is solely for illumination in the thesis, I have translated a more catechetical articulation of Augustine's from *De Trinitate*, which corresponds to what he labels as the universal or catholic belief (*catholica fides*).

The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit penetrate one divine unity of one substance in inseparable equality. They are not three gods but One God, albeit the Father has begotten the Son, and for that reason the Son is not who the Father is; and the Son is begotten by the Father and thus the Father is not who the Son is; and the Holy Spirit is

---

<sup>13</sup> Marcus Dods writes in a note in his translated *The City of God* that 'Heraclitus supposed that "God amused himself" by renewing the worlds' (Dods, trans. 2010, p. 352).

<sup>14</sup> Qui motus illic talium corporum sint futuri, temere definire non audeo, quod excogitare non ualeo; tamen et motus et status, sicut ipsa species, decens... erit finis erit desideriorum nostrorum Hoc munus, hic affectus, hic actus profecto erit omnibus, sicut ipsa uita aeterna, communis. (*civ. Dei*, XXII: 30)

neither the Son nor the Father but only the Spirit of the Father and the Son, being Himself co-equal with the Father and the Son and belong to the Unity of the trinity.. This is my faith, as it is the Catholic faith.

*Pater et filius et spiritus sanctus unius substantiae inseparabili aequalitate diuinam insinuent unitatem non sint tres dii sed unus Deus quamvis Pater Filium genuerit, et ideo Filius non sit qui Pater est; Filiusque a Patre sit genitus, et ideo Pater non sit qui Filius est; Spiritusque Sanctus nec Pater sit nec Filius, sed tantum Patris et Filii Spiritus, Patri et Filio etiam ipse coequalis et ad Trinitatis pertinens unitatem... Haec et mea fides est, quando haec est catholica fides. (Trin. I: 4.7)*

Augustine claims Christians to be the only ones who understand God in this hypostasis. As for other characteristics of God, Augustine quotes Cicero conveying the limitlessness and independence of an ultimate consciousness.

Cicero ... certainly wanted to define God within his capacity when stating: “ There is a certain mind, unbound and free, secret from all mortal concretization, which knows and moves everything and is itself provided with an eternal motion.”<sup>15</sup>

*Deum certe uolens, sicut poterat, definire Cicero...: “Mens quaedam est, inquit, soluta et libera, secreta ab omni concretionem mortali, omnia sentiens et mouens ipsaque praedita motu sempiterno.” (civ. Dei, XXII: 20)*

Plato is admitted to have imputed a tripartite causation to God whose properties bears some resemblance to the peculiarities of the three individual persons in the Trinity.

For him, [Plato] God is showed to be the author of all natures, bestower of intelligence and the planter of the love by which one lives in happiness.

*Cui neque naturarum omnium auctor nisi Deus uisus est neque intelligentiae dator neque amoris, quo bene beateque uiuitur, inspirator. (civ. Dei, XI: 25)*

This Platonic theodicy corresponds to the Christian, insofar God is an efficient cause; but it does not tell anything about God as *telos* (final cause)<sup>16</sup>. God which the pagan aristocrat will encounter in *De Civitate Dei* is on the other hand an involved God, helping both the author

---

<sup>15</sup> The theodicy is taken from Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* I: 27.66.

<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Neo-Platonism disclaims the factor of love being the supreme ontic component of the realization of one's *telos*. Bruno Switalski accords the Neo-Platonists the consideration of eudaemonistic ecstasy ‘not an act of love but exclusively an act of the intellect, which is moreover unconscious of itself’ (Switalski, 1946, p. 108). In Neo-Platonism the Supreme Being's own disposition is less active than the Christian God who as *telos* is playing a part in humanity's fulfilment and that of secularity. Still, the very comparison shows some sign of affinity with Plato and a reluctance to jettison his former paradigm as incomparable.

and reader of the vast literal work, both being part of His providential design.

### 3

## Augustine's Affinity with the City of Men and with its pagan aristocratic Inhabitant

---

### AFFINITY WITH THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

#### (a) The Empire and Its People

The facticity of the world is not ignored by Augustine; he is far from those coenobitic monks who relinquish every substantial involvement in mundane affairs, and this might instigate and sustain credibility in the judgment of an aristocrat of the Late Roman Empire who has several duties inextricably linked to a set structure of social institutions (Salzmann, 2009, p. 49-53). Augustine, as he is also much involved with his near and far community, uses the institutions of the imperial state and recommends every Christian to do likewise, (plausibly to the aristocratic reader's relief).

The entirety of human institutions, which are a convenience to the necessary practices of life, must not be spurned by Christians; no indeed, the institutions should be paid sufficient attention to and be retained in memory.<sup>17</sup>

*Haec tota pars humanorum institutorum, quae ad usum vitae necessarium proficiunt, nequaquam est fugienda Christiano, immo etiam quantum satis est intuenda memoriaque retinenda. (doc. Chr. II: 25.40)*

The pagan aristocratic reader and Augustine are part of the same Empire, whose history they both share in memory in addition to the shared academic and literal heritage which I will discuss below. Stephen J. Duffy elaborates on Augustine's perception on *memoria* under the topic of Augustinian anthropology.

The human person is a diachronic being. Not only does a human have a past, but to a large extent one is one's own past as well as one's present and future<sup>18</sup>, hence

---

<sup>17</sup> I think *total part* is too verbatim a translation for *tota pars*, and the omitted translation of *haec* is appropriate in an excerpt where anaphoric pronouns tend to be obsolete.

Augustine's identification with *memoria* with selfhood'. (Duffy, "Anthropology", *Augustine through the Ages*, 2009, p. 25)

Memory, according to Augustine, is what binds culture and society together; and this allegation makes a lot of sense. If there is not any memory in a community of itself it could not persist in being so, since this memory is the basic common mind-set which allows and inspires people to work together for a common goal. Memory is what binds an individual to the society in which it lives; it conditions his ontological standpoint in a relative manner; and accordingly the *City of God* is emphasized as the *nation* of God.

A difference between state and nation should be elucidated: I can easily move to another state and feel the state apparatus penetrating my daily life; I can formally become a citizen, and thus be legally part of that state, without becoming so in spirit if my memory is incongruent in certain quintessential aspects with that of rest of the population. Memory (*memoria*) is a faculty of the mind, whose proper functioning of a majority of individuals is a prerequisite for a nation to last for some space of time as an organization of consensus. In this line of thought any harmonious body of individuals, which remains so, can be a nation.

A community is not made happy by one thing and an individual made happy by another, because a community is nothing else than a harmony of many individuals.

*Neque enim aliunde beata ciuitas, aliunde homo, cum aliud ciuitas non sit quam concors hominum multitudo. (civ. Dei, I: 15)*

So in Augustine's purview being part of a nation is an experience of harmony which lays the foundation for future good experiences, id est prospective memories.

An aim for perfection is theoretically attainable when everyone has the same divinely inspired goals (*telos*) of politics in view and the corresponding means to achieve them. A discrepancy, however, is evident in that laws, being the normal means to monitor a society towards an agreed state of affairs, are simultaneously in their necessitation a symptom of an extant disagreement on what this state of affairs should be. Therefore Augustine exhorts to obedience, because realistically the topicality of the mortal world impinges upon the heavenly society. The *City of God* on its earthly sojourn is depended on facets of the mundane society which bear resemblance to something divinely orientated, namely its laws for perseverance of order.

---

<sup>18</sup> What I think, Duffy indicates by 'being one's future' is the anticipation thereof which is 'integrated into one's present experience' (vide *ibidem*).

The Heavenly City, or rather the part thereof which in this mortal state travels as a foreigner and lives by faith, has to make use of the peace [of the Empire]<sup>19</sup>, until it transcends to the immortal state for which such a peace is necessary. Therefore, the Heavenly City, while it lives like a captive along with the Earthly City, does not hesitate to obey the laws thereof; for that which makes the mortal life sustainable, is administered by these laws in order that concordance be maintained in those things which appertain to both cities; because [at this point] mortality is shared, even though the Heavenly City has been given a promise of redemption with the gift of the Holy Spirit as a warranty.

*Ciuitas autem caelestis uel potius pars eius, quae in hac mortalitate peregrinatur et uiuit ex fide, etiam ista pace necesse est utatur, donec ipsa, cui talis pax necessaria est, mortalitas transeat; ac per hoc, dum apud terrenam ciuitatem uelut captiuam uitam suae peregrinationis agit, iam promissione redemptionis et dono spiritali tamquam pignore accepto legibus terrenae ciuitatis, quibus haec administrantur, quae sustentandae mortali uitae adcommodata sunt, obtemperare non dubitat, ut, quoniam communis est ipsa mortalitas, seruetur in rebus ad eam pertinentibus inter ciuitatem utramque concordia. (civ. Dei, XIX: 17)*

The obedience of the ‘*legibus terrenae civitatis*’ is therefore necessitated inasmuch as these laws are the divine laws’ feeble substitutes. The snag is that this is simply not always the case. Augustine has repeatedly and famously been quoted, that ‘an unjust law is no law at all’, which is originally articulated as: ‘It does not seem to me to be a law, that which has not been just’ (*mihi lex esse non videtur, quae iusta non fuerit*) (*lib. arb*, I: 5). And this ipse dixit adumbrates an equally strong necessity, namely that the earthly laws by definition must bear their likeness from the divine ones subsumed under ‘the most just ordinance of the Creator’ (*iustissima ordinatio creatoris*) (*civ. Dei*, I: 20), id est *divine* law.

(b) The Edifice of Empire in teleological and providential Context

The relative easiness of communication in the Roman Empire has given opportunity for Christianity to spread, and under the same headline Augustine infers that the Church itself is made possible by the Empire which consists of a common memory which steers a collective attitude towards the obtainment of heaven which is phrased by Augustine as the City of God, a city which will not only make the universal Church possible but see to its fulfilment.

Edward Morgan observes that ‘Augustine's reflections in the *De Civitate*

---

<sup>19</sup> This peace is commonly known as *pax romana*.

*Dei* demonstrate how the *ecclesia* is able to bring together in an ordered unity people who were previously divided from one another by their differing languages.’ What Morgan means by *ecclesia* is the congregations of the Christian community, but there has been another congregation, that of the government of the Roman Empire, which also greatly has facilitated this ‘ordered unity’. Augustine, and explicitly so, promotes the exertion made by the secular state to remedy the issue of incommunicability between nations, which would have stood as an unfortunate impediment to evangelization.

But there have been efforts by the imperial state that not only its yoke but that also its own language is to be imposed on the subjugated people for the sake of<sup>20</sup> the peace of the community.<sup>21</sup>

*At enim opera data est, ut imperiosa civitas non solum iugum, verum etiam linguam suam domitis gentibus per pacem societatis imponeret. (civ. Dei, XIX: 7)*

Admittedly Augustine laments the methods practiced to achieve this. In short, miseries has provided some joy, but still more miseries are in the advent (*non est tamen eorumdem malorum finita miseria*) (*ibidem*). A common language has been achieved but in derogation of natural freedom for many, and of real justice.

Still, Augustine’s conception on divine providence seems to contextualize these regrettable evils as a necessary corollary of the permitted sinfulness of mankind. Consequently, since an empire in praxis has been realized by the ambitions of certain individuals, and furthermore, since God is alleged by Augustine to be pleased with the realization of an Empire in the west (...*cum diu fuissent regna Orientis inlustria, uoluit Deus et Occidentale fieri*) (*civ. Dei, V: 13*), it seems that ambition is a component in God’s providence. Augustine alleges:

God made concessions of great power to such people who, for the sake of integrity, praise and glory, saw to the interest of their fatherland, in order to overcome the grievous ills of many nations. They did not hesitate to prioritize their county’s safety

---

<sup>20</sup> In classical Latin one would expect pro and then an ablative.

<sup>21</sup> Augustine hence predicates what is going to become a real asset in the future. Verily Latin became a favourable lingua franca in medieval Europe, and made possible a unifying Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church.

for their own, suppressing lust for money and many other vices for the sake of this *one* vice, id est vainglory.<sup>22</sup>

*...idque talibus potissimum concessit hominibus ad domanda grauia mala multarum gentium, qui causa honoris laudis et gloriae consuleuerunt patriae, in qua ipsam gloriam requirebant, salutemque eius saluti suae praeponere non dubitauerunt, pro isto uno uitio, id est amore laudis, pecuniae cupiditatem et multa alia uitia comprimentes. (ibidem)*

The ethicist goes on:

They despised their own affairs for the common cause, id est the state and the state treasury. They resisted avarice, aided their country with counsel for freedom, neither addicted to that which according to their laws was considered a crime, nor addicted to lust.

*Sic et isti priuatas res suas pro re communi, hoc est re publica, et pro eius aerario contempserunt, auaritiae restiterunt, consuluerunt patriae consilio libero, neque delicto secundum suas leges neque libidini obnoxii. (civ. Dei, V: 15)*

This might resonate well with a pagan aristocratic reader, who is a possible descendent of these deceased men now receiving laudable attributes from his converter.

Moreover, Augustine appears to agree, as to the definition of a people, with Scipio who is the famous general who conquered the Carthaginian enemies of Rome in 202 B.C.E.

A people is defined [by Scipio] as an assemblage of the multitude joined by an agreement on law and common share of service.

---

<sup>22</sup> Since *amore laudis* is tantamount to vanity (*vanitas*) when it is not redirected or transferred to God, the expression can here be seen to be connoted as vainglory. It is important to remember *comprimentes* as suppressing something; and accordingly vainglory does not obliterate latent vices; yet it conveniently keeps them in check for providential design's sake (*civ. Dei*, V: 15), for the Roman Empire has grown to be a more illustrious (*imperii latitudine et magnitudine inlustrius*) (*civ. Dei*, V: 13) than the Persian, Augustine argues, because of the desire of praise by its politicians.

Augustine has indeed been, possibly due to formulations connected to this topic, 'criticized for his narrow and utilitarian, extremely reductivist viewpoint' (Harrison, 2004, p. 60). Augustine's providential outlook heralds that the ends actually do give sense and rationale to the means, but whereas in virtue ethics the definitions of the virtues to be upheld are quite fixed, utilitarian ethics are more prone to be opinionated as to what would induce good ethical result. A statement from *De Mendacio* further indicates this line of thought, especially since Augustine has been stated to be at his least pragmatic concerning lying in general. (v. Dodaro, 2004, p. 118): 'It must be considered whether there is admittance for compensation for the sake of avoiding a greater sin' (*videndum est utrum admittat compensationem, ut dicatur vitandi maioris peccati gratia*) (*mend.* 18: 36).



*Populum enim esse definiuit coetum multitudinis iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatum. (civ. Dei, XIX: 21)*<sup>23</sup>

In light of this definition *Populus Dei* and *Civitas Dei* are synonyms for Augustine. Hence, *Populus Dei* could suffice as the denomination of his greatest literary work; and consequently the very fact that Augustine employs the word and model of *civitas*, both to signify a heavenly communion and to portray the earthly Christian fellowship, makes the point that the edifice of a state announces a good thing. Because of stately instituted peace, the diaspora Jews in the Roman Empire have now the opportunity to divulge the prophets and the Commandments so that no one will suspect the Christians, including Augustine himself, of having made up (*confictum a nobis*) the historical and cosmological paradigm surrounding Christianity's evangelical message. The situation of the Empire is thereby ordained by providence (*Dei providentia est*) (*civ. Dei*, IV: 34)<sup>24</sup>.

Augustine assumes the Empire, around whose edifice the Church has grown, as a significant part of Judeo Christian historicity, since by his own definition of a people the Church is the closest thing to a universal nation, for

a nation is an assemblage of people united by the same consensus (*communione sociatus*) and common rationale (*multitudinis rationalis*) of what is to be loved.<sup>25</sup>

*Populus est coetus multitudinis rationalis rerum quas diligit concordi communione sociatus. (civ. Dei, XIX: 24)*

The church as a '*corpus permixtum*' (*en. Ps*, LXI: 6) combines the actuality of the Earthly City with the altruism of the Heavenly. As it always will have some imperfections, this *corpus permixtum* is not to be completely relied upon to perfectly imitate the Heavenly city. It is 'thoroughly mingled' (*permixtum*) with bad and good humans alike; as when a fisher looking solely for cod will have gotten many maritime lifeforms in his net, the net of the church likewise contains all kinds of people 'until the net reaches the shore' (*donec*

---

<sup>23</sup> The original sentence is from Cicero's *De Re Publica* I: 25. 49.

<sup>24</sup> *Dei prouidentia est, ut...de codicibus eorum probetur, quem ad modum hoc fuerit tanto ante prophetatum; ne forte, cum legeretur in nostris, a nobis putaretur esse confictum. (civ. Dei, XIX: 23)*

<sup>25</sup> The two expressions in brackets would sound extremely pleonastic in a literal translation.

*perveniat ad litus*) (*civ. Dei*, XVIII: 49)<sup>26</sup>. The essential thing is that the catch is prodigious, and this is partly the merit of the ancestors of the aristocratic pagan reader.

## THE PAGAN ARISTOCRATIC READER: A COMMON LANGUAGE, A DIFFERENT BELIEF

### (a) Language as common Denominator

The demarcation of paganism is somewhat blurred, and I will not try here to be innovative but instead quote Gerald Bonner's clear-cut designation of paganism as 'a set of beliefs and conventions, rather broadly based on certain religious assumptions, generally accepted, and rejected only at the prize of becoming an outsider' (Bonner, 1984, p. 343). The situation for being labelled as an outsider is almost reversed by the time Augustine begins his labour on *De Civitate Dei*, where he hurls out polemics and ridicule against traditional *paganism* without fear of persecution.

For the pagan reader's traditional culture things look bleak. Emperor Theodosius made Christianity a state religion in 392 C.E. and pagan practices are therewith outlawed. Still 'in dealing with those aristocrats whose pagan linkage remains strong the late Roman emperor cannot go beyond a certain range of actions' (Salzman, 2002, p. 190), and consequently paganism is not quite extinct. Luckily Augustine is very prequalified to the task of converting by the same reason the pagan reader is inadvertently prequalified to be converted.

There is an aphorism, whose verity I think would be considerably recognized by Augustine, that of Hans-Georg Gadamer, the late German philosopher who is posthumously an eminent authority on hermeneutics:

Language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement happens between two people. (Gadamer, 2012, p. 386)

The fact that Augustine is conscious of this, as all educated people in the Roman society are, can be assumed from the annoyance he has had as a young student over his failure to master Greek as a second language<sup>27</sup>, and from his promptness to stress out the reconciliatory effect a

---

<sup>26</sup> This nifty analogy of the collectively known act of fishing is a part of the teleological attitude of Augustine as an author which is communicated pedagogically to the reader.

<sup>27</sup> Even though recent research has proved that he in due course masters that language enough to read the Greek version of the Bible and some philosophical texts written in the Greek original (Switalski, 1946, p.79, footnote

common language might produce as the main medium of human intercommunication. Augustine proposes a hypothetical encounter between two humans of different tongues and places their ability to communicate below that of animals, indeed even below that of animals of different species (*facilius sibi muta animalia, etiam diuersi generis*) (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 7). The accuracy of this allegation can be rejected; even so he raises an important issue therewith. Lack of smooth communication is an impediment for everyone involved, and language as medium and method is extolled as something essential to this earthly life which is propaedeutic to the true communication of heaven, ergo an aspect of the fulfilment (*telos*) of a human being.

Gadamer further claims:

One relates the demands of fashion to a whole that one's own taste keeps in view and accepts only what harmonizes with this whole and fits together as it does. (Gadamer, 2012, p. 33)

One's own taste and fashion stipulates the intake of new ideas. Even inspiratory the ratio between that of content and of rhetorical execution can in this respect be in the latter's favour. Augustine knows this all too well; as a young adult he had given up on The Bible, which he would later come to regard as the most important, indeed the only necessary literature for salvation; and the abandonment of the Sacred Scriptures was mostly due to their uncouth style (*vilitas dictorum*) which did not harmonize with his expectations, a fact against which he warns others (*conf. XII: 27.37*). He found the experience as a reader distasteful, as it were, and could not at that point in his life incorporate the sentiments therein into his hermeneutics.

Gadamer also argues that 'if every language is a view of the world, it is not so primarily because it is a particular type of language (in the way that linguists view language) but because of what is said or handed down in this language' (Gadamer, 2012, p. 438). Conveniently, when significant parts of the cultural erudition of Augustine and the pagan reader are common, this facilitates the repudiation of the paganism of the latter. Augustine has read Varro, Cicero, Seneca (Beduhn, 2010, p. 96) and Vergil (Eriksen, 2000, p. 42), and if the pagan educated reader has done the same it insures a correlation by the unity of language as a support for communication in *De Civitate Dei*.

For example: There is a claim on the part of Augustine which describes the circumstances of Christian preaching:

---

nr. 384), it is evident from *Confessiones* that Augustine himself hated Greek as a subject at school (*conf. I: 13.20*).

Nothing unsightly and shameful is proposed [for the auditors of Christian evangelization] to either watch or imitate.

*Nihil enim eis turpe ac flagitiosum spectandum imitandumque proponitur. (civ. Dei, II: 28)*

If that statement is to be communicated as intended, the qualifications of *turpe* and *flagitiosum* must be somewhat common to both the pagan readers (*eis*) and to the general ethical outlook of Augustine; and so its communicability is stipulated by the usage of the two terms in a common literal heritage; id est turpitude and shamefulness would have to have been promulgated somewhere beforehand to be shunned, independent on whether one is affected by the moral sentiment sympathetically, if only intelligibly. There are many examples thereof, but the most apt at the present discussion is from *De Finibus*, the main teleological treatise of Cicero, where both *turpiter* and *flagitiose* are convened in a moralistic castigation.

Who among us would say, we who are not ashamed to call those things evil which are by the Stoics called hardships, that it is better to perpetrate something base entailing pleasure than to do something honest entailing pain? It seems to us that Dionysus of Heraclea did a shameful deed when he dissented from the Stoics [only] because of pain in the eyes.

*Quis nostrum dixerit, quos non pudet ea, quae Stoici aspera dicunt, mala dicere, melius esse turpiter aliquid facere cum voluptate quam honeste cum dolore? Nobis Heracleotes ille Dionysius flagitiose descivisse videtur a Stoicis propter oculorum dolorem (Cic, fin. V: 93; 94)*

A common literary heritage has then the potentiality to entice the philologically critical eye of the pagan aristocrat, even if he has an abiding wish only to be *counted* as honourable. Actually *having* honour is not the pivotal factor of appeal to the reader.

(b) Willingness to believe

Through the 22 books of *De Civitate Dei* Augustine has to instigate and effect a transition of view for the reader with thematic alteration. Gadamer has stated the following on the term *transition* in this sense:

When we find someone transformed we mean precisely this, that he has become another person, as it were. There cannot *here* be any gradual transition leading from one to the other, since the one is denial of the other. (Gadamer, 2012, p. 111)

The *here* can be referred to the reader in general whom Augustine's dialectics need to convince to such an extent that he becomes congenial with Augustine's thoughts and the conviction which produces them. I would still suppose, given the prodigious length of *De Civitate Dei* that it is an on-going commutation of suppositions rather than a sudden and total permutation of conviction which is the process of alignment to Augustine's teleological outlook. And this steady acquisition of perspective insists upon a willingness to believe, ergo a volitive act which resonates back to Augustine's succinct maxim that 'to believe itself is nothing else than think with assent' (*ipsum credere, nihil aliud est, quam cum assensione cogitare*) (*pr. sanct, 2.5*).

Religious evangelization, which is without visible scientific proof, is quintessentially facilitated on the part of the recipient in the forbearance, patience and willingness to consider and not exclude a new paradigm, id est the perspectival matrix wherein the evangelical message thrives and makes sense. Therefore are the inherent flexibility and openness of the pagan reader most crucial catalysts for an effective evangelization.

Augustine's official power in society can work as an authority of ethical sentiments which are based on a religion not yet shared by all. His *audita episcopalis* makes him a benefactor of the unprivileged (Dagemark, 1995. p. 110), and it is not unlikely that some people of the underclass are converted on the grounds of respect towards one's societally superior protector. But a pagan aristocrat possesses beforehand an equal authority, and an epistemology and an ethical outlook, when challenged to permutation, require a 'leap of faith', as it were.

There is a favoured aphorism of Isaiah's from the Old Testament, much used and discussed by Augustine, that of '*nisi crederitis non intelligetis*', 'unless you believe you will not understand'.

For I [Augustine] ask: If what is not known is not believable, how can children perform service to their parents and cherish with obliged duty those whom they believe not to be their parents. It simply cannot be known in any way by reason.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> *Ullo pacto* (any agreement) is often used in the ablativus absolutus as an expression and is more meaningfully and idiomatically translated as *any way*.

*Quaero enim, si quod nescitur, credendum non est, quomodo serviant parentibus liberi, eosque mutua pietate diligant, quos parentes suos esse non credant. Non enim ratione ullo pacto sciri potest. (util. cred. 12. 26)*

Augustine proceeds to present belief as a criterion for daily social structures and relations. This criterion is the oil which makes daily conduit smooth and functioning; it is ‘the thought that counts’,

since what madman would consider a person culpable, one who has offered proper obligations to those whom, perhaps, he believes to be his parents, even if they are not?

*nam quis vel insanus eum culpandum putet, qui eis officia debita impenderit quos parentes esse crediderit, etiamsi non essent? (ibidem)*

And thus, the very fabric of society is based on belief and credibility between its citizens; and that is a sentiment which can be applied even nowadays to societies wherein information roam freely and science supplies fact which is immediately not clear to the naked eye.

Many things can be deduced<sup>29</sup> whereby it is illustrated that nothing at all of human society remains safe and sound if we decide to believe nothing of that which we cannot grasp immediately.<sup>30</sup>

*Multa possunt afferri, quibus ostendatur nihil omnino humanae societatis incolume remanere, si nihil credere statuerimus, quod non possumus tenere perceptum. (ibidem)*

Likewise no sentiments in *De Civitate Dei* will remain safe (*incolumis remanere*) from a scepticism which inhibits the welcome of new ideas. This idea of Augustine is found in *De Utilitate Credendi* but is supported by sentiments in *De Civitate Dei*, which develop it subtextually and perhaps with a paratextual allusion. The intellect can operate more confidently (*fidenti*) by faith (*civ. Dei*, XI: 2), and this confidence is justified by the rational view that faith in the Wisdom of God, who is the Son of God, extends the intellectual participation of God’s essence. The whole of *De Civitate Dei* as divinely inspired is graspable because the reader, just as Augustine the writer, is made in the likeness of God, which again can be understood from the Christian philosophy presented therein.

If that is not possible let at least let it be *believed* that Man is created in the image of God.

---

<sup>29</sup> *Afferri* means literally *to be brought forth* (Simpson, 1977, p.12); and in this case something can be brought forth *by reason* in the argumentation, which in English is *to be deduced*.

<sup>30</sup> I insert ‘immediately’ here, because of the locutionary participation of the perfect participle, *perceptum*, with the infinitive *tenēre*.

*Si hoc non potest, saltem credatur factus ad imaginem Dei. (ibidem)*

Yet again Augustine has appealed to an openness latent in the reader.

## The Fusing of Pagan and Christian Epistemai

---

### AUGUSTINE’S RELATION TO AND USE OF THE “GOLD OF EGYPT”

#### (a) Useful and harmful Knowledge

The distancing from the traditional Roman conception of the divine is an on-going process for Augustine, and this chapter will look at some of his discursive strategies and expose how he transform an episteme. Reading Augustine's work as an attempt to address and sway the pagan reader necessitates an examination on the way that Augustine handles the totality of his own acquaintance with pagan knowledge, id est the whole pagan episteme. In this chapter, I assess how Augustine presents the features of this episteme and subsequently relates them within a Christian framework, a process which reveals that Augustine, rather than stressing out ideological hostility, can find in pagan thought promising elements and appropriate them to his own textual agenda. This process I call the fusing of epistemai.

Augustine seems aware of his audience and the likely lack of knowledge of patristic literature, let alone the directly biblical. In return for undaunted juxtaposition of ideas with intellectual maxims of pagan culture, his teleology’s substantiality gains credence through the credentials of passing the test, as it were. The turnouts make the Christian teleology the champion of logic as the implications of the divergent outlooks are explicated. In spite of the dangers of dealing with and responding to more philosophically consistent rationales, and in spite of the even more precarious situation of interposing in his text citations, ultimately belonging to a pagan party, Augustine never safely absconds from meticulously presenting that which cannot claim to be Christian thought and canon, and fortunately for posterity he rather possesses the cornucopias, given the insights which have been nurtured by his educational upbringing, to exhaustively confront alternative outlooks.

‘The gold of Egypt’, is alluding to a metaphor of Augustine’s, explicated in *De Doctrina Christiana*, where he compares pagan intellectual valuables, expropriated from paganism, with the golden and silver valuables taken out from Egypt in Exodus, among which



are garments which the Jews have ‘liberated’ (*vindicavisse*) and put ‘to better use’ (*ad usum meliorem*) (*doc. Chr. II: 40.60*). I will dare to ascribe the following rationale of this remark of Augustine’s; that likewise one can appropriate whatever truth which may be found outside the Scriptures and the church and ‘liberate’ it from the company of pagan erroneousness.

This can be supported by another sentiment two chapter later, an unmistakably pragmatic statement about pagan literature:

Whatever man has learnt from other sources; if it hurtful, there it is condemned; if it is useful, there it is discovered

*Quidquid homo extra didicerit, si noxium est ibi damnatur, si utile est, ibi invenitur.*  
(*doc. Chr. II: 42.63*)

The transpiration of an accretion of knowledge or of an insight, which is an aid in the search for pure truth, is a proviso which Augustine sets to an avid reader of literature. Augustine sees theology as philosophy because true philosophy seeks to understand the Wisdom who God is.

The name itself [*φιλοσοφία*], if we translate it into English professes love of wisdom. Moreover, if wisdom is God through whom all things are made, a fact which divine authority and verity has showed, a true philosopher is a lover of God.

*Ipsum nomen si Latine interpretemur, amorem sapientiae profitetur. Porro si sapientia Deus est, per quem facta sunt omnia, sicut diuina auctoritas ueritasque monstrauit, uerus philosophus est amator Dei.* (*civ. Dei, VIII: 1*)

He is well-disposed to available wisdom, wherever it can be found, because *telos*, a final cause, effaces unproductive principles, subordinating them to the more pervasive one, namely the *attainment* of Wisdom. Vice versa secular knowledge is injurious (*noxium*), when it impedes the vision of higher verities, even if it does not contradict them. The persistency in error is downright hostile to truth. Augustine describes this tendency as

old depraved opinions hostile to the truth of piety which the long-lasting error of the human race has very deeply and persistently fixed in unenlightened minds.

*prauas et ueteres opiniones ueritati pietatis inimicas, quas tenebrosis animis altius et tenacius diuturnus humani generis error infixit.* (*civ. Dei, VII: praef.*)

Hence there are limits to Augustine’s fusing of epistemai, and these limits are more numerous where an episteme is more dogmatic and thoroughly outlined in contrast to regular paganism as defined by Bonner (vide p. 26). There are those materialist Epicurean and Stoics, denying even the immortality of the soul. Bonnie Kent aptly paraphrases the sentiments of *De*

*Trinitate*, XIII: 7.10 revealing Augustine's point that the facticity of worldly hardships without a prospect of a *telos* beyond death lowers the goal for eudaemonistic seeking. Epicurean and Stoic teleology, advocates that sombre finality of death which Christianity manage to avoid and which Augustine ridicules. Kent argues that 'they choose to redescribe the ideals of happiness in such a way that it becomes attainable in this life' (Kent, 2001, "Augustinian Ethics" in *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, p.210). In the one sentiment the reader would be discouraged to seek truth, and in the other be furnished with a false hope, since this life is more justified 'by the remission of sins then a perfecting of virtue' (*potius remissione peccatorum constet quam perfectione uirtutum*) (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 27). Moreover, there are elements of Neo-Platonism like idolatry, superstition and metempsychosis which Augustine considers erroneous (Switalski, 1946, p. 107), and they must accordingly, together with the Manicheans' belittlement of God and materialistic perception of evil, be classified as harmful (*noxius*).

(b) Confirmation of Truth by the pagan Maxims

There is citation from Vergil which is a clear document on how the pagan classics are used by Augustine to corroborate his teaching. Augustine hereby proffers a pagan voice to stifle the Neo-Platonist rationality behind metempsychosis. In this case in point he explains that existential sensations are not only moved by the body but also by mere will which still resides in a disembodied soul (*ex se ipsa his potest motibus agitari*).

"O father is it conceivable that some souls goes hence to heaven exalted and returns once again to dull bodies? What dire lust in miserable souls is so eager for the light?"  
<sup>31</sup>

*"o pater, anne aliquas ad caelum hinc ire putandum est  
 sublimis animas iterumque ad tarda reuerti  
 corpora? quae lucis miseris tam dira cupido?"*  
 (*civ. Dei*, XIV: 5)

Utterances of Seneca, Cicero, Vergil, and Varro are often flagrantly used as documentation of opinion concurrent with Augustine's, and as instances of a literary cooperation of the Scriptures and pagan literature.

Granted that the Bishop of Hippo is first and foremost a quoter of Biblical passages, whence most of the information fuelling his teleology is taken, Augustine the quoter is a

---

<sup>31</sup> The lines cited are from Vergil's *Aeneid*, VI: 719-721.

writer symptomatic of his associative thinking. At the end of the thirteenth chapter of the fifth book, he overtly quotes Cicero as a canonical proof for the typical attitude whereby moral accountability is misplaced and the activation of a certain number of virtues is arbitrary and selective.

Honour nourishes the arts and everybody is excited towards glorifying studies, and those studies which are by everyone disapproved, lie idly about.

*Honos alit artes, omnesque accenduntur ad studia gloria iacentque ea semper, quae apud quosque improbantur.* (Cicero. *Tusc. Disp.* I: 2)

When Augustine explains how demons are unfitting mediators between God and the reader, on the grounds that demons have the body of angels but souls more like that of wicked humans, Augustine turns his enthymetic reasoning into a complete syllogism with one of Sallust's maxims:

For the body is the inferior, thus says even Sallust: "We use the mind to command and more often the body to obey".<sup>32</sup>

*Corpus quippe seruum est, sicut etiam Sallustius ait: "Animi imperio, corporis seruitio magis utimur."* (*civ. Dei*, IX: 9)

One must decide whether that 'even' (*etiam*) is used with a derogatory intent or a monitory one, if we are to assess in general how much gravity Augustine accredits to pithy adages of the classic pagan authors. *Etiam* has a responsive meaning of *yes, indeed, truly* and an additive meaning of *and also, even, furthermore*. It is a question of how Augustine puts them in context and so uses them; one can choose to assume a hypothetical question to the response of the quote above or see the citation just as an enforcing supplement to Augustine's argumentation. Either way he has appropriated a property of the pagans to his own benefit.

Augustine even cites Horace as a backup while explaining that the desire for praise is a vice (Horace, *Epistulae*, I: 50.36-37). Although Horace does not get top marks among the classical figures, to others Augustine does not prescind from outright laudable attributes. Especially the case of Porphyry (vide below), the most bitter enemy of Christians (*inimicus acerrimus*), suggests a frankness in Augustine's approach towards his intellectual adversaries when this adversary is presented as a most learned man (*doctissimus philosophorum*) (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 22). Varro is also considered *doctissimus* (*civ. Dei*, IV: 1) and Cicero, under the frequent appellation of Tullius, is in spite of his Scepticism a serious man (*vir gravis*) (*civ.*

---

<sup>32</sup> The adage from Sallust is taken from *De Conj. Cat.* I.

*Dei*, I: 27). This respect, which Augustine's rhetoric exudes in apologetic methodology, helps to integrate the episteme of the reader to a new one, while both epistemai are fused by common denominators, which are the signification of being *doctissimus*, *gravis et cetera* (vide p. 28).

Augustine is therefore wise with respect to the fairly speedy rupture of the traditional world paradigm to which the realm and society, wherein he writes *De Civitate Dei*, owes a great deal. In what Carol Harrison describes as the 'fractured humanity'<sup>33</sup>, Augustine writes *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos* for the pagans, and all this to a large extent in the language and dialectics of the pagans. He bothers to make them comfortable with their own canonical aphorisms and places classical maxims as supplements to the Christian argumentation and deductions. However, they are thus contextualized that the epistemology of the pagan world, which has long since produced them, is opposed; and one can argue that by attacking pagans with their own aphoric weapons Augustine impugns more derisively their original capacity to sort out a verisimilar epistemology and ethics from each individual sentiment in a consistent interconnection. I should therefore now consider what golden jewels there are to be found in the pagan episteme which are being corrected and adopted by Augustine, only to be melted and fused into his own more interconnected teleological outlook.

## FAMILIARITY WITH *FATUM*, POLYTHEISM AND ORACLES

### (a) *Fatum*

*Fatum* is an intrinsically Roman pagan idea and, translatable into *fate* or *destiny* in English, and it approximates Augustine's concept of providence. Providence is the 'order of causes' (*ordo causarum*) and the 'will of God' (*voluntas Dei*) (*civ. Dei*, V: 9). An order of causes is the signification of *fatum* as well, and Augustine's polemics against the pagan term is mainly sprung out from conventional associations of that which misinterprets the will of God, namely astrology (*constitutio siderum*) whose study is pointless (*inaniter*) (*ibidem*). Nevertheless, he

---

<sup>33</sup> Carol Harrison's *Augustine, Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* is an illuminative treatment of the religious situation and by extension the moral problems, expressions, conditions and practices in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century as the operative and reactive background for Augustine's thoughts and experiences, with all its expediencies and restrictions.

concedes that the etymological basis of the word permits us to use it, if in a completely literal sense.

We cannot use *fatum* unless we should happen to interpret it from *fari* (*to speak*), id est *to tell* or *declare*, for we cannot deny that [something] is written in the Sacred Scriptures.

*Fatum a fando dictum intellegamus, id est a loquendo; non enim abnuere possumus esse scriptum in litteris sanctis. (ibidem)*

What is written (*scriptum*) prophetically must also have been spoken (*fatum*) by the prophets, and in that sense *fatum* is what humans will perceive and denote as providence. Augustine supplies a rejoinder after a rhetorical question about who his God is, an answer which promulgates the axiomatic aspect of God's existence and His effect in the world:

One can retort "Who is this God, or by what can He be proved worthy of the obedience of the Romans so that no one except Him is worshiped with sacrifices?" It is great blindness to still ask who God is. God is the very one whose prophets predicted what we now perceive'.

*Responderi potest: "Quis iste Deus est aut unde dignus probatur, cui deberent obtemperare Romani, ut nullum deorum praeter ipsum colerent sacrificiis?" Magnae caecitatis est, adhuc quaerere, quis iste sit Deus. Ipse est Deus, cuius prophetae praedixerunt ista quae cernimus. (civ. Dei, XIX: 22)*

Augustine's reply is pretty straightforward and accredits a considerable authority to the prophesies of the Scriptures. However the perception of manifested prophesies also be accurate; and a latent possibility of false soothsaying, which will consequently not be written down (*scriptum esse*), is what makes *providence* in Augustine's eyes a more precise and infallible expression of the cosmic destiny (together with individual destinies) which manifests the will of God.

In this respect Augustine appreciates the difference between linguistic error and that of opinion. In his attack on *fatum* as erroneous concept contra providence, he concedes that people actually use *fatum* in the providential sense of Christianity, but the pagan reader should not do so lest the conventionality of language conflate important distinctions, since he should disprove astrology and dismantle his old polytheistic cosmology in his episteme. Hence a conventional signification of *fatum* is disparaged but an etymologically based resignification is permitted. Augustine thus set the bounds for the pagan aristocrat: 'Let him keep his sentiments [and] correct his language' (*sententiam teneat, linguam corrigat*) (*civ. Dei* V: 1).

Even more leniently vis-à-vis his pagan reader, Augustine in fact tries to conjoin the pagan understanding of *fatum* with that of God's will. Quite interestingly Augustine states that God's will is *proved* (*probāre*) to be indistinguishable from *fatum* by Aeneas Seneca<sup>34</sup>, and the Bishop of Hippo then proceeds to quote a sequence from *Epistula* CVII of this famous pagan stoic. Besides imputing a conspicuous authority to a pagan author by using the verb *probāre*, Augustine has nearly fully accepted the term used within his enemies' religiosity. Furthermore there is an opinion of Augustine's which surmises a pagan version of providence which is equivalent to his own in its connection to an omnipotent volition. He says that

[the pagans] name Jove the one whom they think to be the highest god, and from whom they say the chain of fates hang.

*Iouem appellant quem summum deum putant, a quo conexionem dicunt pendere fatorum. (civ. Dei, V: 8).*

The chain of fates (*conexio fatorum*) is depended on Jove, and this is the god with whom Augustine attempts to fuse the pagan notion of a supreme deity with his trinitarian God.

#### (b) Polytheism

As late as in 390 C.E. Augustine actually poses the following question to the interlocutor of his *Epistula* XVI:

Who can bear that the lightning wielding Zeus is deprioritized [for the sake of a more obscure divinity] called Miggo.

*Quis enim ferat Iovi fulmina vibranti praeferri Mygdonem? (ep. XVI: 2)*

The query could be that of a Roman pagan aristocrat, albeit the overall purpose of the letter is ultimately to defend monotheism. Even though by the time he has begun writing *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine seems to be more hostile and condescending to any comparative approach of traditional deities; but he evidently still carries with him enough insight from former years to employ dialectics immersed in pagan epistemology. Fusing the epistemai of paganism and Christianity is simply symptomatic of Augustine's mission to explain Christianity and argue factually against paganism, and not solely to vent out his frustration or anger; consequently

---

<sup>34</sup> Dei summi uoluntatem, cuius potestas insuperabiliter per cuncta porrigitur, eos appellare fatum sic probatur. (*civ. Dei, V: 8*)

his rebuttal of polytheism is gradual and careful.

Conflating Jove with God, as seen in the deliberation on *fatum*, is one example of this deliberate approach to pagan religiosity. Towards the end of *De Civitate Dei* he juxtaposes God directly with Jupiter, (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 20)<sup>35</sup>, which nevertheless does not mean that the traditional picture of Jove is correspondent to the Holy Trinity; but the pagan reader is indicated to severely lack in knowledge about his own supreme god. Even Porphyry is admitted participation, however peripheral, of the divine mystery (vide below). Ergo, when Augustine finally presents his true God, he subsumes Him under the epistemai of both traditional pagan religion and that of a fiercely hostile Neo-Platonist.

The plausible objective of conceding ten books for the discussion of the old Roman paradigm, even if it is there only to be refuted, is the occasion to transform an ancient pagan mind with a mind receptive to God. Augustine could just as well have said that Jupiter has nothing to do whatsoever with the Christian, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent God; but as Jupiter had some good he can stimulate a provisory though imperfect affiliation with God, which is evoked for the sake of expediency of informing a pagan reader, and maybe even converting him. Inasmuch the *telos* of the reader as a creature is implied to be cooperative in the world in ways a pagan can perceive, albeit incompletely and erroneously, the pagan reader's episteme is at that point generously included in a wider cosmological spectre.

Another most defining example of a pedagogical fusion of epistemological horizons executed with regular commutation of the reader's paradigm is that Augustine does not at all shun from putting *deus* in the plural, even after it has been unquestionably established that there is only One True God (*solus est Deus verus*) (*civ. Dei*, IV: 33).

Angels is what substitute the notion of the gods' wisdom and graciousness. Unfortunately all interaction the reader's might have had with beings above humans that has felt genuine, cannot have been with angels, as they are paradoxically unfitting mediators, though good as they are as messengers, 'for those who always see the face of the Father [of the Trinity] should announce His will'<sup>36</sup>. The reason, however, for their unfitness in negotiating between God and humans is that they share neither in the misery of humans nor in human mortality. Only daemons as miserable spirits and Christ as mortal can function as

---

<sup>35</sup> Ipse est Deus, quem Varro doctissimus Romanorum Iouem putat. (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 22)

<sup>36</sup> Qui semper uident faciem Patris uoluntatemque eius quibus oportet adnuntiant. (*civ. Dei*, XI: 4)

mediators, of whom only the latter's brokerage can obliterate misery and mortality in the human condition (*civ. Dei*, IX: 15). Thus Augustine never blatantly exclaims "ye shalt not believe in many gods!", but merely professes the consequences of polytheism, with confusion, misperception and a multitude of definition of what is to be honoured and worshipped. Nevertheless Augustine's thorough confrontation with pagan religiosity is not claiming that it cannot from its culture produce an iota of truth.

### (c) Oracles

Oracles have been a great part of Roman culture, so much so that 'the oracular, the mantic, the prophetic is something that can scarcely be contained by civic or religious authorities' (Johnson, 2009, p.102), and they are perhaps so ingrained in Augustine that to impart truthful utterances to oracles would not be awkward even as a Catholic Bishop. On the contrary *oraculus* is the word which Augustine uses as a Latin speaking Roman citizen to designate divine revelation in the Scriptures. When Abraham learns from God of the Promised Land which will be given to him, it is through an oracle (*oraculo tertio dixit Dominus ad Abraham*) (*civ. Dei*, XVI: 21).

As for oracles which do not have the guarantee of the Bible, the criterion is that whatever broadcasted traceable to some veritable fact might be inspired by God. In his *Epistula CCLVIII* Augustine enmeshes a pre-existent oracular interpretation and adopts it to a Christian outlook, citing the *Bucolics*, IV 13-14; after stating the original author's (Publius Vergilius Maro's) source, he adds:

Perhaps even this oracle had heard something in her spirit about the Saviour, which she had to reveal by necessity.

*Fortassis etiam illa vates aliquid de unico salvatore in spiritu audierat, quod necesse habuit confiteri. (ep. CCLVIII:5)*

This is written in 423 C.E. only three years before *De Civitate Dei* is completed and over three decades after Augustine has become an ordained cleric in the Church. In the case of Vergil's alleged proclamation of the Baby Jesus, Augustine is the concluding arbiter of whether the proclamation of the soothsayer be divinely inspired or not. But Augustine demonstrates even greater liberality in *De Civitate Dei*, since there he gives to Porphyry the



judgement to consider (*putāre*) which oracles are divine (*dei*), and hence to set the criterion of truthfulness:

He is God whom Porphyry, the most learned among philosophers, though most ardently hostile to Christians, admitted to be a great god, even in agreement with those oracles which he considered to be divine.

*Ipsē est Deus, quem doctissimus philosophorum, quamvis Christianorum acerrimus inimicus, etiam per eorum oracula, quos deos putat, deum magnum Porphyrius confitetur. (civ. Dei, XIX: 22)*

Contradictory to this is Augustine's quite subsequent accusation of a certain oracular utterance being in reality an invective fabrication against Christians by 'a clever man' (*ab homine callido eoque Christianis inimicissimo haec oracula fuisse conficta*) (*civ. Dei, XIX: 23*) and thus Augustine pulls apart the believability of oracles as deliberate truth tellers. The truth is revealed unwittingly, as seen by Augustine admissions, when it so happens to be, and therefore it is not the oracles ipso facto which are to be taken seriously but truth per se 'wherever it can be found'. For the author of 22 voluminous books with basically one scope, silence is not golden but truth is, as golden as the vestments vindicated from Egypt by the Jews already so long ago.

## **Part II:**

Augustine's teleological sentiments and subtextual  
exhortations

---

## 5

### Using One's Power in a teleologically correct Manner

---

#### *UTI OR FRUI?*

*Uti* and *frui* are two Latin verbal infinitives which respectively mean to *use* and to *enjoy*. Their importance for Augustine's discourse, wherein he explicates the ethical road conducive to the attainment of *telos* based on performativity and will, is not to be underestimated, both as regards the clear locutionary presence of the two notions and the illocutionary implications which then entail in the on-going teleological discourse. The juxtaposition of *uti* and *frui* is another example of dialectical heritage from classical texts. Augustine is indeed not the first person who has compared *uti* and *frui* in philosophical exegesis. Exempli gratia, Seneca<sup>37</sup> frequently juxtaposed the two terms, and the most model example thereof may be in his *De Vita Beata*, I: 5: 'You enjoy lust, I use it' (*tu voluptate fruieris, ego utor*). Albeit it is in an unlikely sentence in Augustinian ethics, it approximates Augustine's interplay with the verbs; Augustine follows a semantic tradition but adopts it for Christian terminological exigency. That is a tendency which adumbrates many other conscious applications of centuries-old Latin words and notions; and that is why a philological method to conjecture the reception of Augustine's sentiment by a pagan reader is apt.

To grasp profounder the concept of *vanitas* the reader must already have apprehended the *uti-frui* distinction which is never explicitly defined in *De Civitate Dei*. One needs to look to *De Doctrina Christiana* for a lucid and concrete exposition. There Augustine also provides for a clear-cut delineation of their effect by ethical orientation; id est he mentions the pivotal consequence ensuing the misapplication of the acts and orientations which these notions signify:

There are some things to be used and others things to be enjoyed, but some who both use and enjoy.<sup>38</sup> Those things which are to be enjoyed make us happy, and those to be used help in the direction of happiness and are a sort of support for us so that we may

---

<sup>37</sup> BeDuhn includes Seneca on the list of authors (BeDuhn, 2010, p. 96) all of whom are eminent within the ambit of liberal sciences, and whom Augustine read with interest.

<sup>38</sup> I am going out on a limb here, thinking it proper to render *aliae quae fruuntur et utuntur* as an adversative statement, if *aliae* is there interpreted as signifying 'capita' (individual persons lit. heads).

arrive at the enjoyable and stick to it. Indeed we who, being placed among these things, both enjoy and use them, if we would like to enjoy the things which are there to be used, our course will be obstructed and even sometimes change path, the consequence of which is that we ourselves are either delayed from obtaining the enjoyable or even turn away from them as we are entangled by love of inferior things.

*Res...aliae sunt quibus fruendum est, aliae quibus utendum, aliae quae fruuntur et utuntur. Illae quibus fruendum est nos beatos faciunt; istis quibus utendum est tendentes ad beatitudinem adiuuamur et quasi adminiculamur, ut ad illas quae nos beatos faciunt, peruenire atque his inhaerere possimus. Nos uero qui fruimur et utimur, inter utrasque constituti, si eis quibus utendum est frui voluerimus, impeditur cursus noster et aliquando etiam deflectitur, ut ab his rebus quibus fruendum est obtinendis vel retardemur uel etiam revocemur, inferiorum amore praepediti. (doc. Chr. I: 3.3)*

*Uti* and *frui* have their firm distinctive, even sometimes disparate place and functioning vis-à-vis the very *telos* that makes them complementary to each other. They are the main verbal protagonists in Augustine's teleological ethics; of which *uti* invest the most versatile role<sup>39</sup>, and strictly speaking the only 'thing to be enjoyed is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that one and only Trinity' (doc. Chr. I: 5.5)<sup>40</sup>. All corporeal and temporal things are on the other hand for usage on the ontic journey to the spiritual and eternal peace of the City of God. The notion of *uti* imparts significance into every act, and the lack or presence of utility in respect to the advancement towards *telos* naturally monitors the respective teleological value which that act would possess. Using is conducive to the eventual enjoyment experienced in a teleological fulfilment and enjoying is what in turn inspires that conducive using.

*Frui* is however not only translatable as *to enjoy*, and the constant rendering of this

---

<sup>43</sup> To use something is to dispose it to the faculty of volition; but to enjoy is to use with a joy of the thing used and not just with anticipated joy of a future thing. Hence everyone who enjoys, uses; for he consign something to the faculty of volition for purpose of enjoyment. But not everyone who uses, enjoys, not if that, which he attempts to commit at the disposal of the will, is for the sake of something else and not per se.

*Uti est enim assumere aliquid in facultatem uoluntatis; frui est autem uti cum gaudio non adhuc spei sed iam rei. Proinde omnis qui fruitur utitur; assumit enim aliquid in facultatem uoluntatis cum fine delectationis. Non autem omnis qui utitur fruitur si id quod in facultatem uoluntatis assumit non propter illud ipsum sed propter aliud appetiuit. (Trin, X: 4: 17)*

This excerpt is from *De Trinitate*, but a pertinent example nonetheless for the delineation of Augustine's predisposition on this topic in general; it further stresses the watershed between the two terms of *uti* and *frui*, delimits the applicability of *frui* and shows that the using one's power beneficially is an act of volition. As an act of volition as a common denominator this effects that *uti* and *frui* are not diametrically opposed to each other in the discourse of Augustine's teleology.

<sup>40</sup> Res igitur quibus fruendum est, Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus, eademque Trinitas. (doc. Chr. I: 5.5)

verb in English into *to enjoy* obscures some of the original communication in the verb. The aristocratic reader already knows the word but in different contexts. In forensic speech *frui* means *to have the use and enjoyment of*; in other more colloquial contexts it simply means *to have the benefit of*. Cicero has applied *frui* in an egoistic sense in the basic meaning *to enjoy*, when the instrumental or causal ablative is *voluptate* (Simpson, 1977, p. 257). *Fructus*, the completed or perfect tense of this deponent verb is associated with the homophonic noun *fructus*, which aside from *enjoyment* means in financial and agrarian expressions *proceeds*, *profit*, *produce* and *fruit*. Augustine himself reminds us of these other uses of *fructus* and *frui*:

But we still use proceeds and enjoy practices in the mode of speech which is obtained by convention; for the fruits of the fields are an appropriate appellation of the agrarian produce which we all certainly use temporarily.

*Verum tamen eo loquendi modo, quem pius obtinuit consuetudo, et fructibus utimur et usibus fruimur; nam et fructus iam proprie dicuntur agrorum, quibus utique omnes temporaliter utimur. (civ. Dei, XI: 25)*

Nobody enjoys the harvest as the ultimate end in itself, but Augustine appreciates how his language reflects the immediate impression of what one is experiencing<sup>41</sup>. Accordingly I do not think that Augustine implies that the enjoyment experienced during and after a useful act is totally inappropriate. Making a bold but plausible conjecture based on another passage in *De Doctrina Christiana* (*doc. Chr. I: 4.4*), I would propose that one must understand the conscious experience of *uti* and *frui* as a twofold teleological step whereon the immanence of God comes to be intelligibly tangible in the occasion of provisory but nevertheless authentic enjoyment in this world. If God is the only thing to be enjoyed, then what is meant by those enjoyable things (*res*) in the plural in the extended citation above? The visual realization of the eternal and spiritual occurs in the understanding (*intellecta conspici*) (*civ. Dei, XXII: 29*) of those thing whose properties are closer affiliated with God's essence; and such an indication that one is on 'the right track' is in the moment of revelation understandably enjoyable. Analogically the power of the aristocratic pagan reader can plausibly be experienced as an enjoyment, either morally as when it is exercised in accord with Christian teleology, or immorally and therefore falsely as when in conflict or outright derision of the perspective educed from the text of *De Civitate Dei*.

---

<sup>41</sup> This aspect of *frui* is also important to note since, when an overwhelming grace and predestinarian thoughts exclude the prospect of reaping in heaven what one has sowed on earth, it is still possible to experience a gratuitous profit in simply being created with a certain intention as fruits (*fructus*) of existence.

The perspective is contingent upon the idea that in heaven the activity of *uti* is replaced by that of *frui* in a communion characterized as ‘a most harmonious group of individuals, enjoying God and enjoying each other in God’ (*concordissima societas fruendi Deo et invicem in Deo*) (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 17). Secular society is not to be teleologically enjoyed but only used, because of its fickleness and the appertaining disturbances which no power of any pagan aristocrat can stem.

This [society] is mostly divided against itself in quarreling, waging war and fighting, and in seeking either victories that cost lives or certainly fleeting ones.

*Ista aduersus se ipsam plerumque diuiditur litigando, bellando atque pugnando et aut mortiferas aut certe mortales uictorias requirendo* (*civ. Dei*, XV: 4)

Indeed a society in such a state is according to Augustinian deduction not even useful for reader, other than as a test of virtue (*virtutis examen*) (*civ. Dei*, IV, 3). *Uti* is inferred to be a teleological act only if the act be referred to something good (*bonum*) (*div.qu*, XXX) because only good things is purposive to the attainment of God. ‘Therefore whoever uses something badly, does not use it’ (*non ergo utitur, quisquis male utitur*) (*ibidem*), not at least for what it is intended, and thus one disrupts the teleological trajectory ordained by God. Likewise but more paradoxically enjoying can entail misery, even if one enjoys something one loves; ‘for many who love that which ought not to be loved, are miserable, and when enjoying it, they are even more miserable (*multi enim amando ea, quae amanda non sunt, miseri sunt et miseriores cum fruuntur*)’ (*civ. Dei*, VIII: 8).

If, as Augustine says, only God is to be enjoyed, how can society assure true enjoyment for its citizens? The fact is that it cannot by itself provide sublime happiness, but merely aid and pinpoint the *telos* towards which it must strive with its people and present at disposal the surroundings in which a genuine striving is possible on a more private level. Augustine’s rhetorical positioning of *uti* and *frui* hallmarks a summary cosmopolitan outlook and alludes to a waypoint whereat one of the two societies, namely the City of Men and the City of God, must be selected.

Good [people] use the world to this purpose of enjoying God; but wicked [people], want<sup>42</sup> to use God in order to enjoy the world.

*Boni quippe ad hoc utuntur mundo, ut fruuntur Deo; mali autem contra, ut fruuntur mundo, uti uolunt Deo.* (*civ. Dei*, XV: 7)

---

<sup>42</sup> They want to but cannot, due to the omnipotence they are up against.

Distinctive moral allegiances are treated as traits definite to each city, and the pagan aristocrat by the formula of using and enjoying must choose how he wants to expend his power.

## *POTESTAS AND CONSŪLERE*

### (a) Power

In context things are frequently used to aid a greater whole. The bible uses tropes and figures to convey divine messages and not as ostentatious ends in themselves.

It is a form of locution where it happens that something far greater is said than what is in the text<sup>43</sup> itself.

*Iste autem tropus, id est modus locutionis, fit, quando id quod dicitur longe est amplius, quam quod eo dicto significatur. (civ. Dei, XVI: 21)*

Likewise one's official power has to signify something analogically *far greater*. A pertinent instance thereof would be concerning the treatment of slaves as human beings with their own teleological value.

Having no delusions about the plight of many slaves Augustine maintains that slavery is a consequence of the Fall of Man (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 15). Originally only the irrational creation was to be subjugated by humans. Humans have been made rational, as a common endowment, in God's image (*rationalem factum ad imaginem suam*) (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 17). Therefore a human being has never been intended for enslavement by another human being, even though Augustine admits slavery as a just burden for sin<sup>44</sup>. The aristocratic reader is not to hold and treat slaves as if servility is a natural state, like an inborn system of caste. With pertinent argumentation he resorts to etymological speculation and explains the origin of the word *servus* in the Latin language:

The origin, however, of the word *servus* in the Latin language is believed to come from when those who could be killed by martial law were preserved; they were made servants, a name derived from their *preservation*. That was something which could not happen without the desert of sin, because, also when a just war is waged, the adversary

---

<sup>43</sup> The ablativus locativus *eo dicto* can be translated to a text in these idiomatically typical Latin clauses which is too cumbersome to translate directly.

<sup>44</sup> *Conditio quippe seruitutis iure intellegitur inposita peccatori. (civ. Dei, XIX: 15)*

fights back by sinning; and all victories, even when it accrues to the wicked, are the result of divine judgement which seeks to humble the vanquished either by removing or by punishing their sins.

*Origo autem uocabuli seruorum in Latina lingua inde creditur ducta, quod hi, qui iure belli possent occidi, a uictoribus cum seruabantur serui fiebant, a seruando appellati; quod etiam ipsum sine peccati merito non est. Nam et cum iustum geritur bellum, pro peccato e contrario dimicatur; et omnis uictoria, cum etiam malis prouenit, diuino iudicio uictos humiliat uel emendans peccata uel puniens. (civ. Dei, XIX: 15)*

So slavery is a corollary of sin and

consequently we do not read the word ‘slave’ in any part of Scripture before the righteous Noah appropriated the sin of his son with this appellation.

*proinde nusquam scripturarum legimus seruum, antequam hoc uocabulo Noe iustus peccatum filii uindicaret. (civ. Dei, XIX: 15)*

The sin is a slave to the son’s vices, and thus the concept of submission is the qualification of slavery and not the official arrangement, which is merely a consequence of that the idea thereof being manifested on a societal basis. An aristocrat in the Late Roman Empire has some power (*potestas*)<sup>45</sup> to a lesser or greater degree, but unless he would possess the will, aided by Augustine’s teleological input, to view his own authority and his own ability to control people’s actions in a wider teleological framework, that power could become an impediment to confronting truth and avoid both extrinsic and intrinsic vanity; for, abusing his power, he would sin.

O wretch who had the possibility to sin!<sup>46</sup>

*O miserum, cui peccare licebat! (civ. Dei, V: 26)*

As a result Augustine can denominate him as ‘a slave, and not to one man but, what is more troublesome, to as many masters as he has vices’ (*civ. Dei, IV: 3*)<sup>47</sup>, and to follow up on any teleological sentiment, as can be distilled from *De Civitate Dei*, is hard enough without

---

<sup>45</sup> *Potestas* is a term with which a Roman aristocrat would be much familiar. Whereas the headline of the next and final chapter, ‘One should enjoin the Peace of the City of God by eschewing *Vanitas* (Vanity) and confronting *Veritas* (Truth)’ can be directed at any pagan reader, the title of this chapter, ‘Using One’s Power in a teleologically correct Manner’ is particularly addressed to the pagan aristocrat reader as a preparation for the carrying out the following and more fundamental exhortation to truth.

<sup>46</sup> The citation is originally from Cicero’s *Tusculanae Disputationes* V: 19.

<sup>47</sup> *Seruus est, nec unius hominis, sed, quod est grauius, tot dominorum, quot uitiorum. (civ. Dei, IV: 3)*



having plenty of other masters keeping one occupied.

Otherwise there is nothing wrong with exercising just power, even though obedience seems coerced. Power is not intrinsically a distortion of justice; it is only so if misused.

Pride is neither the fault of the dispenser of power, nor of the power itself, but is the fault of the soul who inordinately loves its own power while a more just power of a mightier one is held in contempt.

*Nec superbia uitium est dantis potestatem uel ipsius etiam potestatis, sed animae peruerse amantis potestatem suam potentioris iustiore contempta. (civ. Dei, XII: 8)*

The mightier one (*potentior*) is clearly inferred here as God to whom all the power of the pagan aristocrat must be devoted. The pagan reader is told that his power is teleologically legitimate as long as he uses it for the proper ends and realizes that there are grades of power, from whose summit he as a mere human aristocrat, will always be far, just as there are grades of individual capacities.

Latin has a convenient etymological coherence between the noun *potestas* which means *power*<sup>48</sup> and *posse*, which means *to be able*. This makes it more lucid the logic of the semantic relationship of the noun and the verb than the Germanic equivalents in respectively English, German and Norwegian: *might* and *can*, *Macht* and *können*, *makt* and *kunne*. Power is nothing else than the constancy of possibilities to effect or affect something. Pride beyond self-dignity, id est *superbia*, is on the other hand that which corrupts power; and thus the old saying that ‘power corrupts’ is rendered obsolete, since it is in fact the same thing which corrupts power that in the end debases its proprietor, namely the act of volition in abusing and enjoying inordinately (vide p. 44, note 39). The citation from *De Civitate Dei* above (XII: 8) imbues the agent, the holder and dispenser of power with the ultimate responsibility and exonerates the notion of power as an automatically pejorative notion. When power is exercised by politicians to be instrumental (*uti*) and not exerted for its own sake (*frui*), it can be exercised with a proper understanding of *telos* for the good of humanity, so that people are united in a state nearest as possible to the eudemonia in the City of God; and one can get a clearer picture thereof with sociolinguistic attentiveness.

---

<sup>48</sup> *Potestas* is *power* in a more official and formal sense than *potentia*, which bears a connotation of innateness.

(b) Consulting

Here an expatiation upon the verb *consūlere* is in order; for the verb adumbrates the benevolent purpose of power, seeing that the dative *consūlere* has the meaning of ‘taking council for someone or something’, ‘having regard of the interest of someone’, or simply ‘look to’ (e.g. “I will look into it”) (Simpson, 1977, p. 144). *Consūlere* is politically connoted, intertwined with the apprehension of the Latin world and culture of the Romans. Consulate, the most prestigious office in the famous *cursus honorum* of a Roman’s political career, has a function to which the verb is conscientiously linked.

Hence it is that, not tolerating regal domination, [the Romans] nominated two generals for a year in office (*annua imperia*), who were called consuls from the verb *to consult* and not regents or lords connoted with *reigning* and *lording*.

*Hinc est quod regalem dominationem non ferentes annua imperia binosque imperatores sibi fecerunt, qui consules appellati sunt a consulendo, non reges aut domini a regnando atque dominando (civ. Dei, V: 12)*

The Romans see a consul as someone honourable and beneficial to the state in stark contrast to a king (*rex*). Domination at a whim is ruled out in the very etymology of the office; and so a more reasonable teleology lies behind a consul’s imperious decisions.

Exuding this rationale, a consulate instils more readily loyalty from those it seeks to control. I would suggest that *consūlere* for Augustine is virtually a teleological form of commanding as it invites a mode of ruling with the *telos* of the ruled in mind. The Romans seem to have a proper understanding of short term teleology<sup>49</sup> of authority, seeing that the consuls had been the two most powerful men in and for The Roman Republic for well near half a millennium.

In *De Civitate Dei* Augustine reveals the established microcosmic social contracts and power relationships in late antiquity which he accepted. Augustine’s discursive strategy is to remain within the bounds of long-established conventionalities, while he indicates an order of propriety:

---

<sup>49</sup> Neither in short is term or long term teleology is consulting God possible, because He is His own *telos* and that of the would-be consultant.

Nobody could have said that they had been taking care of a fountain, having drunk therefrom, or claim to had provided for light by having seen.

*Neque enim fonti se quisquam dixerit consuluisset, si biberit; aut luci, si uiderit. (civ. Dei, X: 5)*

So from here domestic peace has its provenience, id est the agreement of those living together on who are to obey and who are to command. For those who look for the interest of others, they are issuing commands; just as there are issued orders from husband to wife, parent to child, master to slave. Those whose interests are regarded, they obey; just as it is for women vis á vis their spouses, children vis á vis their parents, servants vis á vis their masters.<sup>50</sup>

*Hinc itaque etiam pax domestica oritur, id est ordinata imperandi oboediendique concordia cohabitantium imperant enim, qui consulunt; sicut uir uxori, parentes filiis, domini seruis. Oboediunt autem quibus consulitur; sicut mulieres maritis, filii parentibus, serui dominis. (civ. Dei, XIX: 14)*

What is detractable from the excerpt above is the vindication of *obidience*, which, rather than collapsing into opposition to self-assertiveness, impedimental to the dignity due to oneself as a human being, is performed because one is looked after. One obeys the laws of the state apparatus which in turn protects the individual from pure and arbitrary coercion, the very coercion which is not necessary if the right form of command is issued.

Admittedly the propriety of *consūlere* is delegated only to those who are “best suited” only by a conventional proviso. If one is to go along with the idea that those who are best suited are entitled to rule, Augustine would hereby imply that husbands know better than wives, father than sons and master than slaves. So Augustine is a man of his times but within his episteme he has carefully offered consulting as an axiomatic concomitancy with righteous authority and ordinate obedience in a kind of quid pro quo; the sentiments goes like *oboediunt autem quibus consulitur* and not *quibus imperatur*. Command does not by default imply subsequent coercion; it is purely an utterance with perlocutionary intent of realization, to put it somewhat technically. *Consūlere* is to command with consideration, with consideration to what is actually commanded and with consideration towards those who obey the command. To command without any consideration is to impart one’s will on other human beings as if one’s more elevated nature makes the will of others automatically subservient and deprioritized.

In that perspective Augustine aptly uses *consūlere* purely as a verb of virtue, when he applauds the ancient Romans in putting their country before themselves ‘with generous counselling’ (*consilio libero*) (*civ. Dei*, V: 15),

---

<sup>50</sup> The power relations are easily recognized from the dative in Latin; but, in my translation, English, due to its lack of grammatical cases, will have to support itself on circumlocution in order to achieve the same semantic effect.

for they do not command with the lust for rule but from the sense of duty to consult the interest of others, not from pride of authority but from compassion for providing.

*neque enim dominandi cupiditate imperant, sed officio consulendi nec principandi superbia, sed providendi misericordia. (civ. Dei, XIX: 14)*

Authority is as with power alluded to as having no innately negative traits, but it needs qualification of which Augustine herewith presents the concomitant duty to consult (*officio consulendi*), logically juxtaposed with a compassionate inclination to taking charge (*providendi misericordia*). Likewise those pagan aristocratic readers, who are also paterfamilias<sup>51</sup>, have fulfilled their role well, if with that duty and compassion in mind of Christian religiosity.

Those who are true paterfamilias will urge everyone in the household as sons to worship and merit God.

*Qui autem ueri patres familias sunt, omnibus in familia sua tamquam filiis ad colendum et promerendum Deum consulunt. (civ. Dei, XIX: 16)*

#### (c) The true Motive and true Authority of Power

The society on earth (*civitas terrena*) bears some similarities to the real, id est eternal *civitas*, but it has fundamental deficiencies. It is not eternal (*sempiterna non erit*) (*civ. Dei, XV: 4*), and therefore any power therein is hinted to be a means to an end and not an end in itself. No worldly power and political action can have any justification without the teleological sanction of God, no matter how omnipresent and omnipotent it may seem.

That was an elegant and frank answer which the captured pirate gave to Alexander the Great. When the famous king questioned the pirate why it seemed to him that the ocean should be infested, the pirate [asked in return] with liberal contumacy: “What do you mean by infesting the whole earth? Because I scourge with a small ship, I am called a bandit, and because you do it with a navy you are called a general.”

*Eleganter enim et ueraciter Alexandro illi Magno quidam comprehensus pirata respondit. Nam cum idem rex hominem interrogaret, quid ei uideretur, ut mare haberet infestum, ille libera contumacia: Quod tibi, inquit, ut orbem terrarum; sed*

---

<sup>51</sup> The other option, as to the social positions of the aristocrat, is to be one of these sons, whereby the reader can interpret it as an appeal to filial piety.

*quia id ego exiguo nauigio facio, latro uocor; quia tu magna classe, imperator. (civ. Dei, IV: 4)*

Nevertheless, as showed in the excerpt from the nineteenth book of *De Civitate Dei*, it is the sacrificial attitude of serving one's country which makes plundering in the name of an Empire relatively better than acting similarly for one's own personal benefit. This proclivity for sacrifice does not, however, convey true saintliness. Those aristocrats who behave well with their power because of wanted respect from one's fellow men, and not by the power of the Holy Spirit by the faith of piety 'does not achieve holiness but are simply less base' (*non quidem iam sancti, sed minus turpes sunt*) (*civ. Dei, V: 13*). 'It is therefore without doubt better that this lust is resisted than yielded to' (*civ. Dei, V: 14*)<sup>52</sup>.

Augustine further postulates what distinguishes true virtuous people from apparently virtuous people. It is this: That in the former there resides a greater love for truth than for human praise (*ibidem*). This is a provision Augustine infuses in a dilemma, wherein truth is deprioritized as second rate and societal procedures get in trouble. In the case of extracting truthful information during lawsuits torture is prevalent at the time of Augustine, and its ill-considered congruency with genuine truth is acutely discerned by him. He says:

If one has chosen, according to the wisdom of some men<sup>53</sup>, to die rather than endure longer the torments, one will plead guilty even though one is innocent. When the tormented is found guilty and put to death, the judge is still uncertain whether or not he has killed the real culprit or an innocent person whom he has tortured lest he kill in ignorance an innocent; consequently the judge has tortured someone to learn about his innocence and killed him while not yet<sup>54</sup> knowing about it.

*Si enim secundum istorum sapientiam elegerit ex hac uita fugere quam diutius illa sustinere tormenta: quod non commisit, commisisse se dicit. Quo damnato et occiso, utrum nocentem an innocentem iudex occiderit, adhuc nescit, quem ne innocentem nesciens occideret torsit; ac per hoc innocentem et ut sciret torsit, et dum nesciret occidit. (civ. Dei, XIX: 6)*

A judge employed in the state apparatus is a human being and ultimately answerable to God. Every human is responsible to God whose authority justifies and condemns any act. Augustine compares the illicit arbitrariness of a private soldier acting in disregard of his

---

<sup>52</sup> Huic igitur cupiditati melius resistitur sine dubitatione quam ceditur. (*civ. Dei, V: 14*)

<sup>53</sup> The anaphoric *istorum* (of those) intrudes in the flow of the translation, if it is made literal.

<sup>54</sup> The imperfect tense heralds this addition of *yet* in the translation.

general, to that of any human vis-à-vis God. This exemplifies what Augustine deems to be the precariousness of self-reliance:

When a soldier kills a person, being obedient to the authorities under whichever he is lawfully placed, he would not be indicted for homicide by any law of the state. On the contrary, unless he has killed the man, he would be accused of being a deserter of the [Roman] Empire and of holding it in contempt. The [same thing]<sup>55</sup>, if done at his own whim and authority, would incur the incrimination of having spilled human blood.

*Miles cum oboediens potestati, sub qualibet legitime constitutus est, hominem occidit, nulla civitatis suae lege reus est homicidii, immo, nisi fecerit, reus est imperii deserti atque contempti; quod si sua sponte atque auctoritate fecisset, crimen effusi humani sanguinis incidisset. (civ. Dei, I: 26)*

So it is the will of God which in the last instance decides whether or not an act is useful or not and therefore permissible or sometimes obligatory. Even standard a priori precepts are rendered to no more than rules with room for exceptions. There is of course a fine but often fatal line between receiving an actual divine invocation and injunction and psychologically imagining these for one's own private benefit, which has often been a potential problem in enthusiastic religion, but Augustine seems satisfied with this terse warning at the question on suicide:

Therefore the one who has heard it is not permitted to kill oneself, he may commit suicide if God, whose orders it is not lawful to disparage, orders it, provided that the person in question be very sure that a divine command has been issued.<sup>56</sup>

*Qui ergo audit non licere se occidere, faciat, si iussit cuius non licet iussa contemnere; tantummodo videat utrum diuina iussio nullo nutet incerto. (civ. Dei, I: 26)*

As adumbrated by Augustine, such a complete gravity centred on the will of God, subsuming one's own, guides the soul to true peace of which I will discuss in the following chapter.

---

<sup>55</sup> The Latin *quod* links the two clauses in an antithesis, but in the English there is need for some kind of anaphoric elucidation of the dilemma.

<sup>56</sup> The last sentence is almost entirely translated on sense. The literal translation, *must see to it that the divine command leaves nothing in doubt*, indeed leaves something in doubt for the English reader.

## 6

### One should enjoin oneself to the Peace of the City of God by eschewing *Vanitas* (Vanity) and confronting *Veritas* (Truth)

---

#### VARIETIES OF PEACE

##### (a) Peace as an axiomatic Necessity

Robert Dodaro states that Augustine's 'religious and moral use of terms like justice (*iustitia*) and its allied civic virtues, such as piety (*pietas*) and mercy (*misericordia*), consistently overlaps with his political usage of them' (Dodaro, 2004, p. 77). Filial piety (*pietas*), pity (*misericordia*) and justice (*iustitia*) (vide chapter five passim) are seen as being fulfilled rather than challenged by a Christian ethical outlook. This is a tendency of Augustine's which, I would claim, also includes *pax*<sup>57</sup>; and that provides an indispensable link between the pagan and politically conscious reader and the rubric of peace in the teleology of *De Civitate Dei*.

Particularly with *pax* the overt overlap is a communicative asset for the teleological message which is eponymous with the title of this chapter, namely that one should enjoin oneself to the peace of the City of God, by avoiding vanity and confronting truth. Augustine's emphasis on vanity and verity is much more needed to be extrapolated into his texts that what he sees as an axiomatic wish for peace (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 12). That is why it is rather the self-evident necessity and usage of peace, (even of wicked men), that is explicitly discussed by Augustine:

Wars are waged with peace as their purpose, even by those who indulge their warlike disposition in commanding and fighting. Hence it is clear that peace is the most desirable end of war; because every human seeks peace by waging war, but nobody seeks war by peacemaking.

---

<sup>57</sup> The pagan reader with a classical education would have encountered *pax* mostly in a political sense. In Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes*, from which Augustine quoted frequently in *De Civitate Dei*, and whose all five books are explicitly about the mind, *pax* occurs twice with a psychological implication (Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* V: 16.48; V: 29.83). With Augustine, however, the reader is about to encounter the concept of peace in both senses simultaneously.

*Pacis...intentione geruntur et bella, ab his etiam, qui uirtutem bellicam student exercere imperando atque pugnando. Vnde pacem constat belli esse optabilem finem. Omnis enim homo etiam belligerando pacem requirit; nemo autem bellum pacificando. (civ. Dei, XIX: 12)*

Augustine shrewdly argues that even peace which is disturbed is occasioned by a craving for yet another peace more suitable to those who interrupted the initial peace (*ut ea [pax] sit quam uolunt*) (civ. Dei, XIX: 12). I think it applies irrespectively whether the peace is disturbed by good or bad people, because at the most private level each human seeks to achieve ataraxia, which is peace of one's own mind.

It is even necessary for a thing perverted to be both on accords with some part of the order of things and be peaceful in it and exist or by it continue to remain firm [in its perversity] otherwise it would not be at all.

*Quod autem peruersum est, etiam hoc necesse est ut in aliqua et ex aliqua et cum aliqua rerum parte pacatum sit, in quibus est uel ex quibus constat; alioquin nihil esset omnino. (civ. Dei, XIX: 12)*

Thus Augustine equipoises existent natures with peace, because every nature is created from God; and this theory he takes all the way. 'Not even the nature of the Devil Himself is evil', Augustine acknowledges and the very fact that Satan *suffers* in Hell is an indication of some residue of goodness; 'for if nothing good was left, he [the Devil] could not be in pains for the good that has been lost' (civ. Dei, XIX: 13)<sup>58</sup>. Preceding these sentiments Augustine has most interestingly maintained that Hell is in fact a place where some peace remains because of the congruency between the activities in Hell and the original nature of the inhabitants (*quantacumque congruentia coaptantur*). If they were all rejoicing in hell they would all go against their nature and that would be much worse. Hence Hell is paradoxically a place of order bringing about 'some tranquillity' (*ordinis tranquillitas*) and 'therefore some peace' (*ergo nonnulla pax*) in that dreadful place (*ibidem*). Regrettably for the Devil, God will always be his nature's *telos*, and he will therefore never be whole as himself. The Devil's nature subsists in God (civ. Dei, XXII: 24) and in spite of the Devil's reduced being he still exists on some level (*aliquo modo*)<sup>59</sup>.

Moreover, in order to bring about this private peace, another peace with one's closest

---

<sup>58</sup> Nec ipsius diaboli natura, in quantum natura est, malum est... Nisi enim bonum relictum esset, bonum amissum dolere non posset. (civ. Dei, XIX: 23)

<sup>59</sup> Quando quidem, ut ipsius quoque diaboli natura subsistat, ille facit qui summe est et facit esse quidquid aliquo modo est. (civ. Dei, XXII: 24)



neighbour is welcome, either for egoistic or for selfless reasons, but only the selfless person will actually achieve ataraxia, for an altruistic state of mind bears a closer resemblance to God whom Augustine depicts as utterly gratuitous towards mankind. God's final cause to create humans is stated in the very beginning of *Confessiones*: 'You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you' (*conf. I: 1.1*)<sup>60</sup>. And in *De Civitate Dei* he further adduces God's final intention for mankind 'to enjoy God and each other in God' (*civ. Dei XIX: 17*) (vide p. 46).

(b) The false Peace of The City of Men and the true Peace of the City of God

Peace, as Augustine shows, can be used in very wide terms. He proceeds with examples of situations in which the word is imputed with more and more cynical overtones and bears less and less resemblance with the altruistic heavenly peace in the City of God. Sedition or a conspiracy is helpless where it lacks internal peace; but those are caricatures of peace, scarcely situations eligible for such an application.

Thus he who prefers what is right to what is depraved and the well-ordered to the corrupted, he sees that the peace of the unjust is not to be called peace in comparison with the peace of the just.

*Itaque pacem iniquorum in pacis comparatione iustorum ille uidet nec pacem esse dicendam, qui nouit praeponere recta prauis et ordinata peruersis. (civ. Dei, XIX: 12)*

This peace is instigated by a motive, and so it is cynically teleological.

God has and is absolute peace as He is absolutely immutable in His essence (*civ. Dei, VII: 30*). Teleology then offers an opportunity to experience what can at least be *called* the happy life (*civ. Dei, XIX: 20*)<sup>61</sup>. If one's faculty of volition conforms itself to proper ordering of the divine hierarchy of existential value, one approximates what is Being. True peace is the prerogative of the heavenly city, the City of God. It is because this city is the only one actively expressing the created nature of a *civitas*, a society; thus it is the essence of society. The City of God is not mentioned to have, like the cities of earth, an order of command and

---

<sup>60</sup> Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te. (*conf. I: 1.1*)

<sup>61</sup> I owe this observation to Bonnie Kent as she deliberations on a related theme of Augustine's notion of happiness. (Kent 2001, "Augustinian Ethics" in *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, p. 211)

concordance in obeying; and it is *still* the most ordered and harmonious in comparison with them.

Civil peace is an arranged concord of citizens on who obey and who command; the peace of heaven is flawless harmony and this perfectly ordered.

*Pax ciuitatis ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia ciuium, pax caelestis ciuitatis ordinatissima et concordissima. (civ. Dei, XIX: 13)*

The peace of heaven is invested with superlatives in juxtaposition to the civil peace attained on earth, which is classified more like an ersatz peace; it is definitely to be used and to effect as much good as possible, but since its length of time is uncertain, likely to disappear and even be a source of malcontent as the ‘wrong sort of peace’ it cannot be *enjoyed (frui)* in a teleological sense. Detected at length by the malcontent as a false peace, it is its own cause of dissolution.

Those vices in love which Terence recites, “insults, suspicions, hostility, intermittent war and peace”, do they not fill up human affairs everywhere? Do they not often occur in sincere friendships? And peace is indeed precarious, since we do not know the heart of those with whom we want to keep it. Even if we happened to know it today, we would do well in not making any claim to know what those hearts would be like the day after.

*Illa, quae in amore uitia commemorat idem Terentius, “iniuriae suspiciones, inimicitiae bellum, pax rursus”: nonne res humanas ubique impleuerunt? nonne et in amicorum honestis amoribus plerumque contingunt? ... pacem uero incertum bonum, quoniam corda eorum, cum quibus eam tenere uolumus, ignoramus, et si hodie nosse possemus, qualia cras futura essent utique nesciremus. (civ. Dei, XIX: 5)*

The uncertainty contained in its experience is what renders a mortal life unsuitable for total ontic investment. Heaven is the only thing worthy of orientation in this life,

where God will be everything in everyone in certain perpetuity and perfect peace.

*ubi erit Deus omnia in omnibus, aeternitate certa et pace perfecta. (civ. Dei, XIX: 20)*

This ‘perfect peace’ is the peace which Augustine wants the reader to seek and finally join;

that is why we can say that our final good is peace.

*quapropter possemus dicere fines bonorum nostrorum esse pacem, (civ. Dei, XIX: 11)*

## VANITY AND TRUTH

### (a) Towards Nothing

Arraying peace with a diversity of contextual repercussions Augustine entices the philosophical disposed reader on to figure out how peace without imperfection and termination is a fitting *telos*, even though life's vicissitudes, cited by Terence (vide above), are obstructing the attainment of true happiness along with humans habituated sinfulness. Still the reader is not discouraged in the pursuance of an ethical policy, sustaining mortality as a prelude to the Heavenly City, a cathartic approximation to God. Otherwise the whole text of *De Civitate Dei* would be obsolete for other purposes than reading and exercising Latin grammar and style; for

if which way to take is ignored or unknown then there is not much good in knowing where to go.<sup>62</sup>

*Si autem desit aut ignoretur qua eundum sit, quid prodest nosse quo eundum sit? (civ. Dei, XI: 2)*

Augustine emphasizes the importance of this notion of *via*. He describes Jesus Christ the Human as Way (*via*) (*ibidem*). What helps in following the Truth on the Way to Life, is to avoid the quagmires of falsity, to discontinue acts motivated by vanity, leading to teleological emptiness.

Emptiness, falsity and vanity are notions which are all contained in the Latin word *vanitas*. It is also very appositely translatable to *untruth* in antagonism between *veritas*. The noun occurs no less than 72 times in *De Civitate Dei* and often within citations from biblical passages<sup>63</sup>. It is a concept which very much constructs and leads the teleological outlook which the pagan aristocrat should progressively obtain during the process of reading, and hence its implementation in ethical discourse is worthy of inspection.

Since Augustine is convinced that existence has a goal and that the goal is the very eudemonia which he has sought for in vain before his conversion and since, moreover, that happiness is only attainable in God, *pointlessness* in eudaemonistic endeavours is indicated as

---

<sup>62</sup> I have translated *desit* as ignored for that which is outside is ignored; and *ignoretur* is actually in Latin idiom often a replacement for not knowing. Confer *ignorantia* as a 'want of knowledge' and the contracted first person singular subjunctive past perfect of *nōscere* (*to know*), *noram* (Simpson, 1977, p.184; 285; 396).

<sup>63</sup> *Vanus*, the adjective which blemish any noun with the attributes of *vanitas*, occurs 49 times.

the hallmark of the plain lack, whether deliberately or by ignorance, of acknowledgement of the true God. It is a lack of recognition of *telos* and thus a hole in the teleological matrix which sustains a *raison d'être*.

In the contexts of *De Civitate Dei* I would define vanity in its ontic core as a disoriented attention, which is devoid of meaning and profit in the teleology wherein it is reckoned. As a more universal example: When someone spends too much ontic energy on physical appearance, on glory and on fame as ends in themselves, that someone is on the wrong track. These acts are vain precisely because they are ultimately *in vain*, given the mistaken orientation in which they are perpetrated. Teleologically according to Augustine, they would lead to nowhere.

Pursuing this rationale, *vanus* is the adjective which is ascribed by Augustine generically to pagan philosophical enterprises (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 1). Augustine reduces the pre-Christian philosophical endeavours to 'worthless things' (*rebus vanis*) in comparison with the hope (*nostra spes*) which Christians have in anticipation of their *telos*, a hope that they have received and whose fulfilment will be given to them as 'true beatitude' (*vera beatitudo*) (*ibidem*). Augustine's fellow Christians, with whom he wants the aristocratic pagan to unify, have an explicit *telos* to which to look forward. That is their hope with which they can sustain a degree of the genuine happiness, albeit temporal.

The seemingly happiness of the wicked is nothing but vanity. Their *telos* is non-existent. In fact a sinful life and a thorough disregard of God's precepts are teleological reductions ad minimum.

For whoever exists, is this, a keeper of God's commandments; because the person who is not this is nothing, for he is not reformed to the image of Truth but remains in the likeness of vanity.

*Quicumque enim est, hoc est, custos utique mandatorum Dei; quoniam qui hoc non est, nihil est; non enim ad veritatis imaginem reformatur, remanens in similitudine vanitatis. (civ. Dei, XX: 3)*

Here *vanitas* is signified as the emptiness from which one is created and *veritas* as the truth which is Existence, by whom one is created. The quote moreover raises the issue of human beings being created in God's likeness. What does it mean to be an image of something or somebody? Gerald Bonner rightly claims in his discussion of Augustine's doctrine of sacrifice that 'the efficacy of any image depends on the relation to its original' (Bonner, 1991, p. 103). Hence only an upholder (*custos*) of divine justice reflects truthfully the original Divinity and fulfils its destiny as an image. The emptiness or vanity of an image occurs when it is

rendered dissimilar to what it reflects through a prism constituted of acts which avert from the nature of what it is supposed to reflect. It is a possibility which arises from Augustine's idea on the cause of evil which is grounded on the dogma of creation *ex nihilo*. Every created thing has the potential for evil because it is created 'out of nothing' (*ex nihilo*). Angels and humans alike are made *by* God (*ab illo*) but not *of* God (*de illo*) but of nothing (*de nihilo*) (*civ. Dei*, XII: 1)<sup>64</sup>.

Accordingly human volition has the prerequisite to defect from what is ultimately Existence, *id est* God. In a consideration on human ontics and moral choices Augustine delegates all efficient causality to God and adds deficient causes into the discourse, which Woodfield's example of the house fails to include (*vide p. 14*), in order to explain evil<sup>65</sup>:

I know this: that the nature of God can never and nowhere be deficient, but that something, which is made from nothing, can. Still, they exist more thoroughly inasmuch they do good deeds, for then they actually *do something* and have an efficient cause. But insofar they defect [from God]; they sin and have deficient causes, for what are their acts but empty?<sup>66</sup>

*Hoc scio, naturam Dei numquam, nusquam, nulla ex parte posse deficere, et ea posse deficere, quae ex nihilo facta sunt. Quae tamen quanto magis sunt et bona faciunt (tunc enim aliquid faciunt), causas habent efficientes; in quantum autem deficiunt et ex hoc mala faciunt (quid enim tunc faciunt nisi uana?), causas habent deficientes.* (*civ. Dei*, XII: 8)

Since symptoms of evil have their cause in nothingness, that cause has no essence (*essentialis nulla sit causa*) (*civ. Dei*, XII: 9). Evil acts are indeed in vain and empty (*vana*) of any teleological point. Ergo, to oppose God is futile, if the motive is self-realization, and Augustine quotes a psalm of the Old Testament to corroborate this contention: 'What his heart spoke made no sense' (*uana locutum est cor eius*) (*civ. Dei*, XVII: 18). It made no sense by

---

<sup>64</sup> Quae fecit, bona quidem esse, quod ab illo, uerum tamen mutabilia, quod non de illo, sed de nihilo facta sunt. (*civ. Dei*, XII: 1)

<sup>65</sup> A. M. Fairweather argues that Augustine compared with Thomas Aquinas has a cosmic sense of evil influenced by his Manichean leanings and that he never seems to have freed himself from such leanings. The sequence of the 22 books attests to this. There is no surprise that by a person like Augustine, who searches for a meaning and a purpose with his own life and with the world, evil as a theme seems alluded to be an existent force; but his cosmological sense of evil never excludes in *De Civitate Dei* evil's inferiority vis-à-vis good and its position as *vanitas* (emptiness).

<sup>66</sup> I think that translating both *nusquam* and *nulla ex parte* would be redundant, and that what can be considered as a pleonasm is merely an emphasis on the simplicity of God, I have put the translation of *aliquid faciunt* in italics to emphasize Augustine's effort in his rhetoric to bring home the point.

the very fact that it was against God, which for Augustine is the focal point of all meaningfulness. Indeed Augustine has cited another verse of the Psalms (94: 11) not long earlier in the same book, notifying the reader that whatever thoughts (*cogitationes*) conceived, which are not from God (*ab illo*), are in vain (*vanae*) (*civ. Dei*, XVII: 4).

Manichaean supposed piety is based on vanity, because it is based upon an all too human perspective (*civ. Dei*, XIV: 5). Marcus Dods has translated Augustine's commentary on the psychology behind their dogma about the evilness of the body and the goodness of the soul into the following: 'These things derive from human fancy and not from divine truth' (*id uanitate sentit humana, non ueritate diuina*). I think *fancy* is quite an extended translation of *vanitas*, but it underscores the point that capriciousness is a hallmark of a dogma constructed on the basis of human experience. Manicheans are fallacious promulgators of truth, according to the ex-Manichean Augustine, and their vanity or futility is symptomatic of conflating condition (*habitus*) with nature (*natura*)<sup>67</sup>, so that with Augustine's intellectual spectacles Manichean duality is not at all discussing true cosmology and teleology but simply proffers what human cognizance undergoes as a consequence of a compromised nature.

The reader must disentangle himself from any paradigm having its foundation on vanity. Presumptions that the gods will protect them are deceptive (*quanta sit uanitate praesumptum*) (*civ. Dei*, I: 3) for it is based on wishful thinking. The risk of not being attentive enough thereof is to waste one's life on adiafora which will confiscate too much time. Life is full of undertakings and entertainments which are pointless, exactly because of the vain presumptions of pagan religion, especially when what is founded on fictive pretence become incursive in society, like a pointless and immoral sit-com. The reader is told that the games he frequents are constituted on false stories (*uanitati deputant fabularum...unde ludi fierent*) (*civ. Dei*, XVIII: 12), and thus the description of that particular participation of the pagan aristocrat demonstrates that *vanitas* stands in contraposition to truth as a mistake of teleological prioritizing; so such events are not simply adiaforous but outright detrimental to a determinate confrontation with truth. Therefore the error of teleological orientation is what produces wickedness and not the things to which one turns. These things are not necessarily evil but the prioritizing of them on behalf of what is closer to *telos* is what effects evil (*efficitur mala*) (*civ. Dei*, XII: 6).

Augustine issues a caveat to the reader, in the description of the body and mind of human beings as somethings which not purely *are* because of their mutability. He compares

---

<sup>67</sup> Manichaeans believed evil has its own nature, the same evil that operates in human bodies and from which the human soul, which is purely good, try to escape.

the mental components of a human being with a cup of water which has something which it is not:

Hence [these things] can be deprived of what they *have* and turn into other conditions or qualities and change; so that a vase can be emptied of its liquid, a body can be discoloured, the air darkened or grow cold, and the soul can lose its wisdom.<sup>68</sup>

*Hinc est quod etiam priuari possunt rebus, quas habent, et in alios habitus uel qualitates uerti atque mutari, ut et uas euacuetur umore quo plenum est, et corpus decoloretur et aer tenebrescat siue frigescat et anima desipiat. (civ. Dei, XI: 10)*

The implicit exhortation shows the pedagogic side of Augustine's rhetoric. Most people have an aversion of growing foolish with the years (*desipiat*), and hereby the reader's emptiness is presumed in the fact that he still lives and has not yet met his efficient or final cause. The farther a thing is from the most indivisible Trinity the less reliable it is to persist in its intended being; the more a lie a thing is based on, the more unstable<sup>69</sup> it becomes. Next to heavenly fulfilment this life is virtually nothing and a human is affected by this as he is living it (*ista vita mortalis, ubi homo uanitati similis factus est*) (*civ. Dei, XXI: 24*).

#### (b) The Exigency of Truth

While *vanitas* is to be avoided *veritas* is to be sought. *Veritas* stands in opposition to *vanitas* in the following manner: *Veritas* which means truth, the adjective *verus* (true) and *verax* (truthful) and the adverb *ueraciter* (truly, truthfully) are contributing to counterpoint the derivatives of *vanitas*, and they comprise a theme which adumbrates how to prevent the detrimental tendency of *vanitas* in the human condition on earth. By knowing the genuine article contra a fallacious version of a concept, whether it be a sacrifice, a god, a cosmological theory or an ethical precept, there can be a conscious approach towards the only true society which fulfils with superlatives the definition of people and of state, the City of God, which is 'eternally truthful and truthful for all eternity' (*semper ueracem et ueraciter sempiterna*) (*civ. Dei, IX: 21*).

It is also naturally a state of blessedness, given that the owner of the City is the Giver

---

<sup>68</sup> To translate *desipiat* to *lose one's wisdom* is somewhat liberal. However, as Augustine is relating to things which can be lost, to translate *desipiat* as *will act foolishly* is improper.

<sup>69</sup> *Vanus* in the *Aeneid*, which the pagan aristocrat very likely has read, can mean *untruthful*, *fickle*, *untrustworthy* and *unstable* (Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI: 283).

of felicity (*dator felicitatis*) (*civ. Dei*, IV: 25). That is why Augustine imputes eudaemonistic self-contradictoriness to the notion of metempsychosis in the eudemonistic theory of the Platonists, and gives credit to Porphyry for abjuring this opinion and to Christianity for possibly, and in any event surreptitiously, influencing him for that abjuration (*civ. Dei*, XII: 20)<sup>70</sup>. This life is ‘where truth is held in hatred’ (*ubi odio ueritas habeatur*) (*ibidem*) and metempsychosis would perpetuate an interposition of falseness which would in turn make existence very dystopic in Augustine’s eyes. The finality of *telos* in Augustinian thinking is absolute, and it is argued that this is imperative for the obtainment of true blessedness. If true beatitude is to be achieved, no possibility of relapse can be existent.

How can they claim that the more a man loves God, the more readily he reaches beatitude, when they also teach something which makes love itself become dull? For who would feel love more negligent and tepid for someone whom he thinks he must abandon by necessity, and from whose truth and wisdom he will [eventually] avert? And this will happen when he has arrived at the most complete awareness of perfect happiness of which he is capable. When can one love [even] a human friend with fidelity, of whom one knows one will become an enemy?

*Quo modo ergo fatentur, quanto plus quisque amauerit Deum, tanto eum facilius ad beatitudinem peruenturum, qui ea docent, quibus amor ipse torpescat? Nam quis non remissius et tepidius amet eum, quem se cogitat necessario deserturum et contra eius ueritatem sapientiamque sensurum, et hoc cum ad eius plenam pro sua capacitate notitiam beatitudinis perfectione peruenerit? quando nec hominem amicum possit quisque amare fideliter, cui se futurum nouit inimicum. (civ. Dei, XII: 20)*

Tepid, lukewarm love will not do for Augustine, probably referring to Revelation (3.16). Cicero is stripped of authority as a philosopher by the simple fact of being an Academic Sceptic and not taking a solid and clear philosophical standpoint (*civ. Dei*, IV: 30). A lover of God, a lover of Wisdom, id est a philosopher cannot be sceptical about what he loves and in the process of loving. *De civitate Dei* requests an absolute choice to love.

Augustine views himself, as is apparent from his didactics, that he is promulgating the truth of wisdom to the pagan reader, not a hypothesis on the order of things. A claim to undisputable truth, however, necessitates a higher degree of rapport between a reader and an author.

---

<sup>70</sup> Si enim de istis circuitibus et sine cessatione alternantibus itionibus et reditionibus animarum Porphyrius Platonius suorum opinionem sequi noluit, siue ipsius rei uanitate permotus siue iam tempora Christiana reueritus. (*civ. Dei*, XII: 20)



It is a great matter which is at stake, when true and holy divinity, which affords to us the support needed for the fragility of the life we now live, is being preached to be sought and worshipped on account of the blessed life which is eternal and not on account of this mortality, which is like transitory vapour.<sup>71</sup>

*Multum magna res agitur, cum uera et uere sancta diuinitas, quamuis ab ea nobis etiam huic, quam nunc gerimus, fragilitati necessaria subsidia praebeantur, non tamen propter mortalis uitae transitorium uaporem, sed propter uitam beatam, quae non nisi aeterna est, quaerenda et colenda praedicatur (civ. Dei, VII: praefatio).*

To preach truth is a grave matter because of what is at stake; which is both the magnitude and longevity of the consequences of evangelical misinterpretation. Accordingly, the work of *De Ciuitate Dei* have queries whose solutions require the help from God, lord of truth (*Domino Deo ueritatis adiuuante*) (*civ. Dei*, XIII, 24), since Augustine himself is a finite being.

In the aftermath of having read *De Civitate Dei* the stake are still there in every day experiences, God is needed as a helper and sacrifices must be made by the former pagan. ‘A true sacrifice’ is to devote oneself to truth.

A true sacrifice is the total enterprise (in life) which leads us to union with God in the Holy Society. In fact it relates to the final cause of good by which we can be truly happy.

*Verum sacrificium est omne opus, quo agitur, ut sancta societate inhaereamus Deo, relatum scilicet ad illum finem boni, quo ueraciter beati esse possimus. (civ. Dei, X: 6)*

Thus enjoining oneself to the City of God by a sincere effort is a true sacrifice to which every soul is invoked<sup>72</sup>.

The sacrifice of time spent reading *De Civitate Dei* is futile and false, if it is enticed by an interest to undermine whatever claims to truth one might find therein. At the first clash with *De Civitate Dei* as a philosophical treatise, argumentativeness could have reduced the pagan aristocratic to pettiness so that he would be anxious to defend his established paradigm. Confronting truth requires a focus which eschews the vain motive of debative victories.

As Cicero says, logomachy distorts petty Greeks as they are more concerned with controversy than truth.

---

<sup>71</sup> A repetition is appropriate here, since anaphoric use of pronouns is different in Latin from English; also, to translate *multum* would turn into an odd pleonasm in English idiom.

<sup>72</sup> This is in stark contrast to how Augustine describes the honours made to the Roman gods. In those cases a sacrifice is done in that of falseness (*civ. Dei*, XVIII: 12).

*Ut ait Tullius [de. orat. I: 11.47], uerbi controuersia iam diu torqueat homines Graeculos contentionis cupidiores quam ueritatis (civ. Dei, IX: 5)*

Discussions and argumentations have a final cause and are not ends in themselves; as a means to an end they exist to facilitate the discovery of truth; hence in an extended sense Augustine exhorts the reader to enjoin one's motive as seeking truth, all the while eschewing vanity, vanity as a consequence of a narrow self-interest confined within a distorted teleology.

(c) Right and wrong Orientation

By being obsessed with objects with no or little intrinsic teleological value, the will deteriorates into vanity.

Because when the will turns from superior things to inferior, evil ensues, not because it is evil that to which one turns, but since disorientation itself is a perversity. That is why the inferior thing does not make the will bad, but one has depravedly and inordinately coveted the inferior thing, since it is created.

*Cum enim se uoluntas relicto superiore ad inferiora conuertit, efficitur mala, non quia malum est, quo se conuertit, sed quia peruersa est ipsa conuersio. Idcirco non res inferior uoluntatem malam fecit, sed rem inferiorem praue atque inordinate, ipsa quia facta est, adpetiuit. (civ. Dei, XII: 6)*

While *veritas* represent what actually *is*, *vanitas* represents a mirage thereof and in actuality represents pointless nothingness. That is why Augustine sees vanity (*vanitas*) as the evil act of turning to inferior things further from God, and hence the concept is a regular deterrent in the teleology of *De Civitate Dei*. Every evil has only an extrinsic value, inasmuch it is allowed for the greater good of free will, and has no *intrinsic* value in the evaluation of ontic worth, for absolute evil is non-being (*civ. Dei*, XI: 9).

Good men can indeed use the wicked by this ordinance (*utantur malis boni*) (*civ. Dei*, XVI: 2). I have yet to come across an Augustinian passage that indicates bad men's use of the good in the sense using (*uti*) is propagated as a purposeful act in teleological asymptocity. Even though Augustine explicitly admits that injustice 'exploits good persons as well as evil ones' (*civ. Dei*, XIII: 5)<sup>73</sup>, this is always a *misuse*, and because the purposes of the wicked are

---

<sup>73</sup> Sed quem ad modum iniustitia male utitur non tantum malis, uerum etiam bonis. (*civ. Dei*, XIII: 5) In order to avoid *vanitas* one needs to know what to use (*uti*) and what to enjoy (*frui*), since there exists a qualification for teleological using (vide p. 44).

*misplaced too, id est that evil people use good people for their own twisted purposes, they do not use anything or anyone in a proper sense, for, (as mentioned in the previous chapter (p. 46), ‘whoever uses something badly does not use it’ (div. qu. XXX).*

God is not liable to this, He who is the Ultimate Good and makes use of good and bad alike on a cosmic scale.

Those whom [God] foreknows will be condemned are made not in vain [but] are made for the use of those to be saved and for the comparison of the two Cities by mutual contrast. God has done so by His most beautiful and just decree on the whole rational creation.<sup>74</sup>

*Quos liberandos non esse praesciuit, ad utilitatem liberandorum et comparisonem duarum inter se a contrario ciuitatum non utique uane in totius rationalis creaturae pulcherrima atque iustissima ordinatione constituit. (civ. Dei, XVII: 11)*

Even though everything which is created from nothing has a proclivity towards *vanitas*, the designed act of creation itself is never done in vain (*vane*), and this applies for seemingly failures as well; otherwise God would have been liable to error.

Evil is emptiness and does not have its source in God, since God is in no way deficient (*nulla ex parte posse deficere*), and one must therefore look to one’s own will to fathom the source of defection. Contrasting cities comprise a convenient polarization of ontic wills with God as the standard of measurement. The deliberate avoidance of *vanitas* is a voluntary choice, a conduit to the City of God and a safeguarding of one’s *telos*.

Two kinds of love form two cities, the Earthly City by the love of itself so far as contempt for God, and the Heavenly City by the love of God so far as contempt for itself.

*Fecerunt itaque ciuitates duas amores duo, terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei, caelestem uero amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui. (civ. Dei, XIV: 28)*

The choice hereof is matter of which type of love by which one is moved, and the wrong choice is hard to discern from the right one, since *truth* is what the opposite scheme of vanity is; and so vanity deceives the vain person himself.

---

<sup>74</sup> This translation is heavily influenced by Marcus Dods, but for clarity I have made the first clause more in synchrony with the communicated meaning. *Quos liberandos non esse praesciuit* is a litotic clause, which literally means ‘those whom God does not foreknow to be saved’, and does not limit God’s omniscience.

In these two men, so in in two families, likewise in two peoples and accordingly in two realms there comes a rule of justice by which, when vigilantly applied and if we rightly order our motive, we will easily see where happiness [dwells] or the fallacious appearance thereof.

*In his duobus hominibus, ita in duabus familiis, ita in duobus populis, ita in duobus regnis regula sequitur aequitatis, qua uigilanter adhibita si nostra intentio corrigatur, facillime uidebimus ubi habitet uanitas et ubi felicitas. (civ. Dei, IV: 3)*

*Vanitas* is not articulated as the diametrical opposite of *felicitas* but as manifesting a pseudo felicity; and what vanity ultimately generates is misery because of its deceptive nature. Vanity propagates division and with the division there arrives a false sense of independence from God and thence pride, just as Augustine describes vanity overwhelming the spirits of the fallen angels:

As they were imbued with the cunning of vanity instead of the certainty of truth, an interest for particular objects instead of love of unity, they became proud, deceitful and envious.

*Vanitatis astutiam pro certissima ueritate, studia partium pro indiuidua caritate superbi fallaces inuidi effecti sunt. (civ. Dei, XII: 1)*

Then the opposite position must be taken by the pagan reader fo the sake of joining the peace of the City of God, which analogically implies to unite oneself with other human beings in a bond of humility and truth.

## Conclusion: the Potentialities of Appeal.

---

(a) Felicity, which the Reader seeks

*Eudemonia* is the philosophical term of happiness, not just any happiness affirmed colloquially but a considerably more sublime gratification and lasting spiritual delight. Methods to achieve this blessed state have been reasoned out and delivered through diverse philosophical schools and are additionally depended on what eudemonia implies for each particular philosophical tradition. It is not unlikely that the debutant reader of *De Civitate Dei* expects that a potentiality of eudaemonistic achievements resides in Augustine's ethics. Regardless of selfless or egotistic motives, Augustine anticipates the reader's aspiration to become happy<sup>75</sup>:

That every human wants to be happy is the certain opinion of everybody who can in some way use their brains.

*Omnium certa sententia est, qui ratione quoquo modo uti possunt, beatos esse omnes homines uelle. (civ. Dei, X: 1)*

The notion and actual existence of a *telos* render the acts of the candidate for eudemonia purposive and cohesive and should therefore be adhesive to a single moral point of view whereon morality would be meant as a modulator of the candidate's orientation, id est his thoughts and will. In this manner, *telos* or *finis boni* has all to do with *voluntas*. A rational person can absorb intellectually the teleological sentiments of *De Civitate Dei*, but whether to agree or disagree with it, believe or disbelieve it, is as a matter of volition (vide p. 29). Augustine delivers a very simple but useful anecdote, wherein are portrayed two men catching a glimpse of a beautiful woman whereat one of them starts to desire an illicit enjoyment (*inlicite fruendum*) with the woman's body and the other preserves in his

---

<sup>75</sup> Augustine also wonders if not the worship of the god Felicity would suffice for the Roman people; thereupon he castigates their disability to locate the One True God, the giver of Felicity (*civ. Dei, IV: 23*).

(spiritual) composure with a modest *will*, or a will more sensitive to shame (*voluntate pudica*) and so in effect a more conscientious will.

If two [persons] who see a beautiful body are likewise affected in body and mind<sup>76</sup>, and one of them is moved to illicit enjoyment of that body and the other firmly preserves with a chaste will, what cause are we to believe there is for the bad will in the one and not the other? What phenomenon has made this will<sup>77</sup>? Certainly not the beauty of the body because, it occurred to both of them yet induced the bad will in only one. Was it the flesh of the onlooker? Why not in the other? Or was it in fact the mind of the onlooker? But why not both minds?

*Si enim aliqui duo aequaliter affecti animo et corpore uideant unius corporis pulchritudinem, qua uisa unus eorum ad illicite fruendum moueatur, alter in uoluntate pudica stabilis perseueret, quid putamus esse causae, ut in illo fiat, in illo non fiat uoluntas mala? Quae illam res fecit in quo facta est? Neque enim pulchritudo illa corporis; nam eam non fecit in ambobus, quando quidem amborum non dispariliter occurrit aspectibus. An caro intuentis in causa est? cur non et illius? An uero animus? cur non utriusque? (civ. Dei, XII: 6)*

The moot question is what the efficient cause is for each reaction developing and surfacing in the two persons in question<sup>78</sup>. Augustine's idea proclaiming the body's rebellious position exonerates the guilt of involuntary concupiscence (*civ. Dei*, I: 25), not only physically but also mentally, exactly because sometimes it verily is 'the thought that counts'. The example of the beautiful woman displays a leniency towards the almost involuntary commutations in the psychic in the same mode as a Stoic would defend a sage's momentary perturbation in the confrontation with a huge wave far out on a tempestuous sea. John Sellar paraphrases from the fifth book of Epictetus *Discourses*:

---

<sup>76</sup> Here it is to be observed that when the two persons are 'equally affected in body and soul' (*et animo et corpore aequaliter affectos*) the answer to actual change in the originally *equal* disposition is volitive, and it is thereby not a noetic explanation on why any lust occurs in the one and not in the other;. Volition is presented here as the faculty under which love, such an important term in Christian theology, is manifest or lacks in presence.

<sup>77</sup> *Quae illam res fecit in quo facta est*, if rendered verbatim into English, would sound as an unnecessary tautology.

<sup>78</sup> The categorical conclusion is that there is none, not an efficient cause at any rate (vide p. 61). Evil acts are by-products of an evil will, a deficiency which is hard to grasp because it is *ungraspable*.

Where there are deficiencies [the mind] recognizes them by not knowing them; for who can grasp deficiencies?

*Ubi deficiunt, nesciendo condiscit. Delicta enim quis intellegit? (civ. Dei, XII: 7)*

It [Epictetus' book] argued that the impressions we receive that present external objects to us are not within our control...However we do have the power to choose whether to assent to these impressions. (Sellars, 2006, p. 66)

However, Augustine proves to be much less strict than the Stoics on the issue of human passions, interpreted by them as perturbations. Passions can be used, if the volition is already oriented towards God and therefore comports itself to His order of justice:

[The Bible] subjects the mind itself to God to be ruled and aided. Passions are likewise subjected to the mind to be moderated and restrained, so that they can be turned for purposes of justice. Thereupon our discipline [of ethics] does not so much inquire whether a pious mind is furious, but why it is furious; and not so much whether the mind is sad, but what is causing the sadness.

*Deo quippe illa ipsam mentem subicit regendam et iuuandam mentique passiones ita moderandas atque frenandas, ut in usum iustitiae conuertantur. Denique in disciplina nostra non tam quaeritur utrum pius animus irascatur, sed quare irascatur; nec utrum sit tristis, sed unde sit tristis. (civ. Dei, IX: 5)*

Augustine's purports early in *De Civitate Dei* that suffering and troubles are not inglorious but that the handling of them can most certainly be (*civ. Dei*, I: 8). Passion apposite to *telos* is benevolent, as earthly peace is benevolent where the ideal of heavenly peace lingers in the collective memory (vide p. 21). Indolence, as in lack of appropriate passion, is in fact detrimental to a teleological disposed volition, especially since the power of demons is constantly at work. Therefore one needs to stick to the teachings of Jesus Christ, the mediator, the more tenaciously (*tanto tenacius Mediatori*) (*civ. Dei*, XVIII: 18).

So the universal longing for felicity anticipates a reading with hope for eudaemonistic emolument, not only by the informative aspect but also by the emotional aspects of making sense of the text. An amoral, apathetic approach to Augustinian ethics bears little fruit in any case, and the person who reads with such an outlook does not have the Holy Spirit working within him (vide p. 76). If, however, the premise of God's delightfulness is acknowledged, and if this delightfulness is incorporated into one's spiritual paradigm as *telos*, a genuine interest in the ethical sentiments of Augustine is quite plausible, when moral conduct and demeanour are presented as conducive to the eventual enjoyment of that existential fulfilment. Unfortunately enough, the inspiration to persist in a moral behaviour and in a devotion to Augustine's God is disturbed by the onerousness and perturbations in this life, which are at variance with the happiness purportedly secured by the ethical prescription. Delusion may ensue and perhaps even a dismissal of any analogical relationship between Augustine's

teleology and his ethical exhortations and sentiments.

Augustine is very aware of this potential resentment of the pagan aristocrat and the reader is told very early on in *De Civitate Dei* that God doles out happiness and misery to good and bad people alike (*civ. Dei*, I: 8); and subsequently the divine reasons appertaining to this indiscriminate dispensation are divulged (*civ. Dei*, I: 9). Augustine allots a teleological inevitability to the lives of wicked personalities which only respects their volitions as meaningful for the ‘exercise of patience (*exercitio patientiae*) and advancement of wisdom (*provectum sapientiae*) for good people (vide p. 66). Thus the good use evil for their benefit as exercises of their ontic capacity<sup>79</sup>. Being a subject under a tyrannical political power ‘is not punishment of crime, but a test on virtue (*non est poena criminis, sed uirtutis examen*)’ (*civ. Dei*, IV: 3). At the end of *De Civitate Dei* Augustine confirms that true (*vera*) and secure (*secura*) happiness is reserved only for the good at the final judgement and so the felicity of the wicked is merely contentment (*civ. Dei*, XXII: 30). That contentment fits the attributes of being fortunate the state of which Cicero in his *De Finibus* describes as the following: ‘Nothing had happened to him which he did not want to happen’ (*nihil acciderat ei, quod nollet*) (Cicero, *fin.* V: 92). That is a description which is contingent upon a purely good will for it to operate as true bliss, and Augustine’s rhetoric denies this for most humans. Upon whom humans are contingent is God, who is the ‘drinkable fountain of felicity’ (*fons bibendae felicitates*) and who affords perpetual joy ‘if we only stick to Him’ (*Illi cohaerendo beati simus*) (*civ. Dei*, VIII: 10).

His eudaemonistic phrases are hereby pithy and cogent, alone imbued with inspiratory attributes, but the disquisition of a whole teleological outlook throughout *De Civitate Dei* requires patience on the part of the reader to which Augustine’s predestinarian sentiments can be discouraging.

#### (b) Predestination as Appeal in the Subtext of *De Civitate Dei*

In general parlance, Augustine is considered a precursor to the development of the theology of predestination as described in the introduction (vide p. 7, footnote 4). Traditionally, the Pelagian controversy<sup>80</sup> is said to mark Augustine's formulation of a predestinarian point of

---

<sup>79</sup> Sed malus frater in filio suo, hoc est, in opere suo, puer, id est servus est fratrum bonorum, cum ad exercitationem patientiae vel ad provectum sapientiae scilicet utantur malis boni. (*civ. Dei*, XVI: 2)

<sup>80</sup> The Pelagian controversy came about when a monk from Britain, Pelagius, taught that free will makes it possible for humans to be perfect in this life on earth. It ‘was the possible life, because it was the necessary life’



view, emphasizing the centrality in the Fall of Man and the consequent restrictions on human free will, namely in the ability to choose good by one's own. During this controversy he ascribes to God such a dominate part in His dispensing of grace, that it is hard to understand how ethics, propounded in *De Civitate Dei* for the pagan reader, can have any other point than exhibit the author's insights of a truth which cannot be altered and whose comprehension will not affect any providential outcome. Augustine has ascribed to God an eternal and unchangeable intention (*inmutabile aeternumque consilium*) with everything He creates (*civ. Dei*, XII: 14) (also vide p. 67), and in the prologue of *De Civitate Dei* he calls God 'my helper' (*Deus adiutor noster est*)<sup>81</sup>, and hence *De Civitate Dei* is per se a component in God's providence. If the reader has gotten wind of Augustine's theory on predestination and feel it in the subtext of the bifurcation of the two Cities, (the Earthly and the Heavenly), it can possibly feel a bit condescending of a god, who inspired the author in the first place and aided him in the process of outlining a vision of morality which neither is destined to receive the consent of the reader nor will perforce have any soteriological value.

As we have seen, perpetual life is the end of goodness, and the end of evil is perpetual death, a bifurcation which normally leaves little ambiguity as to which part is preferable. What Augustine must have at the ready is a clear phraseology on which his ethical counselling is to rely, so that one can know on which path and to where one is headed (*civ. Dei*, XIX: 4). Augustine believes of all the philosophical schools or trends

that though there is a manifold discordance of opinions, even so, there is no one who doubts that nature has some [efficient] cause, science some method [and] life some final cause.<sup>82</sup>

*multiplex discrepantia sit opinionum, esse tamen aliquam naturae causam, scientiae formam, vitae summam nemo cunctatur.* (*civ. Dei*, XI: 25)

Science is not attributed here with an efficient nor with a final cause but its method (or form) must be implemented in a causality of some kind. Although it is far from the kerygmatic centre of devotion, scientific ethics is not contemplated as something outside the purview of

---

(Wilbur, 2010, p. 202). This line of thought threatened Augustine's view on grace and on the significance of Christ sacrifice for humanity.

<sup>81</sup> The plural of *noster* is purely ethical and does not imply that Augustine had any collaborator.

<sup>82</sup> *Causa* could technically also be translated as final cause, but in the propinquity of *summam* linked to *vita*, I conjecture that Augustine would have used *summam* there as well, id est in reference to *natura*, if a *final* cause was what he wanted to indicate.

religiosity, for God is also ‘God of knowledge’ (*qui est Deus scientiarum*) (*civ. Dei*, XVII: 4).

In his autobiography Augustine is ostensibly a man whose life is goal-oriented, which implicates a *telos*, always present and giving inspiration, strength and guidance to an ontic progress. The *telos* is what has marked some of his actions and moral choices as wrong and some as right, and this disposition of the author, extrapolated into the text of *De Civitate Dei*, has made all the morality displayed therein some kind of ethical consequentialism. *De Civitate Dei* is mostly an informative work and not a didactic one, I would postulate. The reader is never so much commanded to follow specific ethical precept than being explicated diverse consequences (vide p. 40) ensuing certain perpetrations and neglects. Odontology is implicit in the omnipotence of God and the Commandments of the Old testament, but what is actually disserted as the teleological message in *De Civitate Dei* is subordinated to the question: What is the consequence of this action, feeling, thought, attitude and neglect, committed by me, vis-à-vis my relation with God?

To give a serious answer thereon one must comprehend Augustine’s views on virtue and the concomitant fusion of the will of God and that of a virtuous human.

Ethics is exigently the focal point for a candidate for existential consummation, and the candidacy subsists as long as *telos* is not yet achieved; for *ἥθος*, which means habit (Liddell, 1978, p. 226), defines a person and hence his capacity to ontologically transform towards its own completion which in turn, within the ambit of Augustine’s theology, would portend his capacity to participate in God who is the giver of felicity (*dator felicitatis*) (*civ. Dei*, IV: 25) (vide p. 64). It is an exigency which normative ethics fails to satisfy by itself, since Augustine disbelieves any perfection of one’s soul is attainable in this life (*civ. Dei*, V: 19). Within reach are the ideals acknowledged by religious devotion and the choice to approximate them and with what degree of effort.

Such men can have their virtues in this life inasmuch they attribute them to God’s glory, as He has given the virtues to those believers who seek them and at the same time comprehend how far there remains to attain that perfect righteousness extant in the society of angels and saints, for which they most laboriously<sup>83</sup> prepare.

*Tales autem homines uirtutes suas, quantascumque in hac uita possunt habere, non tribuunt nisi gratiae Dei, quod eas uolentibus credentibus petentibus dederit, simulque intellegunt, quantum sibi desit ad perfectionem iustitiae, qualis est in illorum sanctorum angelorum societate, cui se nituntur aptare. (ibidem)*

---

<sup>83</sup> *Nituntur* is a quite a strong expression, emphasizing those who really make an effort.

God has already given the aristocratic pagan the virtue to read, grasp and consent to the substance of this magnum opus, *De Civitate Dei*, which is about a predestined future but does not emphasize predestination of individuals incapable of ‘choosing’ a side in the cosmology and historical outline propounded throughout the 22 books. One can then of course only make conjectures - for the supposed reader is only a straw man - that the good promises of Augustine’s teleology outweigh the menaces if one already has taken the steps to read and therefore be interested and devoted to the Bishop of Hippo’s religion, so that the prospect of happiness everlasting does not seem far-fetched. The reader’s volition and his privately adopted teleological ethics have then converged with that of God; and this has occurred with the help of God and the pagan aristocrat’s obedience.

But the commended obedience, which lies in the precept, is a virtue and in a certain way the mother and guardian of all the virtues in the rational creation; is thus arranged that for the virtue it is advantageous to be under submission, and pernicious to follow its own will rather than that of the one who created it.

*Sed oboedientia commendata est in praecepto, quae uirtus in creatura rationali mater quodam modo est omnium custosque uirtutum; quando quidem ita facta est, ut ei subditam esse sit utile; perniciosum autem suam, non eius a quo creata est facere uoluntatem. (civ. Dei, XIV: 12)*

If the consequence of following one’s own definition of virtue will stand contra to God’s purpose, even if the thought is benevolent, it is a fault. Augustine delimits virtue to the obedience and conformity to the teleological order which God has provided<sup>84</sup>. Prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude are the merely the symptoms of having consigned one’s soul to God. Obedience and to have it set under (*subdita*) God is advantageous (*utile*) for a created being, since it will consequently lead to *telos*. Unless the acknowledgement that virtues are ultimately derived from God, an attitude which is indicated by religious piety, Augustine warns that the same virtues will devolve into vices (*civ. Dei XIX: 25*).

In fact virtues apparently perfect by themselves are not strong enough to perfect the soul but wage a ‘constant war with our vices (*quid hic agit nisi perpetua bella cum uititiis*) (*civ. Dei, XIX: 4*). Virtues are purposive only insofar as they do lead to *telos*, the tête-à-tête vision of God, by their cathartic assets and ontic edification of the soul. Virtue is basically an advantageous willingness to cooperate with God, and Augustine furthermore explains how

---

<sup>84</sup> Virtue is the appellation of the act to use what ought to be used and enjoy what ought to be enjoyed (*quae uirtus etiam nominatur, fruendis frui et utendis uti*) (*div. qu. XXX*). This clear-cut aphorism from *De diversis Quaestionibus octoginta tribus* is absent in *De Civitate Dei*, but substituted by a phraseology therein which conveys the same idea, asserting an equal influence on a potential convert.

weakness, which is imputed even to the future citizens of the City of God, is depended on forgiveness from God and mutual forgiveness of each other<sup>85</sup>.

In this way the citizens of the city [of God] is taken care of, pilgrims as they are on this Earth, longing for the peace of the Father above. And the Holy Spirit operates within so that the medicine [of forgiveness], which is applied from without, can have any healing effect.

*Hoc modo curantur ciues ciuitatis Dei in hac terra peregrinantes et paci supernae patriae suspirantes. Spiritus autem sanctus operatur intrinsecus, ut ualeat aliquid medicina, quae adhibetur extrinsecus. (civ. Dei, XV: 6)*

Noticeably Augustine uses *demittere* alluding to the Jesus' prayer instead of *ignoscere*<sup>86</sup>, reminding the reader (or telling him for the first time) that to be forgiven is to be released from a debt, perchance of having been able to take a stride towards teleological fulfilment by the very role of being the reader of *De Civitate Dei*. If there is no final purpose to absorb teleological ethics other than to realize how off the mark one is and might always be, then what is the point of being a reader of sound teleological sentiments on truth and peace? Moral accountability yields little inducement to act rightly, if one's will is already supposed to be preordained to divine will's conformity; but *demittere debita* makes possible to account for one's actual shortcomings in relation to *telos*, and the extrinsic and intrinsic workings of the Holy Spirit as divine aid is anyhow going to lessen the amount of debt which must be forgiven. The language evokes an impression of a *telos* much in activity (vide p. 18), as an instigator of humans' fulfilment in and by it. Augustine's God is a pragmatic god, both curator and cure;

and when [God] does not guide the mind and act upon it with inward grace then publication of truth is of no benefit. But God does this; that He distinguishes between instruments of mercy and of wrath.

*nec interiore gratia mentem regat atque agat, nihil prodest homini omnis praedicatio ueritatis. Facit autem hoc Deus a uasis misericordiae irae uasa discernens, dispensatione qua ipse nouit multum occulta, sed tamen iusta. (civ. Dei, XV: 6)*

Hence it is clear that ultimately the reader, in the acquisition and acceptance of the Christian message as it is promulgated by Augustine in *De Civitate Dei*, is dependent on grace, the dispensing of which is secret (*occulta*) but just (*iusta*).

---

<sup>85</sup> Sic et uobis faciet Pater uester caelestis, si non dimiseritis unusquisque fratri suo de cordibus uestris. (civ. Dei, XV:6)

<sup>86</sup> *Ignoscere* evokes rather the notion of *overlooking* (Simpson, 1977, p. 285).

That does not, however, mean that the messages therefrom are unproductive. Someone might argue that Augustine's theories on predestination effaces any relevance to whether one agrees with or disparage the overall message in *De Civitate Dei*. I would allow a more optimistic solution which is still not discrepant from the very real predestinarian persuasion of Augustine by the time he finishes this magnum opus.

In an explicit formulation *De Civitate Dei* omits potential deductions wherewith the practical value of uplifting insights and advices becomes obsolescent by the inevitability of the readers' subsequent actions, for the direction of morals can go two ways:

Nathan the prophet was sent for and accused King David of a grave sin and predicted that, for David, an evil future would follow. Who may contend that this does not pertain to society on earth, and similarly to that which is either proclaimed publicly, id est for the safety and advantage of the people, or privately, when divine utterances, where something of the future is let known as a help in mortality, are acquired for the gain of one's people and property?

*Missus est Nathan propheta, qui regem David argueret de peccato graui et ei, quae consecuta sunt mala, futura praediceret. Haec atque huius modi siue publice, id est pro salute uel utilitate populi, siue priuatim, cum pro suis quisque rebus diuina promereretur eloquia, quibus pro usu temporalis uitae futuri aliquid nosceretur, ad terrenam ciuitatem pertinuisse quis ambigat? (civ. Dei, XVII: 3)*

The advantage of the people (*utilitas populi*) purports teleological aid. Paratextually the prediction of Nathan can be well interpreted to allude to the text of *De Civitate Dei*, whose teleological and eschatological statements too will have an advantageous impact on the reader and his salvation – analogically *utilitas legentis*. It is not the perfunctorily reading of the whole oeuvre which is a sign of being elected but the proper acquisition of the content therein. Concurring with grace, reading *De Civitate Dei* for the right reasons is more a symptom of than an aid to good will. The consensus to use one's power from motivation based on veracious teleology (vide chapter five) is in itself a revelation of truth, a most useful epiphany for the reader's soteriological asymptocity, which the concomitant subtextual exhortation to truth (vide chapter six) can only commend, stabilize and encourage further.

(c) The Assimilation of the pagan Episteme into Augustine's Teleology

Chapter five introduced the notion of *uti* and *frui* in order to establish the monitoring concept which Augustine offers as a judge of purposively sound behaviour and disposition. The stress

and interrelated distinction of *uti* and *frui* adumbrates that there is a eudaemonistic incentive to act piously because of its conduciveness to God. The ordering of one's action, while bearing this conduciveness in mind for oneself and others, will mark out the difference between these two modes of experiencing and change an act. Exempli gratia, the reader is induced to order his household with God as *telos* as motivation, and so only by making *imperāre* tantamount to *consūlere* on each plateau of power-relationships will the pagan or Christian aristocrat obtain the operative modus of the approximation to *telos* in mortality. The sixth chapter has endeavoured to give an exposition on Augustine's definitive and summary teleological sentiment by dealing with the concepts of peace (*pax*), vanity (*vanitas*) and truth (*veritas*) as key terms in a eudaemonistic matrix whereby an approval of the teleology of *De Civitate Dei* would subsist. Augustine's text of *De Civitate Dei* seems to come out as having anticipated a 'fusion of horizons', as Gadamer would put it (Gadamer, 2012, p. 390). The fusion is that of Augustine's Christian eschatological and teleological outlook and that of the centuries' old paganism of the reader. It is a fusing of epistemai, and Augustine executes it quite subtly and sporadically.

His mission in *De Civitate Dei* seems foremost to criticize paganism and the shortcoming of pagan philosophy and to juxtapose the origin, development and final end of the City of Men and City of God, as has been mentioned in the introduction of the thesis. A teleological phraseology has been implanted with a consideration for paganistic nostalgia, including in the discourse poets like Vergil and Horace, historians like Sallust, philosophers like Cicero, Seneca, and Varro and even of a comedy writer like Terence. For his pagan contemporary this is a pivotal acquaintance and the starting platform on which *De Civitate Dei* has the potentiality to become a total confrontation with his pagan past, and whence an exhaustive introduction of a new worldview can be established. The pagan perspective has been confounded by means of its own material. Augustine's particular employment of words like *uti*, *potestas*, *consūlere*, *civitas*, *vanitas*, *vanus*, *veritas*, *verus*, *finis* and *pax* obviously helps in stabilizing both a consistent and purposive orientation, but what is more, it triggers the idea that one's accepted paradigm, as it is contained in established literature and to which the pagan reader has been devoted in his upbringing, can be preserved in its repertoire of notions and only permuted in the strict selection thereof, whereby the Christian teleology is the absolute assessor of the importance and implications of each notion.

Lecturing others on how to behave is a precarious business. Thus the regular occurrence of the same conception, whether in the form of appositional adjectives or verbs, might function as an aid in sustaining the attention of the reader and as an appeal to rationality

by cohesiveness. Bonface Ramsey appropriately states that ‘Augustine uses history as his vehicle, for it is easier to grasp by inquirers than a more strictly dogmatic approach’ (Ramsey, “De Catechizandis rudibus” in *Augustine through the Ages*, 2009, p.144). A purely dogmatic approach without any teleological justification would possibly be repugnant let alone unattractive to reader who devotes so much time on a single literary work. Reading a text as a text, id est as many individual thoughts interwoven, whence the Latin participle *textus* which means *has been woven*, is an experience and not just an optical act. Presuppositions can be either affirmed or confused when the reader not only reads *De Civitate Dei* but experiences the text as merging with and perhaps even changing his own ethical and teleological outlook. Experience is contingent upon one’s epistemology both of one’s surroundings and of available ideas. Hence, if one agrees with Jason BeDuhn that ‘consciousness itself, and the reasoning process with which it assesses its environment and itself, is changed by conversion,’ (BeDuhn, 2010, p. 6) it follows that, when the conversion is simultaneous with the reading process, the epistemology of the reader must be permuted if Augustine’s convictive goals are to be accomplished, both by and during the reading-experience. There is an environment of ideas of which the composition is formed by the explicit succession of sentiments in the reading of any text; and logically the longer the text the greater this environment gets. Each subject in *De Civitate Dei* is then likely to have an illocutionary correlation to the other in which each enhances the reader’s understanding and hopefully perhaps interest to the whole Christian philosophy offered therein.

Every different intertextual relation to each classical author is alone a thesis. This study has demonstrated in chapter four that Augustine wants his reader to approximate a better understanding of the true God by elements of his own epistemology, albeit nothing therein tells the aristocratic convert anything about God as *telos*. That information is for Augustine to supply, either with original articulations or with biblical citations. It is the teleological agenda and tone of *De Civitate Dei* which monitors the conscientious contextualization of diverse references to and citations of pagan writers, id est the selective localization of them in the text.

Finally, this tone amounts to an allowance to emulate the intertextual example set by *De Civitate Dei*. Pagan classical texts are used (*uti*) by Augustine in his philosophy; and he deduces that the final cause of philosophy (*causa philosophandi*) is to become happy, and so converges it with the Final Good.

There is in fact no other purpose to philosophizing than to become happy, and what makes one happy is the final good. Nothing else, then, is the end of philosophizing than the Final Good.

*Quando quidem nulla est homini causa philosophandi, nisi ut beatus sit; quod autem beatum facit, ipse est finis boni; nulla est igitur causa philosophandi, nisi finis boni.*  
(*civ. Dei*, XIX: 1)

Allowing the reader to pursue philosophy and make whatever truth thereof as he is able to, Augustine simultaneously demarks what good and veracious philosophy is: It is the pursuance of God. *De Civitate Dei* is a voluminous work on Christian philosophy and in the conveyance of this philosophy pagan arguments which, however decontextualized, have an iota of truth, are justified vehicles for the final cause (*finis boni*) by which they are prompted.

## Finis



## Acknowledgements

Since there is no professional milieu of Patristic Studies at UiB and only a small amount of students of Latin, the process of research and study has been relatively solitary. I have relied mostly on secondary literature and an interest for the text of *De Civitate Dei*. I thank my supervisor Aidan Keally Conti for his sustained involvement in my project, for a number of articles and for indispensable encouragement throughout the process of writing. Also, friends and family members have told me to give ‘full gear’, and they have accordingly by their support set the standard for the dissertation.

# Bibliography

## AUGUSTINIAN TEXTS

*civ. Dei* = *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*, CCL **47-48**: 1955

*conf.* = *Confessiones*, CCL **27**: 1981

*doc. Chr.* = *De Doctrina Christiana*, CCL **32**: 1962

*en. Ps.* = *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, CCL **39**: 1956

*mend.* = *De Mendacio*, CSEL **41**: 1900

*Trin.* = *De Trinitate*, CCL **50**: 2001

*div. qu.* = *De diversis Questionibus octoginta tribus*, CCL **44A**: 1975

## PRIMARY LITERATURE

Augustine, 2010, *On Christian Doctrine (De Doctrina Christiana)*, 397 C.E. (forth book: 426 C.E.), translation by James Shaw, Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1887]

Augustine, 2008, *Confessions (Confessiones)*, 498 C.E., translated by Henry Chadwick, Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1991]

Augustine, 2010, *The City of God (De Civitate Dei contra Paganos)*, translated by Marcus Dods, Peabody (Massachusetts): Hendricksons Publishers, [2009]

Augustine, 2012, *The Trinity (De Trinitate)*, 417 C.E., translated by Edmund Hill O.P., New York City (New York): New City Press, [1991]

Augustine, 2010, *Essential Sermons*, edited and translated by Father Edmund Hill, New York City (New York): New City Press, [2007]

Augustine, 2009, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, translated by Edmund Hill O.P., Hyde Park (New York): New York City Press

Bourke, Vernon J., ed., 1974, *The Essential Augustine*, Indianapolis (Indiana): Hackett Publishing Company

Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, 45 B.C.E., original texts plus translation by H Rackham, 2006, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, [1914]

Cicero, *Disputationes Tusculanae*, Page, T. E., ed., 1964 [1894] New York: St Martin's Press

Vergil, *Aeneid*, Page, t. E., ed., 1950 [1927] Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press

## SECONDARY LITERATURE

BeDuhn, Jason David, 2010, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, 1: Conversion and Apostasy, 373-388 C.E.*, Philadelphia (Pennsylvania): University of Pennsylvania Press

Billicsich, Friedrich, 1929, *Studien zu den Bekenntnissen des Heiligen Augustinus*, Wien: Verlag Meyer und Comp.

Bonner, Gerald, 1991, "The Doctrine of Sacrifice: Augustine and the Latin Patristic Tradition", p.101-117, *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bonner, Gerald, 1984, "The Extinction of Paganism and the Church Historian", p.339-357, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Brown, Peter, 2000, *Augustine of Hippo, a biography*, London: Faber Limited, [1967]

Clark, Gillian, 2006, *Augustine, the Confessions*, Devon (UK): Bristol Phoenix Press, [2004]

Dardano, Maurizio; Trifone, Pietro, 2008, *La Lingua Italiana*, Bologna: Tipografia, Babina, [1985]

Dodaro, Robert, 2004, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

O'Donnell, James J., 2005, *Augustine: a new biography*, New York City (New York): Ecco Press

Eriksen, Trond Berg, 2000, *Augustine, Det urolige hjertet*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Fitzgerald, Allan D., ed., 2009, *Augustine through the Ages; An Encyclopedia*, Grand Rapids (Michigan): William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [1999]

Fredriksen, Paula, 1986, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self", in *Journals of Theological Studies* Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 2012, *Truth and Method*, London: Continuum Publishing Group, [1975]
- Grane, Leif, 1968, *Augustin*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads Forlag
- Harrison, Carol, 2004, *Augustine, Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, New York City (New York): Oxford University Press, [2000]
- Johnson, Aaron P., 2009, “Arbiter of the Oracular: Reading Religion in Porphyry of Tyre”, p. 103 -115, edit., Cain, Adrew; Lenski, Noel, *the Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, Farnham (England): Ashgate Publishing
- Liddell, Henry George, 1978, Robert, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press [1889]
- Morgan, Edward, 2011, *the Incarnation of the Word: the theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo*, London: T & T Clark International, [2010]
- Osmun, George Wilbur, 2010, *Augustine: The Thinker*, New York City (New York): Eaton and Mains, [1906]
- Salzman, Michele Renee, 2002, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire*, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press
- Sellars, John, 2006, *Stoicism*, Chesham: Acumen Publishing
- Shields, Christopher John, 2012, *Ancient Philosophy: a contemporary introduction*, New York City (New York): Routledge Printing
- Simpson, D.P., 1977, *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, New York City (New York): Wiley Publishing, [1854]
- Stock, Brian, 1998, *Augustine the Reader, Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation*, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, [1996]
- Stump, Eleonore and Norman Kretzmann, eds., 2001, *the Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, Cambridge (U.K.): Cambridge University Press
- Switalski, Bruno, 1946, *Neoplatonism and the ethics of St. Augustine: Plotinus and the Ethics of Dt. Augustine V1*, Chicago (Illinois): Capitol Press
- Topping, Ryan N.S., 2012, *Happiness and Wisdom, Augustine's early Theology of Education*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press
- Valantasis, Richard, 2000, *Religion of Late Antiquity in Practice*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

Woodfield, Andrew, 1976, *Teleology*, London: Cambridge University Press